

Inside Interior:
James Watt

James Watt
was President
Ronald
Reagan's
controversial
Secretary
of the
Interior
from 1981
to 1983.

This is the fourth in a monthly series of interviews with former Interior secretaries, conducted by Charles Wilkinson and Patricia Limerick, co-founders of the Center of the American West in Boulder, Colo.

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Colorado University President Elizabeth Hoffman: We are so pleased to have you here tonight and we are so pleased to be hosting this wonderful series of Secretaries here at the University of Colorado. I am particularly honored tonight to have Secretary James Watt. A lot is said of the University of Colorado and a lot of jokes are made about the University of Colorado and about the city of Boulder. One of the points I'm trying to make as I talk to our Legislature and various other people these days, is that we are a place where all voices get heard, where all points of view are respected. I think that is particularly important at this time when we're talking about academic bills of rights and questioning whether the university is truly a place where all voices can be heard.

Through this series that Patty Limerick has put together for us so graciously we really have an opportunity to hear all voices.

I'm going to say just a few words about Secretary Watt and then I know Patty Limerick has quite a few things she wants to share with you. Let me just say that, although he's best known for his work as Secretary of the Interior under former President Reagan, Secretary Watt became interested in land and natural resources long before he ventured into the Oval Office.

He grew up on a ranch in Wyoming, so he really is a son of the West. He went to college and law school at the University of Wyoming and served as a legislative assistant and counsel to a Wyoming senator. He really has had the opportunity to experience the American West. He told me during dinner that he is third-generation Wyomingite, so he has that sense in his background. During the Nixon administration, he served as undersecretary and then deputy assistant secretary of the Interior, and then appointed three years later as director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. He also worked for the Department of Energy and as president and legal officer for the Mountain States Legal Foundation, a Denver-based nonprofit public-based legal center.

He is a real proponent of controlled development, and I know that that's an issue that many of you have a great deal of interest in on one side or the other, and I think that we will all welcome your questions at the end of this dialogue.

His ideas and his policies were not always popular, but he has remained very strong in his convictions. I think we need to remember that he has done some very positive things for our natural resources. He committed a billion dollars to the park restoration and improvement program, which helped preserve our national parks system. Under his management, we acquired 1.6 million acres of new park and wildlife refuge land, and implemented new policies designed to protect water resources and decrease our dependency on foreign oil.

While not everyone in this room may agree with everything he has done, I think there are many things that he has done that stay with us today and have become much a part of our national policy with respect to national parks and natural resources.

I am going to turn it over now to Patty Limerick, who is director of the Center of the American West who wants to share some personal

thoughts about her interactions with Secretary Watt during the time that she was putting together this series. Please welcome Patty Limerick.

James Watt: This has been a delightful couple of days to be here on campus and I have enjoyed it immensely. I've been in the classroom and, particularly with the faculty, it's been a great time. It has been extremely rewarding for me to prepare for this presentation. I haven't focused on these issues for a long time and so to prepare, I spent a lot of time. I was surprised at how much time I did spend and it was extremely rewarding.

Reagan Revolution

To look back 23 years to 1981, the beginning of a major revolution in America. We called it the Reagan revolution. We were commissioned by the people of America in November of 1980 to bring massive change to the way we do things in this country, including the management of our natural resources. The richness, the values, and our whole purpose was to bring people into the equation. It was a phenomenal time in history. Serving Ronald Reagan was pure joy, because this man had a vision for America and he spoke with clarity and he had a common core. He had core values of dignity for the individual and respect and a love for America. He spoke with clarity and those of us who worked for him didn't have to worry about what we were supposed to do. We knew what the orders were and we were to pursue them.

Special-interest groups don't see the grandeur and the greatness of America and the resource base that sustains us. For it belongs to no special selfish-interest group, but it belongs to all of us. And reasonable people can bring balance, selfish people can't. And if we're not willing to share and honor one another and show the dignity, the God-given dignity that we have, then we don't deserve the greatness of this country.

I was probably the first Secretary of Interior who ever worked for a president that understood the Department. For Reagan had been governor of California for eight years, and over 50 percent of California is under control of the Secretary of Interior in one way or another, including the entire coast. He had to work with

Department of Interior people. Not only did we have control over 50 percent of the land and the coastal areas, but we controlled the supply of water for California. He had a vision for the necessity to bring about balance between the development and the preservation of the great resources, not only of California, but of America. He spoke with clarity and understanding. It was really a rich time.

But like every Secretary who's ever served, and the ones you've been hearing from, we are confronted with very, very difficult statutory dictates. Some of the statute says you must develop, you must build, you must dig, you must drill; and, on the other hand, we have a set of statutory dictates from the Congress of the United States that says you must preserve. Totally inconsistent in their standards and yet we have stood and took an oath before Almighty God that we would enforce the laws of the land. It can be done. A reasonable person can bring that balance. A selfish person, a selfish-interest group cannot do it. And that's the struggle.

Tonight we're going to have some fun responding to the issues you want to talk about and, as have the other Secretaries that have come before you, we've had to handle a lot of area. And the dimension is magnificent. A Secretary of the Interior is responsible for managing one-third of the lands of the United States: 750 million acres, wetlands, desert, wilderness, timber, grazing lands, refuges.

And Congress says, "Preserve and develop." Not an easy assignment. But men have come to take the oath of office and dedicated their life to do it. I commend you folks for putting on this series to let an oral history be presented on how these men have performed and what we've done and the eras we've gone through — starting in the '60s with one of my role models, Secretary Udall. I was a young lawyer working for Sen. Simpson, as you've heard, and I got to watch this man up close and personal for six years, and he was a role model.

Stewart Udall built dams, and he built canals and he built power facilities. He was a builder, a digger and a driller. It would have been a great time to be in the office of Secretary of Interior like he was. He put on more parks than I did. I put in a lot more land than he did. But it was a different era. He didn't have to live under all the statutes that you saw on the list. A different mood in the country.

Yet that needs to be understood, because he took the same oath of office with the same commitment and love and dedication to the country. He did his best. I thought he did well.

I worked for Hickel, who followed him. I worked, as has been pointed out, for three-and-a-half years as a preservation official and three-and-a-half years as a developer. I got to know the department. All of the questions that come around and you may want to ask a variety of questions. You may want to ask why does the Secretary of the Interior have jurisdiction over the Micronesian Islands in the Pacific? Guam? American Samoa, Saipan? I've had to take trips to be there, to carry out the responsibilities and the mandates that are under the direction of the Secretary of Interior.

You may want to ask how did you handle the desire of the nude bathers on the national seashore areas? How did you handle the concerns of those who wanted to import the parrots in parrot parks? Because we control what comes in. When somebody says, I want to import parrot parks and it's your decision to deny it or accept it.

Why does the Department of Interior run the schools on the Indian reservations? Here I am the superintendent of schools of the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. Guaranteed to give one of the poorer educations in America, but that's the responsibility of the Secretary of Interior.

How did you, Jim Watt, learn about the degradation, the polluting of the streams and lakes in the national parks and why was it going on without a protest in 1980, 1981. And nobody doing anything about it? Fascinating questions.

Why were you the one, Jim Watt, to get the President of the United States to extend jurisdiction from our coastal areas out 200 miles? Why didn't the Secretary of State do that? Why did the Secretary of Interior? Why did you work and commit your USGS people to work with the CIA when the previous administration wouldn't allow it to happen? How did you resolve the fishing problems on the Great Lakes?

What did you do about alcoholism on the Indian reservations? These are a few of the issues, but the breadth is tremendous.

Some of you will want to talk about, as Patty already pointed out, my religious statements. I am a follower of Christ and I was asked in a hearing about that and I commented that we didn't know how soon before the Lord returned and this thing just blew up on us. We couldn't figure out what was going on. The five or six big environmentalist lobbyist groups in Washington just blew it out of proportion. How do you deal with it? It was such a personal brutal attack on a person's religion. In America. In the '80s.

I think what best put it in context with a news hearing over in Interior and one of the reporters asked the spokesman for Secretary Weinberger, "Does the Secretary of Defense Cap Weinberger believe like Watt in the return of Jesus Christ?" And the spokesman said, "Well, of course, all Christians believe that." The reporter was incredulous. He said, "Cap Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, is a Christian? I thought he was Episcopalian." Those people are interpreting Washington for you. That's how you get your image. I hope we get into some of those press issues.

I think it's important to set the stage. What we were addressing in the 1980s, as Reagan was elected and the Carter administration was leaving. The Cold War was at a new high. Nuclear weapons were aimed at every major city of the United States.

Our military forces had been depleted and degraded and there was a necessity to rebuild our strength in light of the forces of evil that were threatening our freedom. Reagan ran on that. It was a big issue in his campaign. President Carter had declared that America was in a malaise, unmanageable, couldn't deal with it. We had double-digit inflation, double-digit interest rates, high unemployment. We had an energy crisis that was – some of you weren't aware of it. The old people here may remember it. Sitting in lines, two and three miles long, to get gas because of the petroleum crisis. Yet, most of the energy yet to be developed in America will come from your lands. The federal lands.

We have enough coal in my home state of Wyoming to last for 100 years alone, if you don't count the Colorado and New Mexico coal. We have petroleum, oil and gas, the nuclear potential, the wind, the air, the water. All of these have to be developed. We're going, as a nation, to look at these federal lands, our lands, and they are going

to be developed. Period. Paragraph. They are going to be developed. Are they going to be developed with care and consideration and with wisdom? Or are we going to wait and hold the feds off until the rest of America says we're coming to get it and we'll take it, whatever, and they destroy our culture and our environment. Those are the issues we dealt with.

Sagebrush Rebellion

I want to read with some carefulness here because I want you to hear. Before I took the oath of office in January of 1981, every single governor of the Western states opposed vehemently, aggressively, the Department of Interior policies and the Carter administration's policies. And all of the governors were Democrats, except two who were elected in '78, because of the Carter administration policies, at least in part.

There was hostility brewing beyond measure, and it was called the Sagebrush Rebellion. In some of our communities, and we visited about this in several of the classes, in some of the communities at that time, the federal employees of the BLM and the Forest Service were not allowed to leave their offices in government trucks and cars by themselves for fear of their life. Because of the controversy. I kind of laugh when I get introduced as controversial and confrontational. Yet a federal employee could not go out in some counties for fear of losing his life because of the confrontation and the controversy that raged in those days.

Now, five states voted in the Sagebrush Rebellion to take over the BLM lands. Gov. Dick Lamm, Democrat of Colorado, did not declare himself to be a sagebrush rebel. In fact, he vetoed that bill that the Legislature passed to turn the lands, the BLM lands, over from the federal government to the state. He vetoed it and then he signed the bill appropriating funds to study solutions for the Sagebrush Rebellion – as did Gov. Babbitt in Arizona, as did Gov. Matheson in Utah, Gov. Herschler in Wyoming, all of them were Democrats.

There was hostility. Gov. Lamm — this is what I want to read with care because I want it to be heard correctly — never called himself a sagebrush rebel. He said in his 1978 keynote address at the first annual meeting of the Western Governors Policy Office, "We meet at a time when feelings of sectionalism and regionalism are at the

most intense of any time since the Civil War. In this, the second war between the states, the West appears to be the chief area under attack." Gov. Lamm helps us to make the point and helps us to understand, not since the Civil War, 120 years prior to my time, was there such hostility, controversy, confrontation and conflict with the states and the federal government.

Ronald Reagan was elected to change that. We never, of the Reagan team, never thought of these battles as environmental battles. There was the type of government we were going to have. I was given clear charges by the president. I was to bring about massive change in the way our federal lands and western waters were being managed so that all of Americans could benefit and enjoy them. All Americans. Not an elite group, but all Americans.

Two, I was to change the policies so that the federal government would be considered a good neighbor by the Western governors, state legislators, county commissioners, mayors and the users of the land.

Three, in addition, I was to significantly change the management rules so that there would be proper protection or reclamation of the park, refuge, the public lands, the wilderness areas, so that everybody could enjoy all of the benefits, including the clean water, energy, the minerals, recreation and the quietness of life.

Finally, I was charged with improving conditions of the American Indians living on the reservations.

It required massive change and I want to emphasize the word "massive." And whenever change is called upon, it brings controversy. Because the elite, privileged people of power don't want change. They like their position. We were commissioned to initiate a Reagan revolution. We weren't confronting anybody. We were responding to the election of 1980 when the American people said bring about massive change.

Water law

I brought a lot of change and one of them dealt with water rights. During previous years, the administration had changed 150 years of water law to make it read that all waters arising on federal land

belonged to the federal government and were under the federal government instead of the 150-year history that all waters are under state law as Gov. Lamm, Gov. Babbitt and Gov. Herschler, and so forth, all wanted it to be. I was challenged because the president had told these governors that we were going to make it like it was and undo what was done.

I was challenged by the selfish-interest groups that I hadn't negotiated with them before changing it back to what the president promised it would be. We changed it and we changed it quickly. We were able to do this because of the tremendous talent within the Department of the Interior. Dedicated, career employees. I never allowed any of our political appointments to criticize any of the career employees. They were dedicated, wonderful people.

We brought about the massive change. There was a big uproar about a lot of it and I'm reminded of the times that my sister Judith and my brother-in-law Gene, who have been married for over 50 years. We all come from ranching families in Wyoming and I spent the summers as a kid on the ranch working. One day I had loaded up the block salt on the wagon and we were going to take it up to the summer pastures and my uncle went to get the team of horses and he harnessed them and brought them back. He backed them up over the wagon tongue and we hitched them up to the doubletree. He jumped up on the seat and started rolling the wagon out, driving the team of horses. I heard the screen door slam and I looked around; I was on the back of the wagon. I saw my aunt come running out and the door slamming behind her. I paid attention as she jumped up on the seat, because they'd had a real spiff that day. I heard her say, "Ralph, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could pull together like this team of horses does?" And he looked at her, and I'm staring. He said, "Mabel, we could if there was one tongue between us." That's the problem I found. President Hoffman, have you ever found that to be a problem on the campus?

One tongue. That's the battleground. Where is integrity? It was a challenge, and it was so rewarding. I want to thank you again for causing me to focus, to see that we were able to put footprints on the pages of history and be pleased with the results that continued.

I was succeeded in office by President Reagan's close friend and adviser, Bill Clark. He was then followed by my best friend, my

number one guy while I was there and then became Secretary of Energy and then came back to Interior. When Don Hodel went in to see the president to get the promotion to move up to Secretary of Interior from Secretary of Energy, he wrote in the book celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Department of the Interior, "I asked President Reagan was it proper to presume that I was to proceed under the direction you gave James Watt." And the president said, "You are."

We are a hurting country, a hurting nation, because of selfishness and the lack of integrity. Integrity is the glue that holds us together, whether it's a Bruce Babbitt or a Gale Norton. Give them dignity and the future officeholders, give them some respect and treat them with integrity. They're doing their best.

He was then succeeded by Lujan, who will be with you next month. Lujan was our number one guy in the House of Representatives that worked with us and I was delighted at his appointment. It's fun to see that that legacy is there. We've been favored and blessed by the passage of time, these 23 years, to look back and see the tremendous progress that continues to go on because we had the courage to make those massive changes. But they need to be challenged and they need to be questioned and let's see if we can't speak with one tongue on it now that I've been able to go at it too long, but I've enjoyed it. Thanks for the time I've had on campus, I've enjoyed it. The faculty particularly, the diversity was rich. I really enjoyed the time. The students were fun to be with. I was impressed.

Feel free to come at these issues. These are tough issues. Decisions last for generations and are important to all of us because it's our land. And we all have a right to it.

CW: Well, we've enjoyed your comments too, Mr. Secretary. We'd be interested in having you comment a little more on this. You, I think, accurately described the kind of conflict that existed when you came to really the most important office in the West in 1981. You said, I think I understood you, that you felt and the administration felt that you were working against powerful interests. A person could say that one reason for the conflict was that the Carter administration was responding to new imperatives for preservation, for environmental protection. And that the opposition from the

West, in fact, came from the powerful interests: the timber companies, the water developers, the energy companies, the large ranches, and that the real power was on your side.

JW: We didn't feel that way. The statement can be true that you've made. But the list is not complete. The Carter administration was also opposed by the governors, the state legislators, the county commissioners, the mayors of the cities and towns. Because the people hadn't been brought into the discussion as everything was moved to Washington for decision. The basic battle over this wasn't the environment. It was who's going to make the decisions that are going to be made on resource allocation? Central powers in Washington, D.C., subject to the selfish-interest groups of all dimensions, or are the decisions going to be made collectively with the federal, state, county and city levels with people involved at every level?

Reagan was a federalist. He believed in the role of governors – as did Gov. Lamm, Gov. Herschler, and all these people. But they were denied in the Carter administration, and that's why all these governors opposed it so aggressively.

You make a valuable point that we need to underline and that is whoever is serving as Secretary of the Interior is pounded by the powerful interest groups of — and fill in all the names that you've used, plus a bunch more. It is tough. Good statement.

PL: ... (What you are saying is that) local people were being shut out of the decisions and they had to be included. Isn't that at some risk of romanticizing local wisdom? That local people will be able to rise and think in longer units of time and imagine something besides than the interest of the moment? Which is no better or worse than the romance of centralized expertise.

JW: The pendulum swings too far. It goes back and forth. Through the ages of history you see this continuing battle, back and forth, and frankly we found ... that in many instances, the states weren't prepared or capable of doing what we wanted them to do. There was a — I was going to say crippled but that's not the right word — There was an incapacity, an inability of the state governments to respond. We had to give block grants to the states to do what they

should have been doing. So some things weren't done right. There will be an ebb and flow as time goes, it was just too extreme.

It's kind of pleasing as I've met with several professors to learn that in their different disciplines that most of the harsh swings that we brought are still basically in place. I was encouraged with what I learned from the professors here on campus about that.

Yes, we always need to be vigilant; power is an all-consuming thing. It can go either way too far really easy. There was a need to centralize that stuff. It's the balance that you're always in. My pitch always is: reasonable people can bring about a balance, selfish interests can't. Your point's a good one.

PL: You didn't go very far down the privatization road and you certainly didn't go anywhere down the return-it-to-the-states road. ... You said you were a Sagebrush Rebel. You used that phrase and the president also used that phrase for himself, but then you didn't do the key thing that was to get federal land out of federal holdings and get it back to the states and individuals. Could you tell us about that?

JW: That deserves some development. The Nevada Legislature and the other four states were asking that the BLM lands — and my dear state of Wyoming not only wanted the BLM lands they wanted the Forest Service lands, too — to go back under state control and management. Gov. Lamm and Gov. Babbitt vetoed their state Legislatures. Had I been their adviser, I would have said, "Veto it." My interests on this was very selfish.

The states of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, etc., can't afford to manage these lands; 50 percent of Wyoming, 50 percent of California is in federal ownership, and we don't have the money in our little tax base to manage these lands the way we ought to. For selfish reasons we want to keep the subsidies of the federal government taking care of our lands. I felt it was a misdirected policy, as did Gov. Lamm and Gov. Babbitt. As did Gov. Reagan, President-elect and then President Reagan, so my orders were "Jim, be a good neighbor."

I met with the governors in September 1981. It was kind of a delightful experience. I went into the room with all of the governors

in Jackson Hole, now my home, and I said, "Whatever you guys want, you get. We were going to be good neighbors." They didn't know how to handle that. They had been fighting so long. They couldn't cope with a Secretary of the Interior who said, "Take it."

PL: By which you meant?

JW: Take back control of the water law. We're going to give that back where it should be. It should never have been taken from you. Gov. Lamm was delighted. If I go into too much detail, cut me off. The Carter administration had adopted regulations for reclaiming surface mine lands. They hired a guy that was a professional guy from Pennsylvania who had done a great job in the state of Pennsylvania putting in the regulations and they said come and do it federally. So he became the chief guru on that and did it. All of our governors of the West were violently upset. Because there was this uniform standard as if everything should be done as it was done in Pennsylvania. I don't know the waterfall in Pennsylvania but it's a lot more than 11 to 17 inches, like we get in the antelope country of Wyoming. We couldn't sustain Kentucky bluegrass and oak trees and maple trees in the prairies of Wyoming, and the requirements of the Carter administration said the mine lands shall be returned to the same contours of the lands before they were mined.

The West Virginia governor came to me and said, "Mr. Secretary, this is killing us. We want to improve the conditions of West Virginia. We need flat land for a hospital. We need flat land for a school, a ball field, a football field, a soccer field. For housing developments and yet, your Department of Interior is making the mining companies contour the land as it was before the mining took place." That's stupid. Patty doesn't like me to use the word "stupid" but some things are just stupid. I said, "We'll do that." And the governor said, "You will?" No fight. I didn't need to negotiate with him. Of course. You can't expect oak trees to grow between Rock Springs and Rawlins. That's just not going to happen. I don't care how much water you deliver to it.

Then I was criticized, Charles, because these five or six major environmental groups said Watt has lowered the standards for mine land reclamation. Is that true or not? Well, it's cheaper to restore land with sagebrush and bunchgrass in Campbell County, Wyo.,

than it is to plant oak trees and maple trees. But I wasn't as worried as much about the cost as I was the restoration of the land. Did the mining company make a little bit more money on it? I don't know. Probably. But it always felt so unfair that I would be subjected to the charge of lowering the environmental standards for reclamation of mine lands. Let me tell you that Gov. Lamm, Gov. Babbitt, Gov. Herschler, etc., cheered with enthusiasm that the federal government would recognize that maybe there isn't 40 inches of rain on the lands in Campbell County and outside of Rock Springs that would sustain the requirements that the then-Carter administration were requiring. The governors were ecstatic. We didn't have to negotiate it.

We didn't call in the special interest groups in Washington, D.C. and get their advice and counsel. We just did it and worked with the governors doing it.

The Wilderness Act

CW: The Wilderness Act was passed in 1964. It left the wilderness areas open for 20 years for mineral leasing and entry for hardrock discoveries. In '81, you put forth a proposal that there should be some leases in three wilderness areas in Montana. The Bob Marshall, the Scapegoat and the Great Bear. Speaking of going into detail, a set of conflicts that we don't want to go into because it is too detailed maybe but the proposal did not go forward. Later you made a proposal which was interesting. I'm not sure it was a formal proposal but it was an idea you had. That at the turn of the century we should by then know more about our wilderness areas and see if there are some places that we should do some mineral leasing. Looking back on your proposal in '81, how do you feel about that now? And now that we're in the new century, how do you feel about mineral leasing in wilderness areas today?

JW: Good presentation of facts, very good. Mixed emotions as I look back. I was maybe misled a little bit. I thought when you took the oath of office to enforce the law, you ought to enforce the law. And I proceeded to do that as you've outlined. There was just a 20-year open window to explore and inventory the mineral resources in these lands that had been properly and rightfully designated for wilderness, which we supported and time was running out. Because of the Cold War and those problems, I thought we needed to follow

the law of the land and inventory the issue. The lands. That was a hot-button issue. The law was disregarded by the members of Congress and the special-interest groups and, boy, it was a hot issue. We had to make some compromises to get through that. We just turned our back on what the law said. So today, we don't know. We don't have an inventory. We have no knowledge of what potential might be in these hundreds of millions of acres. That's a fault and could be extremely detrimental, but the politics of it made it impossible.

On the wilderness issue itself, I was pleased to know that in my three years I supported and proposed to the United States Congress more acreage for adoption into the wilderness system than the Carter administration had put in for four years. We support the concept of preserving in its natural state certain segments of our nation. The high-altitude wilderness areas. I think we ought to take wetlands. I think don't think we take wetlands as seriously as we should. That's delicate ecosystem that I think we don't protect well enough. I couldn't get through the selfish interest groups on that, either, though we tried with the Wetlands Restoration Act. We need to preserve some of these areas in their natural state and that's why I proposed to Congress that more acreage be put into the wilderness system than the Carter administration had done in their full four years. A little-known fact but still a fact.

CW: But Alaska's in the United States and the Carter administration had the largest wilderness set aside in history with the Alaska Lands Bill.

JW: They shuffled lands around between the different agencies. They didn't add it to the wilderness system. It was already there. They shifted it from refuge to BLM and it was a shuffle. They weren't added to the system. In the acreage there. That's the way they defined it. The Alaska Lands Act -

CW: No, I think it was new wilderness. Those acres were just not moved from agency to agency.

JW: Well, they were moved from agency to agency but you're saying in addition there might be new wilderness.

CW: Right.

JW: It doesn't show up in the — maybe, I need to back off. Maybe I am talking about the lower 48. I ought to look at my chart. Maybe you're right. I guess I am talking about the lower 48. I think I stand corrected. In the lower 48, I did more than. Thanks for pushing me on that. It was in the lower 48, I did more and Alaska had its own unique handling in the late fall of 1980, didn't it?

CW: Yes.

JW: Thanks for pushing me because you're right. In the lower 48, I did more than the Carter Administration. Thank you.

PL: Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard James Watt thank an opponent for pushing him.

JW: Don't be divisive. He's not an opponent. I didn't sense any opposition. Did you feel anger in your heart?

CW: No.

PL: Well, then I'll be oppositional for a moment or two here –

JW: Now remember –

PL: The question about energy vulnerability and the United States' dependence on foreign energy supplies, oil imports. ... your energy policy would have a duration if the development went on full speed 20 years ago, where would we be now? ...

I have one other question. Traveling around the developing Front Range in our Volvo, you and I have shared commentary about the scale of houses. You've talked about Jackson and the wealthy coming in and their big houses. It seems to me that you have a pretty high sensitivity toward waste. Toward profligate use of resources. So, to (what) degree do we keep our energy production high in order to keep people into these odd habits or maybe even amenable habits? ...

JW: Your question frames the issue properly and fairly. Our Reagan policies did accelerate the depletion of the resources and so we did everything we could to draw down the petroleum resources as best

we could in an accelerated rate which does have long-term consequences. But in the long run, we're all going to be dead.

PL: That's not quite posterity's position on that.

JW: You have to live through the short term. And at that time when we came in, roughly half of our petroleum needs were being supplied by the Persian Gulf Arab nations. The most volatile, explosive area in the world. And they'd already really hammered us hard in '73 and '78 with cutting back delivery of petroleum because we supported the nation of Israel. We were vulnerable and were easily damaged and hurt. We had to shift to get through the short term and we shifted by trying to increase domestic production, off-shore production. We shifted and brought in much more oil from Venezuela and Mexico, and fortuitously, the North Sea came in the end of the '70s and we were able to bring that in. We shifted our dependence from the Persian Gulf areas and were able to meet that short-term gap.

What about the long term? The long term has not yet been addressed and has got to be addressed, 25 years, 20 years later. It has not been addressed adequately. The facts continue to be that we must increase conservation. We must increase renewable energy resources, wind, water and solar. We must continue coal mining on private and federal lands. We must drill for oil and gas on public and private lands, and we must bring about nuclear development in the foreseeable future. If we do not, we will starve our people from energy requirements in the military, commercial, industrial and consumer levels. And we cannot do that if we are going to be a strong and free nation.

Your first responsibility as a governing administration is to protect the safety and welfare and the security of people, and that's why we were willing to accelerate the depletion that has long-term impacts and hopefully America will move in conservation and development of these multi-purposes to meet our needs in the years ahead. We have not faced up with integrity on that issue yet.

PL: The waste issue?

JW: The waste issue. There's too much of it. We're a wasteful nation, so it's contrary to our ethic of conservation. We need to conserve.

CW: You had some difficult siting-issue proposals come before you, and one of them was to put an open-pit coal mine near Bryce Canyon National Park. Not in it, but near it. Another was to put a nuclear waste disposal facility right at the mouth of Lavender and Davis canyons over in Canyonlands National Park, but again a bit away from the border. What are your thoughts on those?

JW: Difficult issues, because Congress has said that the public lands of the BLM are to be managed for multiple purpose uses. Somebody asked me about selling park lands. That came out in the paper today and we need to address that. These borders mean something because Congress says you may not sell, touch or dispose of any national park lands. You are to take care of the public lands for multiple use, for surface mining, mining pits, for the multiple uses there, and the boundaries mean something.

Nuclear Waste

There's a legal right there and I have to smile at the hypocrisy of the American people with regard to nuclear wastes. ... For several decades have we been trying to find a place to locate nuclear waste. Every group opposes it. Well, not every group but a lot of these selfish groups oppose it. Therefore, the nuclear wastes of America are located where? All around in the big cities. All around us, where the people are. That is the stupidest decision I can imagine. We ought to get that nuclear waste and put it some safe place.

We've tried several locations and ... the previous administration designated the mountain in Nevada as a location. There's a lot of places where it can be safely stored. But it ought to be moved away from populations. Now because of the opposition, we're paralyzed. The nuclear waste, friends, is resident with you. I think that's not good public policy. Because of the selfish interests, not in my back yard, you continue to live with it rather than shift it. I just think that's foolish. I think their position is indefensible. I think we need a nuclear waste depository, and pushed for it in several different locations and we were unsuccessful there because of what I call selfish-interest groups that don't concern — if it is a danger, that can be debated in the scientific community. But if it is a danger, it should be moved from the population centers to a — what's the name of the mountain?

PL: Yucca Mountain.

JW: Should be moved to a Yucca Mountain, literally or figuratively, and we don't allow it to be in the public policy arena. The issue that you raise, the Bryce Canyon. Frankly, I don't remember the specifics of it but let's handle the general issue. Boundaries are important. That's why we have them. If Congress says this is going to be a national park, that's what's to be a national park. You've taken an oath of office to protect it in the most strenuous way you can. Then people say, "Well, I need a buffer." Then they say on our flat land in Wyoming, "Well, gee, I can see," and they want a visual buffer. That gets into a real interesting legal area. How much land can you take without paying for it under the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States?

On a general issue, and I'm not responding to that specific one because I don't seem to remember it, I would follow the law of the land. If there's to be an open-pit mine and Congress has said that, there's a right to do it and we need whatever is going to be mined, coal or whatever. There are legal rights established by the Congress and I think the Secretary of Interior has a duty and obligation to do what he swore to do. If it's not right, Congress has the right to change it. But to put yourself above the dictates of Congress, is autocratic, authoritative positions that a federalist like myself couldn't live with. Have I responded to that?

CW: Yes, you have. Your point on borders is important. It needs to be said, too, that you're very proud of your record on the national parks and rightly so, of increasing the funding really in a historic way. But let me just see how you react to this on the borders issue. Let's take two examples. Suppose that that open-pit mine, and they are noisy operations, and suppose that really for people in the national park that there really was a constant noise that they were hearing during their hike, or out with their kids, or picnicking or whatever they were doing. Then to take another example, the Grand Canyon and the visibility problems that we've had there, largely because of coal-fired power plants that are beyond the boundaries. How do you think those issues through?

JW: They need to be addressed. In the first instance where you've got an obnoxious, offensive violation of park values it needs to be

addressed and Congress should include it in the park. Buy them out. Some years ago, I don't keep up with these things but – that very issue was presented in a gold mine in Montana and the government came in and bought them out, did they not? Bought the present-day value of future gold mining activities were paid and they terminated that gold mine for that value. That's the way to do it under market conditions. I don't know who to give credit for that, maybe Babbitt, but it was the wise way to do it. Under market conditions.

CW: Clinton took the credit.

JW: I tend to give secretaries credit. I'd give Bruce credit. That's the way to do that. If this Bryce Canyon thing is offensive, go in and buy out the interest. It puts it to the market test. The people benefiting from the action should pay for it. If it's the national park that's the 275 million people, they should pay for it. There is a remedy and it needs to be addressed in that way instead of rules and regulations taking away your private property rights. Was there another dimension on that?

CW: I asked about the Grand Canyon visibility.

JW: Those are interesting issues. I was criticized because I allowed commercial airplanes to fly over the Grand Canyon and it violated some hikers' right that they wanted to be able to hike down the Grand Canyon and not see a jet trail going across. Well, surely there's a boundary somewhere. Do you want electricity or not?

The most offensive thing to me, and this is very personal to me, I have a tremendous reaction to automobile exhaust but I'm not asking the government to buy up all the automobiles and make you walk home tonight in this cold snow. I have to adjust for the common good of everybody so that if electricity is needed from a coal-fired plant that is meeting standards, if the standards are judged to be right, we just have to accommodate them. We live in a community. We have to tolerate one another whether we like it or not.

A society is of civil behavior and we don't see enough civility. It needs to be addressed that way and we need to accommodate some things. You don't have the right to expect every commercial plane

to shut down whenever you want to go on a hike, or if there's noise that's offensive, you might need to wear earplugs. Because we can't accommodate everybody's selfish interests.

PL: You were a pro-development kind of secretary? Were you not?

JW: Not as much as Secretary Udall was. I feel badly about that.

PL: He left you in the dust, did he?

JW: Every Secretary, if he takes his oath seriously, does develop and does preserve. And thank you for correcting me, I added more to the wilderness system of the lower 48 than did my predecessor in four years, I did it in three. Does that make me a preservationist? Because I beat the Carter administration? I added more - I wrote this letter and the newspaper picked it up today. In 1982 or '83, I added more land to the national park and wildlife refuge system than has been added to the federal estate since 1867, when we bought Alaska. Think of that. Now does that make me a preservationist or a pro-developer?

In that one year, we added more — I'm repeating because I'd like somebody to hear this — I added more to the national parks system and the national wildlife refuge system than had been added in any other single year, greater than the Carter administration, greater than the Johnson administration, greater than Teddy Roosevelt's administration, greater than the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration, greater than Stewart Udall. You have to go back to 1867 when we acquired Seward's Folly, the great state of Alaska, and then we added more to the federal estate. Does that make me a preservationist? Why don't you accuse me of being a preservationist? I presented the facts. Those are facts. I did more than Secretary Udall. Come on. Accuse me of being a preservationist.

PL: I'd like you to say a little bit about your putting people back into the equation. Your thoughts about conservationism, and -

JW: As you'll see in the letter that's been handed out to you, I told President Reagan that we'd been so powerfully successful because we put people in the environmental equation. We pumped more money into the national park system than had been put in ever for

capital investment. Because the parks are preserved for people and the people portion had been ignored. We rebuilt roads and we did things to benefit people and in doing that you preserve the resource base. We are trampling our national park system and refuge system with just too many visitations.

If you don't keep the people on the boardwalks in Yellowstone, they fall in geyser holes and ruin our system, not to mention the meat falls off the bones — so I built boardwalks and was accused from some selfish interests that, "well, you're not investing in the land." I'm investing for people.

I leased more oil lands, twice as much as the Carter administration. On shore, I think, three-and-a-half times. Offshore, my figures might be wrong there but the magnitude is about right. I tried to lease more coal than anybody else, but Stewart Udall beat me there by a huge portion. I did that because I'm people-oriented. People need energy. People need electricity; you have to dig coal.

Always the core value that I had, and President Reagan had, was people are important and we're going to do what's right for the people of America under the constraints that the Congress sets out in the statutory thing. Thanks for letting me get to that.

Question and Answer:

Q. Mr. Secretary, what elements of the American environmental movement do you feel are productive and worthwhile?

A. I think that is a good question. We're a healthier nation today than we were in 1960 when Secretary Udall, my role model, commenced office, because we always need to have checks and balances. You should never trust government power. I never trust the government and that's why we have checks and balances in the American form of government. We need special-interest groups that will focus attention on science, not on just emotion, but on science that will help the government make good public policy. I think since the '60s we've had this conservation movement. I prefer to use the word conservation movement in the traditions of Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot because they defined conservationists as the proper conserving and use of the resources for the benefit of people. I think it has been very healthy and I can say with total

confidence that every type of land for which I was responsible, 750 million acres, was in better condition when I left than when I inherited it. That's because of these hosts of laws that have been passed and I think for the benefit of America.

I make this emphatic statement that every type of land was in better condition when I left after three years than it was when I inherited it, and I talked about the sewers and all the terrible stuff that wasn't attended to. For 12 years, we had a Republican administration and then Bruce Babbitt took over the Department of Interior and I have every confidence that when Bruce Babbitt is here, that he has the right to say that these same lands are in better condition when he left than when he inherited the responsibility, and it all goes back to this ethic that was put into statute that you were trying to make in your presentation, or John Whitaker did, that most were passed during the Nixon administration.

So this is not a partisan issue, Republican–Democrat. Too often it is framed that way, but the genesis of the EPA, the Wilderness Society, was Lyndon Johnson, wasn't it? Then in the '70s it was Richard Nixon and most of those laws came in under Republican administrations so it's unfair and unkind to label Republican and Democrat, but I think it's a valuable element of our society that has reason to take great credit for a lot of things.

Q. Would you suggest a change in how Interior is structured in order to bring a more consistent, long-term focus to our public lands?

A. Yes. I'm picking this up from one of the professors I enjoyed being with today. We talked about the role and integration of science and management and you'll want to pursue this with the Secretaries that have yet to be here. I think you need to get good, pure sciences integrated into the management stream, not isolated and put aside. I think BLM state directors need to have access to a scientist. I think the Fish and Wildlife Services ought to have scientists in the field, not in a centralized office. I think the management structure as I understood it from Professor Morgan, Ann Morgan, I thought she made a telling point and I certainly supported that. Put scientists shoulder-to-shoulder with line managers and you get better administration of the land. I realize that this past administration, what I learned today, had taken

another point of view and had taken all the science out and put it under USGS, is that right? I think that's a wrong decision so I'd reorganize the department that way.

PL: Would you move the Forest Service into Interior?

A. If I were Secretary, I wouldn't want to suffer the hassle.

Q. Mr. Secretary, please describe how you tried to improve conditions on the Indian reservations and what were your major accomplishments and major frustrations?

A. Good. Good question. I thank somebody for asking that. I'm going to rephrase the question. What was my greatest failure and disappointment in my three years? Reagan had commissioned me to address the American Indian reservation problems and they are huge. They are improving, I'm understanding from Charles and others. But they are huge problems. I was totally unsuccessful in getting the chairman of the House Interior Committee, Mo Udall, to even hold a hearing to address these generic problems. I could not get the Congress of the United States to even focus on them.

I received tremendous wrath because I dared to repeat what I had learned as I visited the Indian Reservations. By the way, I was the first Secretary of the Interior to visit the largest Indian reservation in America, the Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona. As I went to these Indian reservations, the Indians taught me, the leadership taught me that socialism is a failure. I put it in my terminology and I said - this came from many chairmen, many tribes in the country - and I said, Are you telling me that I don't need to go to the Soviet Union to see the failures of socialism? I can go to an American Indian reservation?" And they said, "Yes, Mr. Secretary, you've got it. Help us get out of these circumstances. Help us."

I went ... back to Washington with that on my heart and couldn't even get the Congress of the United States to address the pathetic plight. I was a failure. Twenty years later, Congress still has not addressed the issues. Charles has been teaching me that some of the things that we did have had some incremental improvement. Is incremental a good word or would you say a huge improvement?

CW: I'd say both.

JW: We gave block grants to tribal governments to develop and things like that. You know if you're a bleeding-heart conservative like me you'd like to do something for them, and we didn't do anything.

Q. Mr. Secretary, given your stated beliefs on selfish-interest groups, how do you respond to Secretary Norton's belief that industry self-regulation is the best way to implement such acts such as clean air and clean water?

A. When I was in office I had a high, intense dislike of past Secretaries of Interior telling me what to do and I've faithfully honored the vow that I took never to give counsel or advice. I've been consistently faithful since and I'm not going to comment on what she might be doing.

Q. Mr. Secretary, my U.S. history textbook says that James Watt joined the Reagan Cabinet committed to dismantling much of the environmental regulation of the previous two decades. How do you think historians will write about you a hundred years from now?

A. Well, first of all, whoever wrote that book should be fired and destroyed for printing such a false statement. There are a lot of college textbooks that just have that kind of thing. We honored them. I added more wilderness system, I added more park lands. I added more refuge lands. I reclaimed the whole surface mining thing to the cheering applause of Gov. Babbitt and Gov. Lamm. I changed all of those things. The Bureau of Land Management became a respected entity. We defused the Sagebrush Rebellion like that. Because we cared. We were good neighbors and for anybody, was that a professor who wrote that? Not a CU professor, of course. Who wrote that?

PL: That's not discoverable.

JW: There's no protecting the family here, is there? That's despicable writing. I'm mad at the author of the textbook. That person lacks professional integrity because it's just not a true statement. Has that issue come across? That such an allegation is irresponsible. Look at the facts. The facts show that we didn't, we enhanced every type — every type of land in America is being managed better today

because of what we did. We didn't dismantle anything. I don't know how to handle that. President Hoffman, have you ever had a problem you didn't know how to handle?

Q. Mr. Secretary, at the very least, your administration was considered polarizing and controversial by some.

A. Yes. The losers of the 1980 election.

Q. You have referred to your opponents as special-interest groups. Did you ever engage with what you would consider reasonable opponents and how did you engage with them?

A. Yes. Whoever asked that question, thank you. I hope that it's come across that I'm hard-line against the high-paid Washington lobbyists of some of these four, five, six big groups, called environmentalist groups. I never found them constructive. I found tremendous cooperation with people in the states and in the regions and the local groups that had their eye on the resource. You can always reach a meaningful answer if your value is the resource rather than the political power position. I found a lot of people that were called opponents, I think the word is in your question, and they voted against Reagan probably, and they'd read the newspaper and hated me as I would if I believed the newspapers. Nobody's asked me about journalism yet. But once we could sit down with the values focused on the resources and not on the personalities and partisan politics, we made tremendous progress. Working with some of these local chapters was fabulously successful, but there I found people dedicated in the heart to the resource. And we had great success. It was the highly paid, chauffeur-driven lobbyists in Washington that made their money on agitation, and as you pointed out, I made a lot of money for these people. And they started driving chauffeur-driven limousines, bigger than my black car.

Q. Mr. Secretary, what's your position on the issue of privatization of our parks?

A. That should be the easiest question in the world to handle and if I've handled it once, I've handled it a thousand times and I can't penetrate. In the local newspaper, there's a quote about that very thing. I can't imagine the ignorance that prevails today.

That is a prohibition. I've never proposed it. No Secretary of Interior has ever proposed it. It cannot exist. I've added more lands to the park and wildlife refuge in one year than any other Secretary has added. I've never sold a single acre. And no other Secretary ever has either. That maliciously spread lie cannot be killed. Truth has no relevance. Integrity doesn't exist for those who repeat it or else they're lazier than –

PL: Most journalists, you're about to say.

JW: Well, this even wasn't a journalist. But that's inexcusable to proceed that way. Thanks for asking the question because for the umpteenth zillionth time I've had to address that mean-spirited – You're not supposed to say mean-spirited but how else do you categorize it? It's either mean-spirited or ignorant. I'm not sure which. I've been outspoken on this issue for 20 years and to have to face it again here in Boulder, Colorado, and it wasn't university people.

PL: Perhaps responding diplomatically might be an experiment to try the next time.

JW: I've tried that for years. And money drives. I've tried that over and over again and I don't know how to beat it. Sometimes you get tired of taking it on the chin. Such irresponsibility – I guess I could say the source of that quote must be misinformed.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in your opinion did the Eastern-based news media understand Western issues during your tenure? What media did the best job?

A. Thanks for a journalism question. I meant to pursue this with the journalism class. I'm called the most controversial, and the big conflict and was introduced that way. I wonder if it's, for the journalists here, I wonder if this is another instance where news flows east to west in America, never west to east.

The biggest conflict with these issues was the Sagebrush Rebellion and the opposition of all the Democrats to the Democrat administration as evidenced by Gov. Lamm's comment and that didn't get picked up. Why? I was not the most controversial — our period in the department has not been the most controversial time.

Gov. Lamm, it was in the late '70s during the Carter administration and he's correct.

There wasn't a lot of money poured in to demean and degrade the previous administration. There were millions and millions of dollars to degrade our administration by these special interest groups spreading lies like I'm selling the parks.

So yes, the Eastern media dominated and really you saw an image of Jim Watt painted by only five or six writers. The AP, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, wire services spread it out and it's printed in the Post and the Rocky Mountain News so you're seeing an image of a government official through the eyes of four or five people that may or may not have their agenda.

We don't seem successful in forcing news from the West to the East. It's a frustration but the facts are quite evident. I loved quoting Gov. Lamm on it. I found him a delightful guy to work with and totally supportive of everything I did here in the state of Colorado. We had a good working relationship.

Q. Mr. Secretary, a two-part question: One of them is: If you had it to do again, what would you do differently; and then what is your favorite recreational activity on public lands?

A. That changes from year to year. I'm into canoeing now on flat water. I have my canoe and I go out to the Oxbow in Grand Teton National Park, my favorite park. I was telling earlier this morning, I'm not politically correct on most things. I was coached and told when you go into these beautiful parks, never tell which one's your favorite. We all have struggled with trying to get the truth out and the enemies of truth are strong. All of us who serve in public office experience abuse that shouldn't be leveled on anybody willing to serve in the public arena.

Patty hasn't shown you a fraction of the cartoons and the writings. And America will not be free if we avoid freedom, and freedom is based upon integrity. And there's not a lot of integrity in the public arena now, as I've talked about selling park lands. It's inexcusable and it's not ignorance. But what's at stake is our very liberty and our freedom and the type of government that we're going to have. I spoke to the group before supper and we did about, I understand, a

three-hour filming for oral history at the Nature Conservancy today. Molly came up to me afterwards and complimented me on the free-flowing exchange that we had, and it was great. She said, "I've just loved hearing this. It was so inspiring. I've heard the four of you and it was just thrilling to see that each of you" – and that's Udall, Hickel, John Whitaker for Morton and myself – "have spoken with such commitment of loyalty and dedication to America" that it had inspired Molly. I was so satisfied. I didn't realize that that was going to come out. But I couldn't have received a higher compliment, Molly.

I hope that all of you sensed that. That all of us who are willing to take the oath of office do our best, and we are all confronted by interest groups that think we're not doing it quite right. But we shouldn't try to destroy the character of human beings. I hope that through this series put on by the Center of the American West, and I commend you two founders for doing what you're doing, and the university for supporting it. I hope that you can start building bridges and restore some of the reputation that this university has by those of us who have been treated as we have in the last many years by special-interest groups that don't see the grandeur and the greatness of America and the resource base that sustains us. For it belongs to no special selfish-interest group, but it belongs to all of us. And reasonable people can bring balance, selfish people can't. And if we're not willing to share and honor one another and show the dignity, the God-given dignity that we have, then we don't deserve the greatness of this country.

Thank you for what you folks are doing here at this university to try to pick up that spirit and make it happen. I ask God's blessings on the university to do that because it needs to be done. We are a hurting country, a hurting nation, because of selfishness and the lack of integrity. Integrity is the glue that holds us together, whether it's a Bruce Babbitt or a Gale Norton. Give them dignity and the future officeholders, give them some respect and treat them with integrity. They're doing their best. Thank you.