

Interview with Chuck Inskeep, May 2001

Interview with Charles C. "Chuck" Inskeep by Dick Nelson for the Oceanside Historical Society. Monday, May 7, 2001 at the home of Chuck Inskeep, 631 S. Clementine, Oceanside CA 92054. Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Dick: Chuck, let's start off and we'll do it chronologically. Let's start off with, where were you born?"

Chuck: I was born in Bonita, south of Chula Vista.

Dick: When was that?

Chuck: September 29, 1911.

Dick: How about your parents names?

Chuck: My father was an eye doctor and my mother was a housekeeper, she was very active. Both were good parents. My father had twenty-five acres of lemons in Chula Vista. We moved from Bonita when I was about four years old to Chula Vista, that's where I grew up. Chula Vista grammar school and Sweetwater High School, they didn't have a high school in Chula Vista at that time. I had to go to Sweetwater.

Dick: What was your dad's name?

Chuck: Charles C. Inskeep.

Dick: And your mother was?

Chuck: Ethel Brown Inskeep.

Dick: You grew up in Chula Vista?

Chuck: Yeah, I went to Chula Vista School and Sweetwater High School and San Diego State College.

Dick: That was back when it was a rather small college.

Chuck: Well, I was in the first college when they moved from out on University, I forget the name of the street, it moved from there in midterm and I was in the first class at San Diego State

Dick: Do you remember what year that was roughly?

Chuck: I can't remember. The first year they had, I have a record of it somewhere. It was a mudhole out there, I remember that. I drove from Chula Vista to San Diego State everyday in my Model T Ford.

Dick: That must have been the late '20s? Early 30's?

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Chuck: Whenever I graduated, I went the first year, after I graduated from Sweetwater High. It was an excellent college. I remember I had a surveying class when I went to San Diego State. I picked the first "S" on Black Mountain out there on Cal's Peak, I got that as a project and it was staked out and after that the freshmen had to line the "S" with lime. It was a marker and the airplanes used to use that as a turning point to come in to land. I was the guy who designed it. I still have my surveying books to prove it.

Dick: Were you a civil engineer then?

Chuck: No, I was just starting engineering. That was part of one of my courses. I worked for the City of Chula Vista part time when I was going to school, helping a surveyor by the name of Cantwell, who was a city surveyor in Chula Vista. I used to work for him when they had weekends or he needed somebody to drive stakes or something. It was years ago, I just remember him.

Dick: How long did you stay at the San Diego State?

Chuck: And then I transferred from there right back to Iowa State at Ames. My aunt was music teacher at Cole College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We had been back visiting her and she thought Iowa State had a good engineering school, so that's where I went. I was there two years but I didn't graduate. It was too cold, I wanted to come back to California.

Dick: Were you in Civil Engineering?

Chuck: Just engineering.

Dick: General engineering?

Chuck: Well, actually electrical. That was one of my projects, but I didn't take all of the courses. I had a lot of background, that's what helped me get my job, I think, at the San Diego Gas and Electric Company.

Dick: You came back here then after two years?

Chuck: Yep.

Dick: You were still single?

Chuck: Yep. I remember L.M. Klauber was the superintendent of the San Diego Gas & Electric Company. I had been working in the gravel pits for Mr. Fenton. I didn't like that job very well. But I decided I'd try and get a job with the Gas and Electric Company and it was Depression time. I had enough gumption to call Mr. Klauber and made a date to meet with him and had an interview with him at his office on the 6th floor of the old Electric Building in San Diego. He was very polite and very nice. After I got through he said, "Well, you sound like you might make a good employee." So he sent me down to get a physical. I was hired and he wanted to know when I could come to work and I said, "right now."

Dick: All within a period of a couple of hours?

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Chuck: Yeah, the next day I went to work. I worked in the electric repair shop in San Diego for a while and did a little bit of everything, wiring all kinds of things, which I enjoyed and the boss there was Mr. K.B. Ayers. I went up and interviewed with him and he wanted to know, he said, "Would you move to Oceanside?" And I said, "Well, if there's work up there, I'll go." And he moved me. He gave me two weeks and moved me and we rented a house there at 632 S. Ditmar.

Dick: Were you married then?

Chuck: Yeah, I had been married.

Dick: Where did you meet your wife?

Chuck: Well, we were in high school but I didn't go with her at that time. After I got back from Iowa, we started going together. We were married in 1936 and had sixty years together before she passed away.

Dick: When you came back from Iowa you lived with your parents? You went back to the house or did you live on your own?

Chuck: I was married at that time.

Dick: When you came back from Iowa?

Chuck: Well, it wasn't long after I came back. I can't remember. But we went to different places together and finally decided we ought to get married. I was working so we rented a house.

Dick: You said you were working in a gravel pit, was that just manual labor?

Chuck: I worked there and I ran a dragline for a while. They taught me how to use a dragline. I remember one instance I was pulling a lever to dump gravel or sand into the back of a truck and pulled the wrong lever and dumped sand on the cab and the guy came out. I thought I was going to get killed! But we kind of reconciled things and I went back to work. I worked there for a while. It was before I went to work for the Gas and Electric family. But I didn't want to work there too long. It was an early morning job, worked long hours for thirty cents an hour, I think it was.

Dick: And all the sand you could take home.

Chuck: Well, I learned how to first, it was all manual operating with those draglines. There wasn't anything hydraulic on them. That's why I dropped the bucket on the cab, I just pulled the wrong thing. Anyway, I stayed with them a little while. Before I talked to Mr. Klauber, that was when --

Dick: How do you spell his name?

Chuck: Klauber. Phil Klauber. Or Lawrence Klauber. He was eventually president of the San Diego Gas and Electric. A real fine person. And in his house, my wife used to go visit there. He was a fellow to keep snakes, he knew their habits and knew all about them. He kept snakes in his basement. He knew all about snakes, that was his hobby. He was quite a man, he took care of the zoo, too. He was quite an authority on snakes.

Dick: When you and your wife were dating ...

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Chuck: She worked for the Gas & Electric Company and worked for the National City Chamber of Commerce. And then I began working for the same company (SDG&E). And they used to go around and they used to have to fix the street lights and I worked for a guy climbing poles. I learned how to climb a pole.

Dick: You could have become a lineman.

Chuck: Well, I couldn't have, there was more training. But I was pretty knowledgeable. Anyway, we'd have street lights on ropes and we'd have to pull them and let them down and put a lamp in or whatever and I had to go up if the rope got caught. The fellow I worked with taught me how to climb and get up there and release the rope.

Dick: They didn't have any nice "cherry pickers" at that time.

Chuck: No. It was all climbing.

Dick: You moved to Oceanside and what was that address again?

Chuck: 632 S. Ditmar.

Dick: What kind of a neighborhood--

Chuck: Well, there weren't any lots or houses there and we used to go for a walk and we liked this corner.

Dick: Streets were laid out?

Chuck: Well, we had streets that was laid out.

Dick: Paved?

Chuck: Partly paved, they weren't all paved but they were paved pretty soon after we got here. We liked this corner, there was one house, the third house up that still exists, otherwise this block was empty. There was no houses around. We came up here and liked the corner and met the manager at the bank. So we had enough money and had some savings, had \$600 for this corner.

Dick: For the lot.

Chuck: For the lot and got acquainted with the bank president who was here, he lived up the street away.

Dick: Do you remember his name?

Chuck: I think it was Roy Hoover, but I'm not sure.

Dick: So there were two homes then eventually here.

Chuck: Well, I no, I was one of the first ones. We built this in, I can't remember.

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Dick: I thought you said there was one home and one down.

Chuck: One home. The third house up was the only house on the block.

Dick: So you became the second one?

Chuck: Well, we started to build there was one in back of us built. He worked for me. He started to build the same time I did. Other people started to build.

Dick: Who built this home?

Chuck: I did a lot of my own. I did my own plumbing and my own wiring.

Dick: Yeah, you better have done your own wiring!

Chuck: Put everything in conduit and copper pipes. I put everything in copper pipe right from the water meters. It's still here. I have no problem electrically or with the water system. But I was at the house at that time that was built that way. They've all remodeled their homes to put in copper pipes since I did it.

Dick: You don't remember who your contractor was? Was he a local man?

Chuck: His son worked for me, but I can't even remember his name.

Dick: Did he build quite a few homes here or a few?

Chuck: Well, he was a contractor here and I should remember his name. He was a very good inside and outside carpenter. He did all of the inside shelving and things and my wife was up here supervising as to what she wanted and he worked with her. She wasn't a big woman. She was only 5'2" I think or 5'1". But she was a wonderful wife and she wanted a sink that was a little lower than normal so we had that put in and she came up everyday to watch them put in things the way she wanted them. She designed the archway between the living room and the dining room and the way she wanted the windows. She was very good at that.

Dick: The first home was down on Ditmar, there were homes on Ditmar at the time?

Chuck: There were some, we lived just two blocks down, right on the corner. We rented the house for, I think it was \$22.50 a month.

Dick: Who was your landlord?

Chuck: She lived on, the lady lived, I guess it was a landlady I paid my rent to and walked down there to pay. It was \$22.50 a month, I think it was, we walked down there and paid our rent every month. I can't remember names anymore.

Dick: That was in the mid 1930's? What time would that have been?

Chuck: 1937, I think it was when we moved up here. I hadn't been married too long. Anyway, our

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first boy was born at 632 S. Ditmar. He's a past president of Monitor Products in Oceanside. He has his Masters in Electrical Engineering. My youngest son is on the right there (showing photograph), his name is Dr. Edward Inskeep, not a medical doctor but a PhD doctor. He's principal of a school in Cypress, near Long Beach. He lost his wife about three months ago, two months ago, about two months after I lost my wife.

Dick: You have two sons?

Chuck: Two sons, and one daughter-in-law passed away a couple of months ago.

Dick: What are the names of your sons?

Chuck: Charles Gilbert and Edward Carey.

Dick: You told me that Carey was your grandfather's name.

Chuck: My grandfather. Charles Chambers was my father, and Charles Carey was my grandfather, but he went by Carey Inskeep.

Dick: When you transferred up here, and we're bouncing around a little bit, with SDG&E, what was the position you came up as?

Chuck: I came up as a clerk. I was taking care of routing the crews. We had one electric crew and one gas crew. I worked under a man by the name of Fred Pierce who was in charge of the thing.

Dick: He was not a superintendent?

Chuck: No, I forget what they called him. He was a supervisor, district supervisor.

Dick: What was the size of the crew?

Chuck: Oh I can't remember. We had two electric crews, now that I think about it. One gas crew. I didn't have much to do with the gas side, most of it was electric. But we had our district manager, I think was Al Whisler. He took care of the commercial end of the thing. Al Whisler was the district manager. He and Fred Pierce never got along very well for some reason. I always got along with both of them.

Dick: You had a commercial office in downtown Oceanside.

Chuck: Yes.

Dick: Where was that, do you remember?

Chuck: It's still there, but its on the corner of Mission and Ditmar, I guess. That was the office. They had an upstairs there. I can't remember much about it. We used to go up there once in a while for some reason, but my office was really down there in a little cubby hole. They moved from down there where we were and we finally took over the whole building as the operating center at 311 South Tremont, I think it was, on the corner of Tremont and Mission Avenue [Third Street].

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Dick: In 1937 and with the growth of Oceanside, you still had a lot of pipe to lay and a lot of lines to string, didn't you?

Chuck: Well, there wasn't much going on in Oceanside, it was a small population. It was a nice community. When the war broke out why, everything happened. That's when I was going in the service and they deferred me to stay here to supervise the electric construction and my boss had since retired at the time.

Dick: You were moved from clerk to what?

Chuck: Supervisor. Eventually I became district superintendent. They moved me up to that. Furnished me a car and I used to ... when Camp Pendleton was built, I went out to take ... the generals that came here and rode with them. They showed me around but I knew the base real well, because the base manager, Harry Witman, I knew very well. He knew the ins and outs of the area before the government bought Camp Pendleton so when the marine Corps came I used to take the generals around once in awhile and show them the area.

Dick: When you moved into this home, did you have, had the gas lines already been installed?

Chuck: Oh yeah.

Dick: They were in. They had installed. You had power?

Chuck: Yeah. Then during the war they were going get a switch on the back of my house and a transformer out here so I could turn the street lights off because when the war came we were on black out and all street lights were on a series circuit. Well, they got up here and decided it was going to be too much work so they never did finish but they got the switches on and everything but they didn't get the transformer here on time. I was supposed to be in charge of turning the lights out every night. We used to have drapes for the black outs during the war. We had to cover the windows with black paper. That was quite an experience.

Dick: Let's hold up a second and let me change sides here. Hate to run out. (Switches sides of tape)

Dick: Alright, Chuck, you've been permitted from clerk to supervisor. What did you supervise?

Chuck: I was district superintendent.

Dick: I mean from clerk, your first promotion.

Chuck: Well, I went from clerk to supervisor and then district superintendent.

Dick: How long did you stay supervisor?

Chuck: Oh I was a supervisor for a couple of years, I guess. And then during the war sometime they moved me to district superintendent.

Dick: What did that district encompass.

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Chuck: That was everything from south of Del Mar to South Laguna and from the coast to Borrego.

Dick: South of Laguna?

Chuck: South Laguna. Del Mar. From the coast to Escondido and eventually Borrego. In fact I supervised the crews that put in Borrego Springs' electric system. I used to drive over there. When I was flying I flew over there just to look it over.

Dick: You were a pilot?

Chuck: Not a commercial pilot. My son was a commercial pilot but I was just a pilot. I learned to fly when I was a young student in Chula Vista. Flew to the Salt Pits in Chula Vista, learned to fly down there and the guys, they used to clank the plane with the prop, I was a young kid really and he let me get in the back, it was a two seater plane, I forget the name right now, but he thought I ought to learn to fly so I got back there. Pretty soon he let me fly it and pretty soon he let me pilot it by myself. So I flew all over Chula Vista and around and came back and landed okay. So that's how I learned to fly, really, that was when I was still in high school.

Dick: Where did you fly from--

Chuck: The Salt Flats, Chula Vista.

Dick: I mean, later on when you were up in Oceanside.

Chuck: Well, I finally had to come up at Palomar, I forget where it was up here. A friend of mine used to fly landed on a strip here in Oceanside somewhere I forgotten. I liked him. I didn't fly but I flew with him. Then I decided I better get my license. So I went up to Palomar Airport and took my flight lessons out there and got my pilot's license and rented a plane every time I could, a single engine, whatever it was available. I flew several different kinds. My wife flew with me different times. We used to fly up to Long Beach area up there that way somewhere and land there and take her to lunch and then fly back. That was a fun thing. Those years are gone. But I flew quite a bit. My son became a regular pilot. He was a good pilot. He flew with me when we flew down by near Florida, but he was with me all the time but I flew the plane. That was a twin. I wasn't licensed for a twin but he let me fly it. It was fun. Beechcraft Bonanza, I think it was. He was an excellent pilot but he flew regular, commercial planes in his day.

Dick: This Palomar Airport, was it the same location as the Palomar today?

Chuck: Yep. That came in later but that's where I learned.

Dick: Up in the same vicinity?

Chuck: Yeah.

Dick: And what about Oceanside Airport?

Chuck: Well, it was there and I flew out of Oceanside airport but it wasn't the airport that had any

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training out there or what not. I had flown into and landed and flown out of it. But it wasn't a convenient airport for me. Palomar was much nicer to fly into. But Oceanside's still exists and there's planes that fly in and out of there.

Dick: You had that area, South Laguna. That's no longer SDG&E service territory is it?

Chuck: Yeah. It goes up to, it's still part of San Diego Gas and Electric territory.

Dick: Really? On the electrical side?

Chuck: Yeah, we didn't have any gas up there. It was all electric. I used to go up there and eventually we had a superintendent up there in that district. But I had to go up and break him in and do things. But it was a long haul. Just a two-lane highway at that time. It took you about an hour to get up there.

Dick: The old coast route.

Chuck: Yeah. I just remember I'd go up there about once a week. Sometimes more. Just make sure everything was going all right. The President used to have a home there, somewhere near the coast, near the borderline.

Dick: The borderline of --

Chuck: San Diego County and Orange County.

Dick: President of SDG&E?

Chuck: No, president of the United States.

Dick: Richard M. Nixon, the "Western White House", at San Clemente.

Chuck: Yeah, that's where he had a home up there. I don't know, we had to build a special line up there for him, I remember, but we had two lines so if one went out he could the other so he would always have power somehow. At that time the Edison company was 50 cycle and we were 60 cycle and I learned how to run the frequency converter up there. So if they had an outage south of us I had to go up there and get that thing going. That was a challenge. First time I got up there to start it, I had been broken in on it, but I had never run it myself. So one time we had an outage and the troubleman up there was ill so they asked me to go up there from San Diego and go up there and start it. I had quite a time starting it I remember, but I had the lights going up and down before I got them on the line. I got it. And everybody had their power again. That's when Oceanside only had two transformers. I don't know, we had 5,000 watts or something like that. Just two transformers, one back up, I don't know, the substation still exists down there at South Tremont.

Dick: Well, when you moved out here, you were on the southern edge of the city. How was the development?

Chuck: Oceanside was here, Carlsbad was a city. One time I was right in there with them, we tried to join the two cities. Because Carlsbad didn't have much of anything and Oceanside was going pretty good. In fact I was appointed on the library board by the city manager, no it was Lucy

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Hoskins that got me on there. My doctor's wife. I served as, well as library board superintendent for several years. I can't remember all the things I did.

Dick: Where was the library in those years?

Chuck: In the city hall at that time. I was with the Oceanside Masonic lodge and the secretary with city, worked for the city, and he kept his books up there in the safe, before we had our own lodge. We met over at the Odd Fellows Lodge. Oceanside Masonic Lodge, Oceanside No. 381. It still exists. I served as Past Master of Oceanside Lodge many years ago. I guess I'm the oldest living Past Master of Oceanside Lodge right now. I'm still existing. I don't go very often because I don't drive anymore. I sold my car. So everybody has to take me somewhere.

Dick: You have to be carted here and there.

Chuck: Yeah. I have a lot of good friends, good neighbors and things.

Dick: The Oceanside Masonic Lodge, was that in existence before you got here?

Chuck: Well, before we built the temple, I was the one that kind of spearheaded the idea of getting it built, but we had other people that were more instrumental in doing things, but we met over at the Odd's Fellow's Hall on Mission Avenue which is now, still the Odd Fellows Hall. When I served as Master I had to walk up those stairs to go to the meeting. It was a small place but it was a meeting place. That's when I decided we ought to have our own temple lodge and I talked the membership into doing it. Dodge Wallace was one of the prime movers, he lived on the corner house over there.

Dick: What was his occupation?

Chuck: He had a service station down here on Hill Street, they called it on the Highway 101, the old Highway 101. He took care of my service on the car, so forth. Good neighbor. He was one of the fellas that picked out the lot, I think. I forgotten who the others were, can't remember all their names.

Dick: How did you raise the money?

Chuck: Well, we had a fairly good balance in the checkbook, I guess. But they were pretty good promoters. They had a good organization and the lodge was growing and they got enough people interested. We did a lot of our own work. I did the wiring, well, three of us. I did most of the wiring for the temple and a lot of the plumbing at the time. I put in the gas line for the gas meter, all the way back to the building from the front curb. Put in wrap pipe, bought it from the gas and electric company and put it in.

Dick: You had some equity in the temple, huh?

Chuck: Oh yeah, I helped build it and my two boys were on the roof nailing sheeting on. They were small and my wife used to go down and fix lunches once in awhile for the people that were working a lot of donated time. We did a lot of our work and it wasn't hard to get a permit in those days from the City of Oceanside.

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Dick: What year was that, what time frame? During the war, after the war?

Chuck: Well, I can't remember. It must have been after the war. I'd have to look at records, I guess, but I can't remember when it was built.

Dick: Were you the superintendent at that time?

Chuck: Yeah.

Dick: So it would have to be from the middle of the war or later.

Chuck: It was after the war.

Dick: Yeah, you couldn't get material.

Chuck: No. It took us a couple of years to build it, I guess. But we did a lot of our own work. The city building inspector was pretty nice about okaying everything.

Dick: Well you probably had many of the trades represented in the membership.

Chuck: Yeah, we did. I can't remember all those things that went on. It was a hundred years ago to me!

Dick: You're doing okay! What kind of car were you driving when you came to Oceanside?

Chuck: When I came to Oceanside we were still driving the Model A Ford my father had and gave it to us as a wedding present. Well, my mother and father gave it to us. They bought another car.

Dick: How were the roads in those days?

Chuck: I don't remember, they didn't have any traffic much.

Dick: They were paved?

Chuck: Oh yeah, around the city. It was a small city, I don't know, I'd say 5,000 at the most.

Dick: When you moved in here, these roads weren't paved?

Chuck: Well they were being paved along the edges. The gutters were in and we had sidewalks for some reason, I can't remember. We had sidewalks when we built here but I know we had a hole out here and I used to carry dirt from the back and bring it up here to dump in the hole when the house was going to be built, before we got the plans that we wanted. I can't remember the builder's name right now, we was a finish carpenter. He was really good. Knew what we was doing and how to do things.

Dick: What about sewer, was that in?

Chuck: No, we had sewer. I put in all the copper piping. It was quite a chore to do the things I did, but a lot younger!

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Dick: Well, in the management position with SDG&E, one of your jobs was P.R. to a certain extent. Do you belong to a number of the local organizations, Rotary and things like that?

Chuck: No, I didn't belong to the Rotary. I belonged to the Kiwanis club and the Oceanside Masonic Lodge and that's the only two I belonged to.

Dick: Where was the Kiwanis, where did they meet?

Chuck: Well, they met at different places once in awhile. Right now they're meeting at Carrow's Restaurant. I'm still a member, a life member of the Kiwanis Club but I don't go very often, although they're having their 75th Anniversary this month and the president of the Kiwanis asked me to be sure and come. I'll probably have him pick me up and take me just to go. But the 75th anniversary, that was before I was here.

Dick: Were you president?

Chuck: No, I never got to be president. Originally I was a member of the Carlsbad Kiwanis. The Gas & Electric company wanted me to go down there and serve, because our office was down that way. But I never aspired to be an officer in the Kiwanis. Oh, I got up to be Vice President and the Carlsbad Club kind of folded up so I petitioned and joined the Oceanside club and just transferred, didn't lose any seniority or anything. So they accepted me and that's where I've been every since. I was very active in both the Kiwanis Club and the Oceanside Masonic Lodge.

Dick: Where did your sons, they progressed through the Oceanside schools of course, which ones did they go to?

Chuck: San Diego State and then my oldest son went up to Washington after he was married, he went up there and got his Masters degree in electrical engineering, I think it was. My youngest son got his doctors degree in San Diego. They've both done very well.

Dick: What grammar school did they attend in Oceanside?

Chuck: Oceanside Elementary.

Dick: Where was that located?

Chuck: Well, it was right down here on Ditmar, the first year they went down here, but right soon after they went up to the Oceanside High School. My son was the last president of the Oceanside-Carlsbad High School, when Carlsbad separated but I forgot what year.

Dick: President of the student body?

Chuck: Student body president. That was the last year Carlsbad was with Oceanside. I forgot what year it was. Then they became Oceanside when my younger son was up there. They both graduated from Oceanside High School. I can't remember the dates anymore.

Dick: Was that high school located where it is today.

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Chuck: Yes, much smaller. But they got money now to build new schools and what not on the last bond issue so it will be growing.

Dick: Let's take a little break right here and I'll change tapes. Okay, Chuck, talking about politics, in the years that you've lived here, have we had any mayors that impress you or any city officials that have impressed you as being good people and making a lot of good progress?

Chuck: I've been through a lot of different people as mayor. Erwin Sklar was one of the best mayors I think we had.

Dick: What was the last name?

Chuck: Sklar, S-k-l-a-r. Erwin Sklar, he did a lot for the city. He was one of the best mayors, I thought we had.

Dick: What was his profession?

Chuck: Well he built one of the first theaters here, I don't know. And when we had needed DeMolay chapter, I was the first chapter dad and he connections, somewhere. He furnished all the uniforms for the DeMolays. He was a member of our lodge. Very, very fine person.

Dick: Is he gone now?

Chuck: Yeah, he was defeated by Richardson, who got to be mayor after Sklar served two years, why he ran a third but Richardson beat him by not very many votes but he did beat him. It was okay, I guess it changed, but Sklar was much better. He was the one who designed and helped build the Oceanside Harbor that we have today. If it hadn't been for Sklar we wouldn't probably have an Oceanside Harbor. He was a very fine person and he did a lot for the city.

Dick: Anyone else come to mind?

Chuck: Well, I don't know.

Dick: Not only as mayor but council people?

Chuck: Well, I used to know them all but I just don't remember them now and I'll probably think of them when you leave. I used to know everybody on the council but my mind, when you get to be 60 years old and thereon, why you ... but I'll be 90 in September.

Dick: You do real well.

Chuck: Well, I don't know. I don't remember like I ought to.

Dick: Well, I apologize for jumping around. If I would keep this more chronologically, you probably would do better.

Chuck: Well, you can put it together like it should be.

Dick: You said your wife worked for SDG&E?

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Chuck: Before we were married, she worked for National City at San Diego Gas & Electric Company as an office clerk. I know Merle Foster who is a friend of mine who worked for the Gas & Electric Company used to have to take the car down that way. So when I went through National City he'd stop and let me go see May. That's where I kept my connection. He was a fine person.

Dick: What was the worst electrical or gas problem that you experienced here in Oceanside? Was it a great storm?

Chuck: Well, we had a flood here in Oceanside. It wiped out ... the flood came out and flooded everything out. I know we had to build a cable car because the bridge was out. The bridge over the San Luis Rey river.

Dick: Where?

Chuck: North of Oceanside somewhere.

Dick: Was that toward Bonsall?

Chuck: No, that went out before, years ago. We used to have a railroad, before I came here, that came in through Fallbrook and around but that washed out in 1916, I think. Then we had another flood, I forget when it was, but it washed the bridge out here north of Oceanside. They finally got it built back up but it created quite a bit of damage.

Dick: You never had any electrical capacity problems down here?

Chuck: No.

Dick: When Camp Pendleton came in you had the power available?

Chuck: Well, one way or the other, yeah.

Dick: You didn't have to use any turbines or anything?

Chuck: We didn't have any turbines. We didn't have any. We had just a line when I came here up from San Diego. As I said before, we had to switch over to Edison if we lost that line.

Dick: And synchronized to get the 60?

Chuck: Well, if they were both running at the same time we used to use a scope and get it synchronized. I'd have to go down and do that. But if one was outing the other, you'd open with one switch and close the other. But that was when we had the frequency converter up in Capistrano. A lot of things of changed. Everything is 60 cycle now so you don't have that problem.

Dick: Well, your gas operation probably in comparison to electric was fairly mild. The electric is where you got outages and broken lines.

Chuck: Well, yeah, we had storm conditions where I had to get out and work with the crews and help climb the poles to help put stuff together. At that time, I had two crews that worked for me.

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Lee Richmand, was the foreman of one. He was electrocuted on a service on a road, I forget where it was. He went to grab a wire, a ground wire, an anchor wire, it crossed a hot wire. He was electrocuted, I remember that. I had to go out there and go tell his wife about it. That was an awful thing for me to have to do.

Dick: What was that time frame?

Chuck: I can't remember but it was one of the storm conditions. He and his wife lived on South Hill. I had to go there and break the news to her, that was quite a chore. Leo Richmand was his name. Jack Wilburn was the other foreman. He eventually came in with a kind of stroke of some kind one day. I finally had to take him home and he never came back to work after that. Jack Wilburn was his name. Those were the two foreman at that time and I had to get other foreman, which I appointed.

Dick: What were the size of those crews?

Chuck: Well, one was made up of four linemen and two groundman and a truck driver. The other, what they called hot stick crews. They worked with sticks you know, Jack Wilburn was the foreman of that. He had two linemen and two groundman and a truck driver. Sometimes three linemen, most of it was two. He was the foreman. Later on, why, we had more crews, but I can't remember. We built lines into Borrego, why I had to have a crew over there, out of Escondido. I used to take charge of the Escondido headquarters. The company finally separated and put in a district manager over there but I had to go over and lay out things at Borrego. That was a drive over there. It was sandy so I had to drive over there with a Jeep, 4 wheel drive and I used to be deaf when I got back with riding that thing! But when I was flying I flew over there a couple of times, it was easier to have the crew meet me. Just to see what they needed or what supplies. I arranged for their board and lodging and so forth over there. They built lines into there and when they built up to Palomar Mountain I supervised that. We had a snow storm I remember one year and broken lines down. It was really cold and I stayed at a house up there. It got so cold I just about froze. Crews had to work up there to put the lines up. I still have a picture somewhere, the snow was pretty near a foot deep on the outwires, circular. It was quite an experience.

Dick: When you and your wife would go out to eat on occasions, what were the places here in Oceanside that you would frequent?

Chuck: Well, we didn't go out very much, really. My wife was a good cook and we had a good range and we had everything here. She took good care of me. For about three months we had to put her in a resthome, however. I went over every day to give her a ride in a wheel chair. She was over here in Vista, had a real nice home for her and they took good care of her. It got too much for me. She'd wake up at night and couldn't get out of bed or get up. It was too much for me and my doctor said "you'll have to put her in a home." A friend of mine recommended this, Joe Craig. His wife said, "there's a real nice home over in Vista, that I know." I went over and talked to them and they said yes. She was in the hospital at that time, my wife was. I made arrangements and transferred her from the hospital over to the home. She was there for three months.

Dick: What year did she die?

Chuck: 1996.

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Dick: What year did you retire?

Chuck: 1973, I think.

Dick: These questions are thrown at you. If you haven't thought about it in a while, it's tough to answer sometimes.

Chuck: I'd have to look at my records. I used to have an excellent memory, but I don't anymore. But if you got anything you want to ask me, you can do that.

Dick: You said when you moved here there were the two homes, yours and the one up the street.

Chuck: Just one home up the street.

Dick: Well, two, including yours.

Chuck: Yeah, we and the one in back of me built about the same time and this one came pretty near soon. Ted Stokes built this one [next door].

Dick: Did the other homes fill in pretty quickly?

Chuck: Yeah, they came in, one over across the street and the fellow that built the one across the street was the electrical contractor here in Oceanside. I can't even remember his name right now.

Dick: Are there any oldtimers that are still in the same homes?

Chuck: I'm the only one. The oldtimer here. The rest of them have all died or moved, I guess. I don't know whether Bess Smith, lived up one house up from the corner. I don't know whether she still lives there, she moved to Oceana several years ago. She was a nurse but I don't know whether she's still alive or not. Lost contact. If so, she'd be the only one.

Dick: You saw them as SDG&E grew, your territory shrunk a little bit. Escondido was growing so they needed a separate operation over there.

Chuck: Yes. Too much travel time for me to go over there and get crews going.

Dick: When did your first lady come on staff?

Chuck: Oh gosh, I don't remember.

Dick: Do you remember who it was?

Chuck: No I don't. It had to have been when we built the operating center I had to build a special room for her down here, separate room for her.

Dick: Were those first ones office workers or did they get into the field?

Chuck: She never got into the field. She was my office clerk and did the dispatching of the Gas crews for me and took care of the records and things like that. The things I used to do, she was a

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very good worker and I can't even remember her name but she finally married one of my foreman. I thought maybe the company would object to that but I went down and explained it. She was very good people and I needed them both. So they said, well okay, so they let her work. But she was very capable and he was a good foreman. He's still alive. Once in a while I see him. We have a luncheon once in awhile. A friend of mine puts it together about once every six months. A lot of them are gone, died, but we still have about probably a dozen old timers yet. I'm one of the oldest. Or the oldest, I guess I am.

Dick: Do you remember his name?

Chuck: He wasn't a foreman. He was a lineman. He sends me ... I forget his name now ... but he sends me a letter to remind me. That's what reminds me of his name. But he was quite a character. He's the one who puts these dinners together up at the Mexican restaurant every year, once a year. It's about due pretty soon, this summer, if he's still alive. He was quite a character.

Dick: These are all the SDG&E fellows from around here?

Chuck: Pat Jones is still alive.

Dick: I was just going to mention that, do you know Pat Jones?

Chuck: Yeah, he worked for me. I hired him.

Dick: He and I were in the Elks together.

Chuck: Pat was one of my best foremen. In fact he took over when I retired. He was a very fine person, still is. He and Evelyn are good friends of mine. I haven't seen him for quite a while.

Dick: When you retired, was your operation down at the power plant?

Chuck: Well, they built a place down there for me. In fact, I went down to supervise the construction of it when our operating center was still here in the old building up here on Tremont, across from Rorick Buick. When the commercial office moved from the corner, the corner office there on Tremont and Third, why I took over the whole section there. It was a nice office and I had lots of room. It was real convenient. Then the company moved to where they are now.

Dick: So you never worked out of the power plant.

Chuck: No, they built my office down there. We had to rent property to put the trucks in the back and it was getting too congested so I got approval and the company approved it and I got a contractor to build the operating center down there. They've got quite a bit of property south of the power plant. And I went down to supervise my office and how I wanted it built, which is a little larger office than they would have otherwise. They got a nice assembly room, a nice warehouse for the crews.

Dick: So you built a nice office for Pat Jones, then?

Chuck: Yeah, he got it later on. But anyway, he took over for me.

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Dick: When you talked about your commercial office, gosh or probably when you came down here as a clerk many years ago, what did you have? One meter reader?

Chuck: I didn't have anything to do with the meters.

Dick: Well, the must not have had too many meter readers.

Chuck: I don't know. That was under the commercial office and I didn't have anything to do with that. I was in the construction. Took care of all the outages and all the repairs and new construction on lines and so forth. I had nothing to do with the billing or anything like that. That was Al Whisler, the district manager, they called him.

Dick: I imagine when you were the general superintendent that you had to go down for occasional meetings.

Chuck: Once a week I went down to speak with my boss in San Diego, the vice president. He was a very fine person. I ought to remember his name but I don't. I ought to remember all of their names, but I don't. He was a very fine person. Anyway, he used to have meetings about once every two weeks or every month, I've forgotten. Every month. I'd go down there with all the other district superintendents and they'd tell us our problems. Anyway, he would get the information he wanted. That was a thing we could count on every month. One time the vice president served us a dinner, that was real nice.

Dick: How nice! Get the guy working!

Chuck: Well, no, he didn't serve it but he had it served to us up in the electric building.

Dick: Well, would be brass come down and see you once in awhile?

Chuck: Oh yeah, they came by. Yeah, they'd come in and check on me. I had good superintendents. Good vice presidents. Couldn't complain. I just about did what I wanted to up here. They almost let me have the run of things. Towards the last I used to write my own budget. Write what I needed in the way of trucks and pickups and equipment and hot sticks, and I don't know what all. And make a list of all the different things that I wanted on the budget. It was quite a chore, really.

Dick: Oh yeah, it's a long process.

Chuck: Yes it is, but I used to do that. It was quite a challenge sometimes. But most of the time I got everything approved.

Dick: What's impressed you most about Oceanside, the progress its made or even as a community?

Chuck: Well, it's one of the nicest communities around, I think. I used to know pretty near everybody in the community, but I don't anymore. When I was with the lodge we used to keep our lodge books up there in the safe, as I told you before and I used to go up there and get them once in awhile. I knew all the clerks and they used to let me go in the safe and get the book. The City Manager was Frank Lilley and when I was on the library board, I remember, the librarian quit. She retired and went out to Miracosta College and so I asked Frank if I could use his office to interview

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some people I put out for bids. He said "sure" so I used his office to interview people and Marietta Edens, I'll never forget her.

Dick: What was the name?

Chuck: Marietta Edens, E-d-e-n-s. She was the one that impressed me the most. She came from Arkansas. She was a school teacher at one time and really knew her library work. In fact she was really fine so I told the council, went up and told them who I was going to hire and they approved. And so I hired for the library as an administrator, well, librarian. And she came and worked for me, or worked for the city and she was very good. I know Mae and I traveled back there and when she retired and went to her home in Arkansas, I can't remember where it was but she had a dinner for us when we were back there. But she was a real fine librarian. After she left, why, I forget who came on. I wasn't on the board then. I still belong to the library association but I don't even get there to check out a book anymore. I can't read with one eye. I can see with both of them, but I can't read with one eye and it's hard for me. So I don't go to the library anymore.

Dick: Okay, you were on the library board appointed by City Council or city council person?

Chuck: Yes. I had to get approval from the Mayor, Erwin Sklar was the mayor at that time, I think. I don't remember, I got a certificate in there thanking me for my several years of service from the city council. I've got all kinds of certificates. I've got a junk room. When my wife was alive she used to keep it cleaned up but now. I can't keep it cleaned up, my sons don't care. But I have all my radio gear in there, and I was a ham radio and I used to talk to people all over the world.

Dick: Oh, you were an OM?

Chuck: No, I was a ham radio.

Dick: Well, there used to be OM, "old man."

Chuck: Oh yeah.

Dick: What's your call sign?

Chuck: W6IRM. I used to have license plates on my car that way. I was one of the, almost the founder of the Palomar radio club. I came here a year late. I'm a year behind on the Palomar Radio Club, I'm still a member.

Dick: Do you still get on?

Chuck: No very often. I usually talk to my son on the handheld but they changed the repeaters so it's hard for us to communicate. But for many years ... I taught both my boys amateur radio and they got their licenses.

Dick: Worked through the code?

Chuck: Yeah.

Dick: I'm WB6UOR.

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Chuck: Well, congratulations.

Dick: Thank you. That was my brother's instigation on that. He was an electronics guy.

Chuck: Good. Do you still have your license?

Dick: Oh yeah, yeah. Now they're issuing them for what ten years at a time, I think.

Chuck: Are they?

Dick: Yeah. Mine expires in 2007 or 8.

Chuck: As far as I'm concerned, I don't know.

Dick: And they automatically send it to you now. You used to have to pay money.

Chuck: I never paid anything.

Dick: You were an executive operator, I was just a peon operator. I had to pay money! Did you work in any of the emergency things?

Chuck: Yeah, I used to. Yeah, I did but I can't remember what they were but I was on call once in awhile. I can't remember. I haven't been there for so many years. I don't even attend the club meetings. A friend of mine called a month ago and wanted to take me to go and I said I just can't do it anymore. Too much for me.

Dick: But you were a year behind when they formed, you came up the next year.

Chuck: Yeah, it was about a year, year and a half. I missed out on the initial formation of the club.

Dick: How many were there in that club?

Chuck: I can't remember. There's a heck of a list of them now. There's a lot of them in there.

Dick: I think you qualify easier nowadays.

Chuck: Well, I don't know.

Dick: We had to our, what was it, ten or twelve words a minute.

Chuck: I was on code for years. I couldn't build my modulating equipment, it was too expensive, so it took me quite awhile to accumulate enough money.

Dick: So you stayed on code.

Chuck: I was code for a long time. Talked code and the technical part of the radio and what not.

Dick: I guess we should mention we're talking about Morse code.

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Chuck: Right.

Dick: It wasn't a secret society!

Chuck: No, no. It was Morse code and I still remember it.

Dick: It's hard to forget once you've got it.

Chuck: I don't remember it very fast anymore. I used to be pretty good at it. I'm pretty slow now. Just like everything else, I'm slow.

Dick: When you were on the library board, what were the other boards or activities that you performed for the city?

Chuck: Oh, I was ... Lucy Hoskins was my doctor's wife and she wanted me to move the Oceanside College campus. She appointed me on the board. In fact, I was chairman to get the board going and I forget who were all on it but I had a lot of friends and I got them together. 'I think we ought to move the Oceanside College off the Oceanside High School and have a college of their own.' So I finally got enough people to do it. I didn't do it. Other people actually spearheaded, I just organized it. That's where they built MiraCosta College out here and got the college off the High School. My son was the last student body president of the Oceanside High School when they separated. Anyway, they bought the property and that's where it is now. That was quite a challenge. Another was, we used to get, years ago, we used to get all of our water pumped out in the valley from groundwater wells river infiltration. I was appointed to be on the committee along with a lot of others ... to get a water system in from the water line that was going to San Diego, get a branch off of here so we could have our own water instead of pumping. I was on that committee for quite awhile. I forget all who were on it. But we finally got it done and we got an inner connection with the line to San Diego and that's where we get our water, the Colorado river so Oceanside now doesn't have to pump, although they still pump out here. But gosh, a lot of things have changed in the years I've been here. I can't remember everything.

Dick: What about, where we have a skating rink now, that was opened up, there were fights and wrestling matches.

Chuck: Yeah, they used to have fights. I never went to them because I wasn't a boxer or a fighter at any time. But they used to have boxing matches down there. They have a roller rink, or did have, I don't know if they still have it down there.

Dick: Yeah, I think it is a skating or roller rink and indoor hockey.

Chuck: Yeah, I never have been there. I've been by it but I've never been in it. A lot of things I should have joined or didn't do I guess.

Dick: Sounds like you had a pretty busy life.

Chuck: Oh I did. I had other things to do.

Dick: What do you think of the future of Oceanside? What do you think of the Manchester project

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and projects for the revitalization and all this stuff?

Chuck: Well, the Manchester project I don't think will ever be built in my lifetime. I hope something becomes of it but there's too much friction going on. We have a mayor now and he's swayed over to it, finally. There's one person on there, the new council lady that is against it but all the rest except one, except her are for it. I'm not prejudice either way. We need something down there. I don't know the council is now going to build an underpass under the railroad, apportioned a certain amount of the budget to go underneath the railroad, so they ought to be starting that sometime, so they can have a walkway all the way from downtown Oceanside to the pier. Pier View Way. So that's going in. It may get there before I die, I don't know. When you get as old as I am, why, you don't know.

Dick: You take ever hour as it comes!

Chuck: You're right! I'm just lucky I'm as healthy as I am. Several years ago, I forget how many years, it's been 15 anyway, maybe a little more, I had open heart surgery and five bypasses.

Dick: Oh boy.

Chuck: I had a special doctor. I still go to the same doctor that sent me to this specialist in San Diego and he put me through tests and decided I had to have 5 bypasses. They took an artery out of my leg and put them up here in my heart and I've still got them.

Dick: That's about fifteen years?

Chuck: At least fifteen and I'm still doing pretty well. I went through five bypasses, somehow. I had an excellent surgeon. He was in San Diego and my daughter-in-law, I remember, came down and took me for a walk. I had to walk a little after the operation a few days. I pretty near passed out on her and they came and gave me a blood transfusion and I said, I don't want that but if she said you gotta have it, my wife did. So I laid there and had a blood transfusion. I don't know whether it helped me or not, but I was okay.

Dick: I guess it helped you!

Chuck: I guess, I'm still alive!. They knew what they were doing.

Dick: Well, you've seen the Oceanside pier disappear more than once.

Chuck: Oh yeah, my wife's and my names are on the pier they built now. We bought a plaque.

Dick: Oh, you bought a two by four, whatever it was.

Chuck: Yeah, with our names on it. Paid \$25 a piece to have our name put on there. That was part of the contribution to help build the pier. So it's still there.

Dick: Yeah, it seems like it's pretty sturdy and gone through a couple of El Nino's.

Chuck: Yeah, we needed it. We used to have a pier on the foot of Wisconsin, down at this street.

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That was before I came here. When we first came here they used to see some of the old pilings and things. They're all gone now. I don't know what the pier was or what it was, but it was a short one. Then they built this, this is the third pier, I think or the fourth of the Oceanside [pier], but this is the second one built here since I've been here.

Dick: You've seen the parish out of San Luis Rey, it's probably progressed quite a bit, the Mission.

Chuck: Yeah, I was out there when the City Manager, what's his name, last time I was out there for a funeral, he went and I sat next to him, he and his wife. Gosh, I should remember him, he was a good friend but he was city manager for a long time. They built quite a place out there now. Quite an assembly room. I'm not a member of the Catholic church, but I don't know much about what goes on but I have been out there to different meetings and when visitors come I've taken them out there for tours.

Dick: Were you involved at all with Heritage Park?

Chuck: Oh yeah. When they moved the school out there, why Ernie Taylor was assistant City Manager here, got me involved in that and got me to help furnish the old school house they moved. So we went around getting the old desks. He had some connections and I did and we went all over the county getting old school desks and we put them in ourselves out there.

Dick: Were these from individuals who had them?

Chuck: Old school houses that had been torn down, or I don't know. We went to Fallbrook one time and got a couple. I don't know where we got them all. But he was a pretty good promotor himself. Ernie Taylor, I'll never forget him. I real fine person. He was assistant city manager. He was on the Fire Department first and did a lot for the city. A real fine person. A member of the Kiwanis club when I was a member. He knew where the desks were and we went around collecting them and putting them in and mounting them in the old schoolhouse. Put up the flag pole on the school. I don't know, worked out there, painted the whole thing inside. A lot of us were in on that, a lot of the Kiwanians went out there and worked. The school bench is still there. Still old pictures around. I had quite a bit to do with that schoolhouse.

Dick: It's a very nice facility out there.

Chuck: We used to have a sit-down ironer. My wife had it before World War I and she used to do the ironing sitting down on one of these roll things, electric. Electric heater. When I was doing any of it, why, I asked him they'd like for a museum piece and they said 'sure'. So that's where our electric ironer is. It's out there in one of the houses. The city came and got it and took it down and put it in. It's got our name on it somewhere.

Dick: What do you think of the energy crisis?

Chuck: Well, we've got one and we didn't build enough power plants for the community. I wasn't in on that but we should have built power plants. Now we don't even own any of them. Gas and electric company just owns the distribution system. Sempra is the company now, I used to have stock in it but my broker told me to sell it, which I did, which I'm sorry I did now, but I was taking his advice. They're coming back, they're doing fine but it's not the same gas and electric company.

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Dick: When I worked for DWP it was, I guess when they finally unionized totally, that pitted management against, we always had IW and that, but they mandated the city of Los Angeles that every employee be represented by somebody and a lot of ... there was a good relationship with IBW but you got a lot of these --

Chuck: Before I became a supervisor, why, it was a compulsory almost to join the electrical workers' union (IBEW). I said, no, I don't want join. A friend of mine says well, join now and when you retire you at least get something. So I joined and then I became a superintendent, I withdrew. I think it's \$9.75 a month I get. I've got it ever since. That's my pension!

Dick: Well, you're living pretty well on it.

Chuck: Well, I gotta better deal.

Dick: Or you conserve very well! Stretch that 9 bucks! Well, is there anything else you can think of Chuck?

Chuck: I probably will when you leave.

Dick: Okay. Well, as I mentioned, we're going to get this transcribed and we'll get it back to you to look over and make corrections and additions, whatever. This is not '60 Minutes' we're not here to ambush you. We just want to get it right.

Chuck: Well, it's nice of you to come by.

Dick: So you might be able to, if you have time and feel like it, to look up and fill in some of those names if you can, and dates.

Chuck: I've got a recording you might listen to, if you want to.

Dick: Is it a tape or an audio?

Chuck: It's an audio. I used to be with KOCT and I've got more history on that to give you.

Dick: Well, let me find out whether we want to use that. I won't take anything.

Chuck: It may have more history on it than I've given you. He made it several years and he used to come and visit me and sit in that chair. He was one of the guys on KOCT. A good friend of mine, I can't remember his name right now, he was a real swell guy. He just died a few months ago. In fact, I forgotten when, just a couple of months ago, but I miss him.

Dick: Okay, then. We will close this and I thank you very much.

Chuck: Well, thank you.

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This is to certify that I have reviewed this transcript and attest that it is true and accurate. By my witnessing the signature, I grant the Oceanside Historical Society or its designees sole right to use this material in any way and for any purpose it deems appropriate.

Chuck Inskip

Date

Witnessed

Date