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INTRODUCTION

The Regional History Project conducted five interviews with the late Charles Dick during April, 1977, as part of its oral history series documenting the agricultural history of Santa Cruz County. Due to a lack of funds for transcribing and editing at the time, the tape-recordings were laid aside for a number of years. Thus this volume, *Charles Dick: Agricultural Regulation in Santa Cruz, 1930-1967* is published posthumously. Dick died in Santa Cruz on January 4, 1993. Although the volume's primary focus is Dick's career as Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner and his forty years in the field of agricultural regulation, he begins his narration with his family history and a picture of Watsonville at the turn of the century.

Dick's father emigrated to America from Germany around 1893 and found his way to California in 1899. He traveled around the state until he hired on at a ranch in Castroville, where he met his future wife who was descended from an early *Californio* (Spanish) family and a Scotch-Irish father. Charles Dick was born in 1907 in Salinas, and moved to Watsonville as an infant, where his father was a farmer until about 1917. Interestingly enough, he found farming distasteful as a child and young man and never considered following in his father's footsteps. Dick attended Watsonville Elementary School, the Beach School, and graduated from Watsonville High School in 1923. He drifted for awhile after high school, did manual labor, worked for the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* as a pressman

and stereotyper, and briefly as a sportswriter, played a bit of semi-professional baseball, and sold Christmas trees.

For several years he worked during the fall harvest months as a shipping point inspector for the California Department of Agriculture. In 1930 Dick began work for the Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner's office, where he started as an inspector. Originally he got into regulatory work simply because it was an available job during the Depression. He soon found that he enjoyed studying for the series of examinations in the agricultural sciences required of inspectors and administrators in the agricultural commissioner's office. Aside from his high school education, he was entirely self-taught. Sitting for a series of examinations, he worked his way up to deputy commissioner, and was appointed agricultural commissioner by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors from 1939 to 1945. In 1945 he was appointed Chief Deputy to the Director of the California State Department of Food and Agriculture where he worked until his retirement in 1967.

In his narration, Dick traces the history of agricultural inspection and regulation at both the state and county levels and explains how California's unique network of county agricultural commissioners originated in the 1880s. The county agricultural commissioners established regional organizations, and cooperated in the development of crop standardization, nursery inspection, and pesticide regulation throughout the state.

Dick discusses the agricultural commissioners' many functions and compares their work with the county farm advisors of the University of California Agricultural Extension Service. Dick explains that while the UC farm advisors offer growers advice and consultation on plant varieties, cultivation methods and the most up-to-date growing technologies, the agricultural commissioners enforce laws governing standards, protect the public from substandard fruit and vegetables, oversee the use of chemicals and pesticides, produce annual reports and crop statistics, and assist growers in protecting against the spread of pest infestations.

Dick's overview of forty years of county agriculture includes his perspectives on the emerging importance of pesticide regulation, the increasing development of

farm mechanization, shifts in the crops grown, the use of labor contractors and farm labor unionization, and changes in the acreages of family farms in this region. His narration concludes with his thoughts on future trends in agriculture and the skills necessary to successful farming.

Unfortunately the Project did not have the benefit of Dick's own editing or corrections in preparing this manuscript for publication. The tape-recordings were transcribed verbatim, the transcript edited for clarity and continuity, and the text organized into chapters.

Copies of this manuscript are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; and in Special Collections, McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz. The Project is supported administratively by Alan Ritch, head, Collection Planning, and University Librarian Allan J. Dyson.

Randall Jarrell

March 12, 1997
Regional History Project
McHenry Library
University of California, Santa Cruz

Family History

Knaster: I'm going to start off with saying that this is Meri Knaster interviewing Mr. Charles Dick in Santa Cruz and today is April 7, 1977. We're probably going to have to repeat some of the information that you gave me the first time we met, simply because I didn't have that on tape at the time that I was taking notes.

Dick: Oh.

Knaster: Well, things like . . . when and where were you born?

Dick: Oh. I see. I was born January 5, 1907 in Salinas, California.

Knaster: Okay. And were your parents from Salinas?

Dick: Well, my father was from Germany originally. He came to this country when he was 17 years old. And my mother was born . . . near Castroville, in a little place they called Moro-Cojo. She was half California-Spanish and half Scotch-Irish. Her father was from New York.

Knaster: Do you know what led to your father's coming to the United States?

Dick: Yes, I do. He was sort of a rebellious spirit, you might say. He liked to wander; he didn't like discipline or a regimen of any sort, and so, when he was 17, he just announced to his father that he was leaving home. And coming to America. Well, of course, partly he wanted to avoid the conscription in the German army which was the law in those days. So his father gave him boat passage money, and an introduction to one of his relatives in West Virginia.

My father came over here and lived with them for a short while, and couldn't stand it any longer, so he went out on his own. He got up around Pittsburgh

where there were a lot of Germans, learned the sheet-metal trade, and later the baker's trade, and then joined the American army in the Spanish-American War because he didn't have to do that. When the war was over, he was at the Presidio of San Francisco, and he was too impatient to wait to be discharged, so he walked out of the United States Army and never did get an honorable discharge.

Of course they didn't want him very bad, so they didn't go after him. He was hiking down the railroad track as a hobo which is what they called them in those days . . . passing a ranch down near Castroville . . . and asked a farmer if he needed some help, and he did, and he ultimately met my mother there who was helping the cook at the ranch. So I guess that's the history of my ancestors . . . at least that far back.

Knaster: Did your father come from an agricultural part of Germany?

Dick: Well, he came from, from what is called the Rhinefaltz, between the Rhine River and Luxembourg . . . and it's a wine growing country; it's agricultural in that sense. His father was some sort of professional man. My father called him a lawyer, but they have in Germany a thing that's called a notary public, which is sort of a sub-lawyer. But nevertheless, his father had an office and a profession. But in his spare time, or as a sideline, he was a winemaker and owned some vineyards and bought grapes from other people, and made and sold wine. So I guess that was the agriculture there.

Knaster: So your father had some contact with knowing how to grow and everything?

Dick: Well, after he was married he either worked on farms or we lived on them, and ran a small farming operation for a good many years.

Knaster: Were you born on a farm?

Dick: No. I was born in town. And incidentally all the time I was going through high school, until I got into the county agricultural commissioner's office or the state agricultural department . . . I hated agriculture. I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I had hoed weeds as a kid, I'd fed chickens, I'd done things like that, and to me it was about as distasteful an occupation as there was. And I still don't think I would have enjoyed being a farmer. I just wasn't cut out to be a farmer.

Knaster: That's good that you recognized that.

Dick: But this thing was a job.

Knaster: Right.

Dick: And then it was a challenge because of the biological aspects of it. The things that I had to study and learn. I became interested in the biological sciences because they're so unpredictable. I've known some people that just couldn't stand them because they're unpredictable. But it's sort of a challenge trying to outguess nature and the weather and those things.

Knaster: So, did you spend your boyhood out in the country or did you spend most of that time in Salinas?

Dick: No. My folks moved to Watsonville when I was an infant. They had a very, very small piece of ground on Beach Road or down at what's is called . . . Camp Goodall, down on Beach Road at Watsonville. Later we lived for several years on our chicken and alfalfa ranch that my father operated for a man. Later

we moved into town again. So I don't suppose I spent more than eight or ten years of my life actually living on a farm.

Knaster: Do you remember what year your father arrived . . . near Castroville?

Dick: What year he came there? Well, it was at the close of the Spanish-American War, which would have been 1899 or 1900.

Knaster: And how many years before had he arrived in the States?

Dick: Well, I'd have to calculate that. He was born in 1876 and he came here when he was 17 years old . . . so what does that add up to?

Knaster: 1893.

Dick: All right . . . '93 . . . and then it was about '98 when he went into the American army.

Knaster: And then he came to California after that war?

Dick: Yes, yes.

Knaster: So he probably came here around the turn of the century?

Dick: Yes. He served in the Philippines. During the insurrection over there.

Knaster: That's interesting.

Dick: It followed the Spanish-American War, I believe.

Knaster: Where did you go to elementary and high school?

Dick: I had one year in Watsonville City Elementary School. And then, it's hard for me to calculate because I was one of these bright little kids that skipped

grades, you know. I was 12 1/2 years old when I was out of elementary school. But then I had, all except the last year of elementary school, in what was called the Beach School. It was located about halfway between Watsonville and the ocean and was one of those little schools where all the different grades were in one room. That way I would recite with my own grade, and then when the next higher grade was reciting, I would recite with them too, and so on. The teacher kept promoting me so that I gained a year and a half by promoting me up to higher grades because I knew their work as well as my own. But that was a disadvantage later when I went back to town, where the kids were better drilled in some of these things that my teachers had allowed me to skip.

Knaster: Oh, I see.

Dick: And so it was a little tough, but didn't matter. I made it. (Laughter) Then I went to Watsonville High School. I thought maybe I was going to be valedictorian. And when the word got out . . . somebody had been in the principal's office and had seen the records . . . why I purposely got bad grades for the next three or four months so I didn't have to be valedictorian.

Knaster: Why?

Dick: Because I was a bashful little kid, and if I were valedictorian, I would have had to make a speech. It wasn't that I didn't want the honor; it was that I just couldn't say my own name to anybody without blushing. And, oh, it would have been torture to me to have given a speech.

Knaster: What kind of children did you go to school with? I'm curious because your own background is so varied. I'm wondering if the other children were also of different ethnic backgrounds?

Dick: Well, yes they were. At Beach School there was one Portuguese family that I think had 5 children see, there were about 20 of us in there in the whole school. There were two sets of Japanese children, two or three apiece, so that more than half of them were either of Portuguese background, or Japanese. I just don't recall too much about the rest.

Knaster: Was English spoken in your home?

Dick: Oh yes. We had to be because my mother couldn't speak anything but English.

Knaster: Did she also speak Spanish?

Dick: No.

Knaster: She didn't speak Spanish?

Dick: No. She hardly knew a word of Spanish. Just, oh a few, a few words, but she didn't pronounce them correctly, and she couldn't compose sentences. See, because the same thing had occurred in her family. Her mother was California-Spanish, but her father was Scotch-Irish, so consequently there was no Spanish spoken except what little the mother would speak when she was speaking to some other California-Spanish person.

My earliest Spanish ancestor that I have record of came to Santa Cruz in 1797. Antonio Buelna. Then the next one I have was Antonio's son . . . José Joaquin Buelna. He was given a grant to Rancho Zayante, which ran from Felton clear up to—way up to the valley up there. In 1834, I believe, he got that grant. In 1839 he sold it for $800 because he was getting old, and he was afraid of the Indians, it wasn't safe to keep his family up there, and so on. His son was José Ramón

Buelna and he ran cattle. Ramón's daughter was Josefa María Buelna, who married McIntire. Now there's where the farming comes in. McIntire, that would be my mother's mother and father, had a large ranch down near Castroville that they called Moro Cojo and they farmed a great acreage there of grain and I don't know what else . . . beans. My grandmother, Josefa María Buelna, was illiterate and she used to do the bookkeeping for the ranch with a bag of beans. She would get her sack of beans out and put the beans on the table and move them like an abacus. Her kids were all going to school and everything with their pencils and grandma always had the right answer. Okay, that's about that, that was my Spanish ancestry.

Knaster: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Dick: Yes. I had . . . well, let's see, I had three sisters, and two brothers, but one sister and one brother died in infancy and one sister died when she was 10 or 11 years old. And my brother died when he was somewhere in his forties or thereabouts . . . and so I have one sister left.

Knaster: Did anybody go into agriculture?

Dick: No.

Knaster: Was it common for young children to die in those days?

Dick: Oh yes, the infant mortality was much higher in those days. Because people lived . . . oh, they were more isolated than they are now. And medical science hadn't advanced . . . if you read *Tortilla Flat* by Steinbeck, I believe that's the book in which the Mexican mother threw the beans out across the floor, and the little crawler kid runs over there and picks them out one at a time and eats them . . . and those things were not unusual. My mother knew nothing about

hygiene or diet or anything for kids. I ate beans . . . from the time I can remember what I could eat. (Laughter) And things like that. They weren't balanced meals, and . . . nowadays a family of six, every one of them grows up, it's nothing unusual. But in those days the infant mortality was pretty high.

Knaster: I guess maybe that's one of the reasons why people used to have many more children to begin with.

Dick: Well, they didn't know so much about birth control either.

Knaster: That's true also, yes.

Dick: I wasn't supposed to live. When I was a little kid, why . . . people would say, "Well poor Mrs. Dick; she'll never raise that skinny little kid . . ." And I turned out to be the healthiest one of the litter.

Knaster: Good for you . . . I'm also curious . . . since your parents were of two different ethnic backgrounds and there were other kids around who were from different ethnic backgrounds, was there ever any kind of discrimination that you remember? Either towards yourself or any of the other groups?

Dick: In my young life, there were no blacks. I mean, they just weren't around, so I didn't have any experience with blacks until I was grown up. There were Japanese kids, we liked them, we were friendly with them and everything . . . once in awhile that little streak of meanness that kids have . . . kids are cruel little people, you know . . . and we'd gang up on the Japanese kids and call them "skibbies" and things like that. But the next day we were loving them again. It was no different than you would have called your own brother some kind of a name while you were flexing your muscles, so to speak. There was one time that I was discriminated against, and that was in World War I because my father was

German. It was a terrible thing to be a German. In those days, they cut the German language out of the schools. They didn't teach it, or allow it to be taught, and that stuff. So there were times when the kids would throw rocks at me all the way home from school, including the Jap kids, because I was German. But those were little spasmodic things of kids' meanness.

Knaster: I had heard that there was an incredible amount of anti-German activity around World War I in this area. That there was one man they accused of harboring dynamite or something, that they would go and find the slightest little thing, anything written in German or any activity that was German, and pull people out of their homes practically.

Dick: Well, I don't know that it went that far. But it was a great deal more of that sort of feeling in World War I than there was in World War II. My father was the kind of man who never had any money because if he had money, he spent it, or gave it to somebody, or spent it in a saloon. He was a generous person, and when he'd get to town and get a few drinks on him, he got to shooting his mouth off. It used to worry us everytime he went to town when World War I was on, because somebody'd say something derogatory to him, you know, and he'd bounce right back if he'd had a couple of drinks in him. I don't recall that he ever got thrown in jail, but I know there's one or two times some of his lawyer friends had to talk pretty fast to keep him out of trouble.

Knaster: Did he speak with a German accent, do you remember?

Dick: I guess he spoke with a German accent, but very slight . . . it was such that most people mistook him for an Irishman. He had picked up enough American slang and he used low-brow language except one period he worked on this ranch and the man who owned it was a professor and the wife was an ex-school

teacher . . . she used great big two-bit words so to speak; then I found out my father could use very big words and very fine words, but he only did it on those occasions. He had that German characteristic of making his ‘v’s like ‘w’s . . . I mean, he didn’t pronounce a ‘w’ like a ‘v’, but if he pronounced a ‘v’ like a ‘w’.

Knaster: Yes.

Dick: He’d say, “This is wery good.” And outside of that there was very little German accent.

Knaster: I’ve been wondering . . . you told me about living on a ranch, that your father was managing for a college professor.

Dick: Yes, that’s the place.

Knaster: Mr. Ryder?

Dick: Ryder, yes. I think his name was R.W. Ryder.

Knaster: You were just a young boy at the time?

Dick: Yes. I was still going to this little country school, so I must have been less than 12 years old.

Knaster: I meant to ask you, when did you graduate from Watsonville High School?

Dick: 1923.

Knaster: Did you train for any field in particular? Did you emphasize any kind of study in high school?

Dick: No.

Knaster: The reason I ask is since you didn't go into agriculture, but you did become agricultural commissioner, I was wondering what led you in that direction? What kind of work experience you had that went into that direction?

Dick: Well, I'll tell you how I got there. That was . . . you wouldn't think it to see me now, but I was a bright kid. I had a high I.Q. I was one of Professor Terman's "termites." Do you know of Terman's studies . . . Professor [Lewis] Terman of Stanford University?

Knaster: No.

Dick: He made a study of gifted children. He originally started out trying to determine whether poor men's children were as smart as rich men's children, or something. So he selected from each school, two or three children. Let me tell you what happened. We were called one day into the study hall . . . all of the students who had a certain grade or higher, which meant that there were 40 or 50 of us. We were given tests and everybody was eliminated except me and one other fellow . . . his name was Donaldson Thornberg; he ultimately became editor of the western edition of *The Wall Street Journal.*

For a period of many weeks, we would be called in each day and given some sort of a test; it would be a test on history or mathematics or a test on this or that. It was in a sense an I.Q. test. And yet an awful lot of it was structured to show what you had read or learned as well as your aptitude or I.Q. I found out through one of my spies that worked in the principal's office that I got a 196 out of a possible 200. And Thornberg got a 194 out of a possible 200. Now I'm sure that wasn't a standard I.Q. test because that's too high for a I.Q. test.

And so, gee, we had great hopes. We thought we were going to get scholarships or something. But we didn't. It was just that Professor Terman had had this thing going all over the state. Well he's long since dead . . . but the staff and the studies continued all these years. They've kept writing me letters and checking on us. I've got one in there on my desk now where they're going to come and see me in the next few months, and find out how I'm doing. What I was trying to say was that I had a high I.Q. And I didn't know what I wanted to be. The principal of the school tried to talk me into majoring in math and he'd help me get through college and put me in charge of his math department. But I didn't want to be a teacher. So when I got through high school I just drifted. I went out and got on the end of a shovel and dug ditches . . .

Knaster: In this area?

Dick: Well, in the Watsonville area. I just did manual labor. Then a neighbor told me that he was leaving his job as a pressman and stereotyper at the Watsonville newspaper and that he would recommend me for it. I was a big, husky kid, I guess 18 or 19 years old. So I got the job in the newspaper office, and I ran the press, and I made the "cuts" as we called them, which was stereotyping. And then I was also the sportswriter for them.

So I continued that for two or three years. Finally one day the foreman, about 4:30 in the afternoon said, "Charlie, I want you to work tonight. I want to get all these cuts out; we want them tomorrow. You'll have to work a couple of hours overtime." I blew my stack and told him that I had a date for that night and that when he wanted me to work overtime, he should *ask* me to work overtime, not tell me to . . . nobody was going to push me around. So I rushed out in the back room and at about 15 minutes after 5:00 I had all the work done that he'd

wanted me to stay and work overtime for, and brought it in and threw it down in front of him, and said, “Here’s your damn cuts, and I’m resigning, I’m quitting.”

Knaster: What year was this?

Dick: That must have been ‘27 or so, along in there. And so I just quit and walked out. Well, I had played a little semi-pro baseball, and a little on the town team and was playing baseball over in Hollister on Sundays for about $7.50 a game, which was big stuff because my salary at the newspaper was $25 a week. To make $7.50 on Sunday was pretty good. You’d go over there and get drunk Saturday night and play baseball on Sunday. It was a nice deal.

First Job in Agricultural Inspection

Dick: So when I quit the newspaper in Watsonville, why the fellow who worked on the Hollister newspaper—I had helped him out one time by fixing something or showing him what was the matter with his press. They had the same make of newspaper press that we had. So he liked me. He was the sportswriter for the paper. He said, “Charlie, what are you going to do now?” I said, “I don’t know.” And so I went into the Christmas tree business, since it was Christmas. And my cousin and I went out and cut redwood trees and took them over to Hollister and sold them. And kept our bottle of whiskey in the back room. This newspaper guy came in and helped us drink it. And so I guess that’s when he said, “What’re you going to do?” He recommended that I go to a man named Beasley in Watsonville who was with the California Department of Agriculture, and they did the inspection service on fruits and vegetables. This fellow gave me a letter of recommendation. Well, I needed a job, and so I went there. And the

guy hired me and . . . that was only seasonal . . . I worked there a couple of seasons, and in between.

Knaster: What were the seasons, what months?

Dick: Well, it was during the fall months, during the harvest months, say August, September, October, and so on through there.

Knaster: And you worked alongside him? Mr. Beasley?

Dick: Well yes, under Mr. Beasley, who was in charge.

Knaster: What was his position?

Dick: Well he was the head of the local branch of the California State Department of Agriculture. It was an inspection office. It was what they called "shipping point inspection." The person would pay a fee to get his carload of produce inspected to make sure it met the U.S. grade. And then when he sold it on the market, say in New York or wherever it might be, he would say I have one car of U.S. No. 1 lettuce. Or a car of 84% No. 1. Or so on. And it was the certificate certifying to the quality of the product so that it could be used as a basis for the transaction. Because the man in New York who was buying it couldn't even see the carload of produce.

Knaster: And what was your function?

Dick: I was an inspector.

Knaster: So you would inspect the fruits and vegetables?

Dick: I would inspect the fruits and vegetables and write up the certificate describing it and then the secretary would type it up and I would sign it. And

then at the same time, we had some regulatory work in that we were enforcing what was then called the "Standard Apple Act" which required that apples meet a certain standard of quality before they could even be sold. The other people there were part policemen in a sense since we were enforcing a statute as far as apples were concerned. But we were rendering a certification service as far as other products were concerned.

Knaster: How many different kinds of crops did you have to check and certify?

Dick: Well, gosh there were hundreds that were on the lists, but there in Watsonville we only had a few. I had mainly lettuce and apples. I remember going to Hollister once to certify several carloads of garlic. There were carrots. But of course consider this on a statewide basis, it was any kind of crop that was grown. In fact one time I did issue a certificate on a carload of gladiolus bulbs. But it was pretty hard to write that up because they didn't have any standard grade set up for it. We just had to write it where it was sort of a descriptive certificate. Say that a certain percentage of them had this, and certain percentage were of this size, and all that stuff and describing it.

Knaster: How many people worked in this office?

Dick: Oh, in that office, I imagine there were six, or eight, or ten or twelve. I just don't recall now. It was a seasonal office. And then when the season was over, it would dwindle down to where they only kept the boss, Mr. Beasley, and maybe one other or two others, two of the prominent employees for things that would happen during the off-season.

Knaster: Was Mr. Beasley appointed to his job?

Dick: He was a civil servant; he was a state civil service employee.

Knaster: Do you think he took an examination to get his job?

Dick: Yes. There were several other people; some of them were transferred to Imperial Valley for the winter. The third class [of employee] like me had no civil service status. We were only seasonal or temporary employees. So I worked that way two seasons, and then . . .

Knaster: Was that just before the Depression?

Dick: Yes, just before the Depression. Because it was in 1930 that the Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner offered me my permanent job; it was in February, 1930 that I went to work there.

History of County Agricultural Commissioners in California

Knaster: Now had this office been in existence all along, or had it just started?

Dick: No. Now let me tell you about that. The best part of the story is the agricultural commissioner's side. California was a pioneer in agriculture regulatory work. Somewhere back in the years between 1881 and 1883, California began to enact the first laws regulating pest control and plant quarantine, and things of that nature. I think the Federal Plant Quarantine Act was enacted in 1912, and the California plant quarantine laws around 1883. So you can see how far we were ahead of the federal government even.

Well back in those early days, in the late 1880s or so, our state legislature under a state law set up boards of county horticultural commissioners. In each county that elected to have them, there were three horticultural commissioners—they were a board. These three men enforced the standards relating to San Jose scale, which got on fruit trees and another law that the grape vines had to be treated

for a disease caused by pests in the roots. They inspected plant material throughout the state to see that it was free of pests.

Sometime later, after the turn of the century there came a change. The horticultural commissioners very often employed an entomologist to do the work. Sometimes they did the work themselves and sometimes they employed . . . a technical person.

Well, sometime after the turn of the century, I don't recall the year, they created the office of county horticultural commissioner (singular) instead of this board of the three horticultural commissioners. And that was the antecedent to today's county agricultural commissioner. Some years later they just changed the name to agricultural commissioner. So that county agricultural commissioners were there in one form or another since before the turn of the century even though it was originally a three-man board.

Knaster: Yes. I was curious because the work that you were doing [as an inspector] was very similar to the responsibilities of the agricultural commissioner. And I was wondering if there was any relationship between the two?

Dick: Well . . . no. The work was in one sense dissimilar and in one sense similar. In other words, the certification of fruits and vegetables to produce a document from which a sale is made is not part of the traditional agricultural commissioner work. Now the enforcement of the Standard Apple Act was later turned over to the agricultural commissioner because that did belong to him. It was in 1915 or '17 or somewhere along in there that they passed the Standard Apple Act and passed several other standardization laws that regulated the quality of other fruits and vegetables. All these others were being done by the county

agricultural commissioner, but for some reason or other, the Standard Apple Act, because of the need for certificates for export shipments and so forth, had still resided with the California Department of Agriculture. That's why we had that sort of dual personality there in Mr. Beasley's office. But it was only a short time after that, a few years, that all the enforcement went over to the agricultural commissioner.

Knaster: When you were working under Mr. Beasley, did you run into any problems with giving out certificates to people? Were there protests from growers that they didn't like the way you handled the matter, or . . .

Dick: Well, certainly. There always were. I'll sort of take on the side of issuing the certificates. Since that was voluntary on the part of the shipper, he only asked you, see the cost I think the old rate used to be $5 a car, you know, a railroad car.

Knaster: For the certificate, you mean?

Dick: Yes. I don't know what it is now. Of course it's much more. But he would only ask for certificates on his lettuce when he thought he was going to get a good grade. Because a man would be very silly to pay $5 to get a certificate that said his lettuce wasn't very good.

Knaster: What did he do with the lettuce? If he didn't have a certificate for the other lettuce, was he able to sell it anyway?

Dick: Oh yes. See, there was lettuce that was high enough to pass the standardization laws, to pass the basic requirement, but not of high enough quality to bring a premium on the market. So if your lettuce wasn't of real superior quality, you were very foolish to send along with it a certificate saying it was of inferior quality. Although it's legal, it's the lowest level of legal lettuce.

Obviously they only want a certificate when they thought their stuff was going to make 85% U.S. No. 1 or better. If it was going to grade out at 50% U.S. No. 1, they weren't interested.

Then of course the market had something to do with when they wanted a certificate. If there was a lot of bad lettuce around or something, a buyer wouldn't buy a car unless he had a certificate showing that it was good. Where there was a lot of stuff on the market, why then the buyers would want a certificate so that they could get the best, because it was easy to get. If it was short on the market, they weren't so finicky about how good they got. So the result was that these people when they called you out and were obligated to pay $5 to grade their lettuce and issue a certificate, and then it didn't grade good, sometimes got a little angry. They were paying money to have their product blasphemed. That was one thing.

The other way that they'd get real angry was on the enforcement side under the Standard Apple Act. Later on in my work in the county agricultural commissioner's office by the time a packer or shipper had a whole carload of stuff packed and ready to go, he didn't like to be told that he was going to have to unpack it and regrade it and that it didn't meet the law. Then it was a difference of opinion, you know. He felt his opinion was just as good as yours and it may have been, if it'd been somebody else's produce, but when it was *his* produce, his opinion wasn't as good as yours because he was biased. I've had people threaten to throw me out and cut my throat and things like that.

Knaster: Really.

Dick: But, as you can see, my throat's never been cut.

Knaster: None of them did it? Was it a common practice among the growers to bribe state and county people? In one way or another?

Dick: No. In all my years the closest anyone ever came to offering me a bribe was a strawberry grower. I had rejected these strawberries out in the field, and he said, "Let these strawberries pass, and I'll be by your house tonight." Now I don't know what he intended to come by my house with . . . but I certainly didn't let them pass. I rushed right to the district attorney and told him about this. He said, "Well, he hasn't made you a specific offer of any kind, so therefore it couldn't be a bribe." But what I was trying to do was protect myself so that later on nobody could say this guy had worked on me or anything. Now that was the only experience I ever had, the only offer I ever had. Now of course I was one of those hard-nosed guys that some of the growers were afraid to send me a box of apples for Christmas because I might interpret it as a bribe.

But I never had a problem with any of my employees taking anything, even all of the time when I worked for the state we had inspectors in the field . . . who occasionally padded expense accounts, but didn't take bribes. You know a guy would charge a little more than he needed to.

There were two cases of corruption in all the time I worked for the state that came to our attention. They both had occurred in the southern part of the state. Of course we corrected them both. So I think the idea of public officials in California being corrupt is greatly overrated. I attended management courses fifteen years ago or so in Sacramento at which some of the professors who had written the textbooks told me that Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington were the least corrupt of all the states in the union. Probably because they were younger and more vigorous and hadn't fallen into the ways

of Illinois and some of those older states. But that the corruption in state government in the West was very much lesser than in the rest of the country.

One more thing that I do want to say now . . . this has nothing to do with bribes, but it is a fact of life. When I was agricultural commissioner, I had to rotate my inspectors every so often. I had to go out in the field and check their work every so often, that is, their standard, their idea of whether a head of lettuce was too much tip burn or not too much tip burn and things like that. The reason for that is familiarity. If you have an inspector working with the same shipper day after day, pretty soon you're calling each other "Joe" and pretty soon when this guy starts talking to the inspector, why his voice, his opinion carries weight . . . and it isn't bribery, the inspector's not knowingly doing something for this fellow, it's just that he's become friendly with him. Unknowingly he's giving this man certain advantages that somebody else is not getting. So I had to rotate them for that reason. The other one was the familiarity with the product.

Say they're out in the field inspecting lettuce. As the season's going on, the lettuce is getting a little bit worse, a little bit worse, and a little bit worse . . . and this inspector's working there, and he's seeing that every day. It's like a child growing up. He doesn't realize how much this has got worse. Of course he's also under the influence to some extent of the shipper who's saying, "Oh, this is good lettuce. This is still good." So the state did have their field man who would come into the district every week or so, and I'd put him out with my inspectors one at a time, you know, go out in the field and just have the inspector decide and say, "This is good, and this is bad," and all that . . . and have the state field man correct him and bring him up to the level where he should be. Or else I'd have to do it myself. The reason I was pure was because I was staying out of the fields so that I wasn't being influenced by this gradual change. Had I been working out

there as an inspector, I would have been just as vulnerable as they were. So that's nothing you can criticize them for as individuals, but it's just one of the reasons why inspectors have to be checked by an impartial or a pure person every so often.

Knaster: It sounds like a really good built-in mechanism to keep the system going.

Dick: Yes.

Knaster: So you said that around 1930 you started working in the agricultural commissioner's office?

Dick: Yes.

Knaster: How did that come about?

Dick: Well, it came about because I was working for Mr. Beasley on a seasonal basis, and the agricultural commissioner needed another man.

Knaster: An inspector?

Role of County Agricultural Commissioners

Dick: Yes. Somebody as a county agricultural inspector. He asked Mr. Beasley to recommend somebody and he recommended me. So then I went to work there. That was a field then where I had to start studying. Because in the first place, it's a very diversified field, and that's where I'm going to use my notes here for a moment just to give you an idea of what the county agricultural commissioner does. Before I do it, let me digress and make sure that you understand the

difference between the farm advisor or county extension office and the agricultural commissioner.

Knaster: Fine.

Dick: Because I think that's a very important distinction that many people don't understand. The agricultural extension service or county agent or county farm advisor . . . you may go by any of those names . . . is an employee of the University of California Extension Service. He works in the county under a contract between the University and the county. While it may be true, I think it's still true, at least in my days, the county put up, furnished, the office and the transportation, the office help and things like that. Then the technical employees, the experts, were provided by the University. The function of that office was to assist and advise agricultural people, farmers. In other words, teach them how to prune, or give demonstrations on this or that. Bring them the latest developments. But it had no authority under state law, no regulatory authority.

On the other hand, the county agricultural commissioner, as I have indicated, developed from this old three-man board of county horticultural commissioners. His office, everything the county agricultural commissioner does, all of his activities, are provided for by state law. With the exception that he can enforce or carry out a county ordinance that the board of supervisors may adopt. But everything that he does has got to be done under the sanction of state law. Some of those state laws are regulatory, where he enforces the law on other people; other state laws are merely enabling acts which say the county agricultural commissioner may do so and so; some of them are things required of him, that the county agricultural commissioner shall prepare an annual crop report, so forth. Now with that background, I want to just list generally the things that the

county agricultural commissioner has to do so you'll understand why I had to study, after I got there.

In fact before I start listing them again let me say how a county agricultural commissioner is qualified. The agricultural commissioner must pass an examination given by the California State Department of Agriculture or the State Director of Agriculture. He gets a certificate of eligibility then which is good for five years. And he must renew it.

Knaster: How is it renewed? By taking another examination?

Dick: By taking another examination. Unless he is an incumbent. If he's holding the job of county agricultural commissioner at the end of five years it's renewed automatically. I don't think that has been changed, at least it hadn't been changed up to a few years ago.

Knaster: How could he get the position to begin with? Would he be appointed, would he be voted in?

Dick: First, before he's even eligible, he has to have a certificate of eligibility. Then in those counties with county civil service he has to meet their civil service requirements because the office of the county agricultural commissioner was a lot older than the civil service systems of those counties. Now that most counties have a civil service system, he must also meet that. But before he can even meet that he has to have this state certificate. Then he is appointed by the board of supervisors in a county. Aside from this civil service protection, the state law says that once he's appointed, he's there for four years; and has to be reappointed every four years. The only way he can be removed during that four year period is for malfeasance or something of that nature. Now that's the

agricultural commissioner. The deputy agricultural commissioner also has to pass an examination in the whole field.

That's the way it was up until the time I retired ten years ago . . . the only difference between the agricultural commissioner and the deputy agricultural commissioner was the grade that they got in the oral examination. If he got 85 . . . let's see they took a written exam . . . and had to pass that by 70%. Then when they took the oral examination, if they graded 85 or better, they got a commissioner's certificate. And if they graded between 70 and 85, they got a deputy commissioner's certificate. Well, then the same thing applies to the length of the certificate . . . five years. But of course this deputy, he can keep going every year and trying to boost that score up to, so he's got a commissioner's certificate.

Knaster: Do you have to be a resident to qualify?

Dick: No.

Knaster: Or for a certain period of time? Can you just come into a county and decide to take the examination?

Dick: Yes.

Knaster: You don't have to know anything about the county?

Dick: No. Well, no you don't. But your chances of passing the examination are not very good if they start asking you about the crops of that county and this and that.

Knaster: Right.

Dick: But there's no requirement that you have to because this certificate, once you get it, is good any place in the state.

Knaster: I see.

Dick: But then when you come into the local civil service, I just don't know what they might ask you.

Knaster: Did you have to take an oath of any kind?

Dick: When you become agricultural commissioner, you take an oath and post a bond.

Knaster: How much do you have to post the bond for?

Dick: Oh golly, I don't remember now . . . it's so many years since I was an agricultural commissioner.

Knaster: What do you think the purpose of that was . . . to post a bond?

Dick: Oh, all county officers have to post a bond as far as I know. The county pays the premium . . . it just doesn't cost you anything.

Knaster: Oh, I see.

Dick: It just has to be posted with the county clerk, and I guess to keep you from absconding with the money, or something. I don't know what it is.

Knaster: Oh possibly, yes.

County Agricultural Inspectors

Dick: Well now then, see where I came in was at the inspector level so I'll tell you about that.

Knaster: Coming in as the inspector, did you have to take any examination?

Dick: Yes.

Knaster: You did? Okay.

Dick: Now, an inspector, he doesn't have to take an examination that covers the whole field like the commissioner does or the deputy commissioner. He can pass examinations in one subject like plant quarantine, pest control, or weed and rodent control, or such as that. And then you're allowed . . . see, when I came in, this was before they had county civil service so I don't know what the civil service allows now, but in those days we could hold a job for, I think it was six months without having been qualified by examination. So the way you did it was, you see, you came in and you worked and before six months was up, you had to pray that there would be an examination given and that you would have learned enough to pass it. So that's when I had to start to study. The things that the ag commissioner's office cover was this plant quarantine work, fruit and vegetable, and honey and egg standardization . . . that's meeting minimum standards of quality . . . rodent and weed control, seed inspection, apiary inspection . . . inspecting colonies of bees, beehives, and then they also gathered agricultural statistics. In later years a few years after I left the agricultural commissioner's office they had dumped on them the whole problem of regulating agricultural pest control operators as crop dusters and issuing permits

for the use of pesticides. So now that's a pretty broad field. So you see why little Charlie Dick, the country boy, finally had to just start studying.

Knaster: Well, how did you about doing that?

Dick: Well, I would buy a big jug of bootleg whiskey, which was the only kind that they had. I was a bachelor, and I had a little cottage over in Seabright. I'd spend, oh $8 to $10 for a textbook, which . . .

Knaster: That was a lot of money in those days for . . .

Dick: It was a lot of money because the salary was $150 a month. And then I'd just sit down there studying that textbook, and have a drink once in a while to keep from going bananas, you know . . . And when the pages got a little blurred, I closed the book up and went to bed. So I just did it the hard way. I studied botany and biology and etymology and plant pathology and so on all out of those books.

Knaster: All on your own?

Dick: On my own.

Knaster: Well, that's very admirable.

Dick: I passed various inspector's exams . . . I never did pass all of them until I took the commissioner's exam. And the time I took the commissioner's exam, on the written part of it, there were about 43 people that took it throughout the state. There were four that passed, and I was the highest in the written.

Knaster: Wonderful.

Dick: And that shows that that old bottle of whiskey and those books had done some good. (Laughter) So that's how I got my certificate finally. And 'cause I can learn more by reading . . . I've always had the ability to learn more by reading than by having somebody tell it to me, or show me. If I read it first and then go out and try to do it, I can do it pretty well. But if they show me and show me and I don't understand the "why" of it, I'm not so good.

Knaster: Well, after you take the examination, is there usually a lot of competition for the position?

Dick: Yes.

Knaster: And then the county, the board of supervisors has a hard time deciding whom to appoint or?

Dick: Oh, I'm not so sure they have a hard time, but there is certainly competition. In the first place, the competition will depend on the county . . . whether it pays well, or whether it doesn't pay well. Then the question of how diversified it is will affect the competition, because some people want the challenge of diversity; others are afraid of the challenge of diversity and want a county that is peculiar to the way they were brought up, or their background. And so there are various factors . . . of course the kind of competition you get is the same way. You have a lot of competition, but not only in the bigger counties is your competition people with good background and good experience. Because a little county like Santa Cruz, which in those days was paying $250 a month, didn't elicit as much competition as a big county, Fresno, or somebody else would, I don't remember how many I had. One reason was that I met, I was in the bar of the St. George . . . you'll think I must be an awful drunk. But I'm telling it like it was. I want to say now just in case anybody ever reads this, that there

was never once in my life that liquor interfered with my work, or my responsibilities.

Knaster: Oh, I'm sure not. Don't worry about that.

Dick: And yet on the other hand there's been hardly a day since I've grown up that I haven't had at least one drink . . . after work, you know, or something. So anyhow, one Sunday I was in the bar of the St. George Hotel when Lorraine Scott, who used to work on the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* was in there. And she said, "Well, Charlie, are you going after Frank Kellogg's job?" Well, see, Frank Kellogg was the agricultural commissioner. And I said, "Why I don't know what you're talking about?" "Well we just ran a story that he's been appointed agricultural commissioner of Ventura County." So that was the way I learned that was a vacancy while I was in a bar on a Sunday afternoon from a newspaper reporter. Well gee whiz, I . . .

Knaster: At this time, you were deputy?

Dick: At this time, I was deputy. And incidentally, I was the only person in Santa Cruz County that had the necessary certificate.

Knaster: Oh.

Dick: None of the other employees had it. And that's another thing . . . back there when you said supervisors might have a hard time making up their minds . . . they generally make up their minds to favor the local guy for the appointment. Unless the office is in bad condition. When it's in a bad condition, then they favor bringing in new blood to reinvigorate it.

Knaster: I see.

Dick: So, anyhow here I was, and now I have to get busy. So I couldn't do anything til Monday. And so Monday I went around to see each of the five members of the board of supervisors and tell them that Kellogg was leaving, that I was interested, and that I was the only person in the county that had the qualifications. Well, there's not much trouble. They all seemed favorable. But the thing that really set me on my heels was George Morgan who owned the Citizens Bank of Soquel . . . well, I don't know if he owned it, but he was the head guy in it. And he was chairman of the board . . . and he said, "Well, sure, I'm all for you." So when the board of supervisors got ready to meet, the day they were to have their meeting, I contacted George Morgan and said, "What time shall I be there?" He said, "I don't want you to be there, I'll handle it." He said, "'Go out and do your work." So here I was clear up in the mountains someplace poisoning squirrels when the board of supervisors was deciding my fate. I couldn't very well have showed up without antagonizing George Morgan. I certainly wanted to be there and present my case. I got the job and there were several other candidates. But that was an awful spot to put me in, to not allow me to be present even to present my case.

Knaster: Right. He obviously knew what was going on.

Dick: Well he knew, or he felt he could handle it, but I felt pretty shaky.

Knaster: So you were appointed in 1931, or was that still 1930 that you were talking about?

Dick: Well, let's see now how was this. I've got to get my dates straight. I went to work for the county in 1930 . . .

Knaster: That was as an inspector?

Dick: Yes. It was ‘39 by the time I was commissioner.

Knaster: So the in-between years you were deputy commissioner?

Dick: The in-between years, I was about five years as an inspector and two years as a deputy . . . now, let’s see, how does that make me come out?

Knaster: That makes it ‘37.

Dick: That makes it ‘37. Well, maybe I’m wrong about the number of years I was each, but I went to work for the county in 1930, and it was December, 1939, when I was appointed agricultural commissioner. So that’s how many years it took me to change from knowing nothing to being the head of the department.

Knaster: I’m curious if the members on the board of supervisors . . . are they usually growers themselves, or . . .

Dick: No.

Knaster: They’re not?

Dick: No. In fact during the time I was commissioner there was never a single grower on the board of supervisors. In fact there’re no farmers on the county board of supervisors now. Unless Cecil Smith may be, but I don’t think he is.

Knaster: I was curious because I wondered if having connections in the agriculture community would help someone to get appointed?

Dick: Some of the commissioners in other counties used to ask me, “Charlie, aren’t you in a bad spot there, having no farmers on your board of supervisors? I’ve got three farmers on my board and I can get what I want for my department.”

Knaster: Oh, I see.

Dick: I said, "No, I feel that I'm the lucky one, because by having no farmers on my board they accept me as the agricultural expert. Consequently they recognize agriculture as an important industry. Therefore I get all that I'm entitled to and I don't have them second-guessing me and breathing down my neck and telling me how to run the department. Whereas in these counties where you have two or three farmers on the board of supervisors, they feel they're the agricultural experts, and the commissioner has more problems.

Women in the Agricultural Regulatory Field

Knaster: Do you know if any women were ever appointed to this office?

Dick: Of county agricultural commissioner?

Knaster: Yes.

Dick: There has never been a woman agricultural commissioner, and I just can't say whether in my mind now, there are any women deputy commissioners or not . . . I don't know. But there have been some women inspectors.

Knaster: In Santa Cruz County?

Dick: No, not in Santa Cruz County.

Knaster: But in the state?

Dick: In the state. I don't know of any in Santa Cruz County. I doubt it.

Knaster: Do you think that there was a lack of interest on the part of women, or that they just couldn't possibly get the job if they . . .

Dick: Well there were quite a few things . . . first there was obvious discrimination that men and farmers and agricultural commissioners just didn't feel that women belonged there. At the time agriculture was a field that women weren't so interested in. Quite a few of them would study entomology or plant pathology and particularly botany . . . there were quite a few woman botanists . . . but they generally worked in universities or in laboratories and places like that; they weren't doing inspection which was law enforcement. So you were just about as likely to have a woman there as you were to have a woman highway patrolman, which . . . you know how long it's taken to get that.

Although I can recall back in the late '30s and early '40s . . . . during World War II, that Buck Saunders, the agricultural commissioner of San Benito County had a woman squirrel poisoner. She was young, about 30 years old, and she'd get on her horse and go out there with the squirrel poison, work with these farmers, and put up with them. She was all by herself; she'd be clear out there in the back country with the cowhands and farmers. Nobody ever got fresh with her that I heard of. She just knew how to conduct herself, and how to handle herself. She was a very fine rodent control inspector.

Then Los Angeles County, back in World War II, had several women nursery inspectors. I tried to encourage my people when I was in Sacramento [in the California Department of Agriculture] that that was one of the places we could get women into field work, inspecting nurseries. The women generally liked plants; they'd like that kind of work, examining them for pests and diseases. It's a clean environment, you know, not a rough neighborhood like getting on a packinghouse floor sometimes and fighting with people over the quality of their produce and all that. I'm digressing now, but in the state department of agriculture I had experience where I came into closer contact with the whole

question of discrimination and resistance to change. Some people just don't like to change. They couldn't get the idea that a woman could do certain of these jobs. There was discrimination against blacks—veterinarians there were mostly all graduates from Colorado. And I don't know why . . . they must have a very good veterinarian school there or something. They were a sort of clique. But if a black veterinarian came, who'd graduated from Tuscaloosa or some other place, they felt didn't have the quality, it wasn't as well accredited as Colorado or Davis or someplace. They'd figure all kinds of reasons why they couldn't hire them. I think most of it was discrimination because a lot of our people were southerners and they didn't like blacks being on an equal basis with them.

Tenure as Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner

Knaster: So you served here in the county as agricultural commissioner from 1939 to . . .

Dick: To 1945.

Knaster: 1945. And you didn't want to have the position renewed at that time? Isn't that how you said it worked? They appointed someone . . .

Dick: Well . . . no. I had been reappointed once, see. 'Cause I started in '39, I was reappointed in '43.

Knaster: Oh that's right, four years.

Dick: Well, there were two reasons why I quit, or why I left. One reason was I had someplace to go. The other reason was I got in a fight with the board of supervisors. I was always a little quick-tempered when I was young. By that time though I was getting over it pretty well. But the salary for all the county officers

in those days was $250 a month. That's what the district attorney got; that's what the agricultural commissioner got, that's what the sheriff got, and that's what they all got, with a couple of exceptions. The sealer of weights and measures got $175; the county purchasing agent I think got $200 or $225 or something like that. Well, the board of supervisors decided to raise the salaries. So they raised the salaries of all the county officers that were getting $250 up to $300, except the agricultural commissioner.

Knaster: What was their reason?

Dick: Well they raised it to $275. Of course, there was nothing for me to do except just go in there and tangle with them. So I got myself an appointment with the board of supervisors at the meeting and unfortunately my best friend on the board, who happened to be a personal friend besides being on the board, was Jim Maddock, who used to own San Lorenzo Lumber Company back in those days. Jim was in the hospital. So we had a three member board, or a four member board. So I went in there and told the board that I was there to complain . . . that the rest of the $250 department heads were getting raised to $300, and I was getting only to $275 . . . that must indicate that I wasn't doing my job. The chairman of the board, this same George Morgan that had appointed me one time you know, he said, "Well no Charlie, that's not it; you're doing a good job. In fact you're doing a better job than most of the department heads." So I said, "Why are they getting this extra money and I'm not?" And, "Well, they have to run for office. They were in an election. And you don't. You're appointed." I said, "Oh, so the board has adopted a new policy." They said, "What do you mean?" "Well, the policy of subsidizing the incumbents when they run for election." And, "Well, no, we're not doing . . ." I said, "Well, you sure are. You're giving the incumbents $25 a month extra so that when it comes

election time, they've got some money." Well it just shook them up. They had never thought of it that way. So we went round and round, and finally by a vote of 3-1, and George Morgan was the 1, by a vote of 3-1, they decided to give me $300. He wouldn't give in.

California State Department of Agriculture

Dick: Then I said, "Okay Charlie Dick, you'd work here; you'd do a good job; you've got a reputation of being one of the best department heads, putting in the cleanest budget of any of them. The only person whose budget doesn't get chewed up in the rat race over there and everything because you put in a honest one . . . and then they pull a stunt like this." So immediately right after that, I began to get offers. It was just pure coincidence. I got one offer from the American Farm Bureau Federation to go to Washington, D.C. and head up their fruit and vegetable department. I got another offer from the [state] director of agriculture to become a regional coordinator, they called it administrative assistant at that time; they've since changed the name . . . regional coordinator for the California Department of Agriculture in Los Angeles. So I weighed the two, and I said, "I'll take this state job." So when it came the first of July, I said, "Here's my resignation, I'm leaving." "What're you leaving for, Charlie?" "Well I'm going to work for the state. You people didn't seem to think I was worth much; I had to fight to get $300 a month out of you; I can get $320 out of the state without fighting." (Laughter) And so I went to the state in Los Angeles, and consequently started going up the ladder and worked there for 22 years, from 1945 to 1967.

Knaster: So you never worked in another county as an agricultural commissioner?

Dick: No. However, in my work in Los Angeles, you see, while I wasn't exactly supervising the ag commissioners there, I was acting as the eyes, ears, and voice of the [state] director of agriculture. I had certain responsibilities coordinating the work. Later, when I got to Sacramento as division chief and later as the assistant director and deputy director, I did have pretty direct responsibilities in coordinating and supervising the work of commissioners. So I was always very close to them. Even after I left here, while I didn't practice it, I was still an honorary life member of the Association of County Agricultural Commissioners. But during the short time that I was a commissioner, I got to be president of the association.

California State Association of Agricultural Commissioners

Knaster: So you had occasion to meet with other commissioners a lot in your job as commissioner here? Was that part of the job—to meet with other county commissioners?

Dick: Well, yes, in this sense—first let me describe the structure for meeting, and then I'll talk about the reasons for meeting. As the structure, we have the State Association of County Agricultural Commissioners which met twice a year. Then we also had regional groups, and there was the Coast Counties Agricultural Association, which would meet once a month. Might be in Santa Cruz one month, in Monterey or Salinas the next, and San Francisco and so on. Those were the two meeting groups, and then, of course, it was quite common to go to Salinas or San Jose or someplace to talk to the commissioner there about a particular common problem. Now the reasons for the meetings is that in enforcing the fruit and vegetable standardization laws, it's very important that you be uniform.

It would be ridiculous for San Mateo County to be enforcing artichoke standards different from those in Santa Cruz County. When it came to pest control or quarantine, if I, as commissioner of Santa Cruz County, were to let some pest escape into this county, it would very well work its way out of this county into other counties. So in all of the regulatory work, there was a great need for uniformity. That was the reason for these meetings—uniformity and new techniques and methods of getting the work done and being more uniform.

Knaster: Did you find it fairly easy to work along with other commissioners, or was there . . . you know sometimes when different heads get together, they have a hard time with each other.

Dick: (Laughter) Well, it's just like any other group of people . . . they're no different. There you got the old pros that think they're doing it right; they know it all, and they're hard to budge, and they're stubborn. Then you've got the young guys that are eager to learn. You've got the dumbbells that can't learn . . . they're just like any group of people.

I just want to tell you a story about a man that's dead, but he was a very dear friend of mine. His name was Dixon W. Tubbs. He was the agricultural commissioner of Orange County. Dick Tubbs was a stubborn man, a brilliant man, but stubborn. When I got to be regional coordinator down there, part of my job sometimes was to go down and call on Dick Tubbs as well as other agricultural commissioners to try to convince them to do a certain thing the way we, the state people, wanted them to do it or our idea of how to conduct a pest survey. So I'd go down to Dick Tubbs and start in on him. Well he'd just argue against me all the way through. I'd say, "Well, you got a point, Dick. I guess you're right. You've got a point, but did you ever think about this possibility?"

"Well, yeah . . ." "Okay, well, you've got a point. There's merit to your reasoning," and so on, and then I'd leave. I'd go back in about a week or ten days and get around to the same subject. He was clear over there arguing the side that I had tried to present to him.

Knaster: No kidding. (Laughter)

Dick: So I'd just make some feeble objections and let him win that argument, and I'd had it. Well it was years later that his wife said to me one time, "You know you've been taking Dick to the cleaners all the time and he said it just finally dawned on him that you're always getting your way with him by letting him win the argument."

Knaster: Were there other regularly scheduled meetings that you had with other state officials, or county officials? Or was it mostly with commissioners?

Dick: Well, those two annual meetings that I mentioned were with [agricultural] commissioners and the state people. What we called the spring meeting was actually the annual meeting of the Agricultural Commissioners Association where they elected their officers. The state [agricultural] people were there and participated. Then the fall meeting was actually called by the state director of agriculture, calling all of the commissioners to Sacramento. The state then tended to put the program on for that meeting. At the regional meetings, there were always state representatives.

I neglected to say, when I was going over earlier the duties of the county agricultural commissioners, that in many cases, these duties, at least the ones that are real law enforcement, that the commissioner is under the supervision of the state director of agriculture. The state director of agriculture's supposed to give

the leadership and the guidance and the supervision on that. In certain other things, like rodent and weed control, the commissioner is not under supervision of the director of agriculture, he can do as he pleases. But he does look to the director of agriculture for technical advice. So at these regional meetings, state people were there in order to get coordination between the commissioners or to bring the state view on a new problem, or to present a problem and say, "Look, our egg inspection is not uniform. We're finding out that one county is doing it different than another," and that kind of thing.

I think what you're going to ask me for next is how much we got involved with growers and farmers in meetings . . . and of course there was plenty of that. Whenever there was an agricultural meeting of any kind in the commissioner's county . . . I don't mean of any kind, not a little three or four person meeting, but I mean any sort of an annual meeting or anything of that nature of any farm group . . . the commissioner was sure to be there, and possibly commissioners from adjoining counties if this were more than a county meeting, if it were a regional meeting or a state meeting. Commissioners had to work closely with farm groups. I think perhaps they worked a little closer with trade associations, such as a lettuce growers association or an apple growers association than perhaps they did with the local farm bureaus, you know, the little farm centers that they have around the county.

Knaster: Yes. I was going to ask you what the relationship of the commissioner's office was to the Farm Bureau or the Grange or other organizations.

Dick: Well, the relationship of the office was of course friendly with all of them. However the [UC] Agricultural Extension Service was so friendly and so close to

the Farm Bureau that many people used to call the Agricultural Extension Office the Farm Bureau Office. I think the Agricultural Extension had helped organize the Farm Bureau at some time. The [UC] farm advisor or agricultural extension man was inevitably present at little farm center meetings. The Farm Bureau and the [UC] agricultural extension worked very close together. Now there was no friction between the farm bureau and the agricultural commissioner except the commissioner just didn't spend as much time with the Farm Bureau as the agricultural extension man did. Granges were pretty much neglected by agricultural extension people because the Grange was sort of in conflict with the Farm Bureau a little bit, and the farm bureau was their baby. The Grange was more of a social affair. So the agricultural commissioner was friendly with Grange people, but didn't go to Grange meetings frequently. As for the Associated Farmers, I think I told you earlier that my predecessor was very closely tied in with the Associated Farmers . . . that is, he let them use his office and his secretary.

Knaster: You did mention that, yes.

Dick: I broke that relationship. I mean I was friendly with the individuals, but I had nothing to do with them as an association because they were in my opinion a kind of labor-baiting association. They may have been right, but they were carrying it to extremes, I thought, to keep kicking organized labor, or kicking back at them, because after all labor was kicking at them too. So most of the dealings then were with farmer groups and trade associations that had something to do with our work; for instance, artichoke growers would decide that the law needed changing, or the apple growers . . .

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Knaster: What I would like to get into is how you actually ran the office . . . whether you appointed personnel, whether you were given a staff to already work with, or whether you appointed the people to work with you and how many people were in the office and what their functions were.

Dick: Well, I think I should start by explaining how people were appointed. I think in our last interview I discussed how the agricultural commisioner was appointed by the board of supervisors from an eligible list. Then the agricultural inspectors or the deputy agricultural commissioner in those days was appointed by the agricultural commissioner himself from a list of eligibles. Now, of course with civil service there has to be a civil service list of eligibles. But at that time it was the list of eligibles that was developed by the state director of agriculture. At the time I took over the office it was already staffed, so I kept the same people on . . .

Knaster: How many people were in the office . . . do you remember?

Dick: As I recall we had four inspectors, one deputy commissioner, and one secretary. Now, with respect to the four inspectors, I can't quite say for sure how many they had when I took over, because at that time it had been the policy of my predecessors to use seasonal inspectors during apple season, that would be in the fall, in September and October, and then to use less employees the year around. I always had my own theories about employees. I believed that three well-paid employees would do me as much work as four poorly-paid employees and also those who had some year-round employment or job security were going to be better employees than picking up a crew of men just for seasonal work. So I gradually built some of those jobs into full-time jobs. I discussed this

with the board of supervisors and asked them to cut my seasonal salary allotment, to reduce it and allow me to have the four inspectors the full year round. I could have plenty of work for them and I would arrange the work so that during the fruit and vegetable inspection season they were relieved of their other duties, such as bee inspection, or things that could be postponed . . . and then as soon as we got through the peak period then I put them back on the routine things that could be postponed.

I made changes in work arrangements . . . and some changes in incentive. It used to be that all of the employees got the same salary. They were required by law to have passed one of the examinations, in one category or another. So I found that most of them had passed the easiest examination and that was all they had striven to qualify at. As soon as I got a vacant position I made a deal with the board of supervisors to have a graduated salary scale. In other words, they had all been getting $150 a month and I got the board of supervisors to agree to start them at $140 and work them up to $160 in $5 increments. I would not recommend a person to be appointed, or elevated on that scale unless he had passed a certain number of those examinations in different subjects. For instance, to start work he'd get $140, but as soon as he passed a second examination in another field, then I would recommend that he be promoted to $145 . . . and $160 was the maximum, but it wasn't based on seniority, it was based on how many different fields they had qualified. I rationalize that by the fact that if a man were qualified in four fields, he was certainly more flexible, could do more different kinds of jobs and was more of an asset than a person who was limited to one type of work.

Remember I was a guy who came up the hard way and worked manual labor and things and I understood the employee's viewpoint, and I was somewhat of a

radical too. I just didn't believe because granpappy did it that way that it was the way it had to be done.

Of course, nowadays you have merit salary adjustments based on seniority and attaining a certain standard of performance. But I think the present agricultural commissioner . . . has more to select from and he wouldn't even select a new employee unless he was qualified in several fields. Whereas in those days we almost had to hire a local man—public opinion required it—and it was hard enough for a local man to get qualified in one subject. In fact, nowadays, I understand that they require a college education in order to qualify for the certificate from the [California] state director of agriculture. Because I can remember when I was assistant director of agriculture before I was deputy, that I was writing and giving examinations that I wouldn't have been eligible to take because I didn't have a college degree. So now, the commissioner has better educated people to select from than they had in those days.

Knaster: Well, do you think that's fair? You wouldn't have been able to hold that position since you had not gotten a college education, but obviously you were educated and knew what you were doing and fulfilled the job . . .

Dick: I don't think it's fair. The present system discourages people who are trying to get in where they don't belong and it gives the employer better people to select from, but I think it does discriminate against the individual who got his education in an informal manner . . . who doesn't have a formal education. Of course, that was the thing that plagued me all my life. I'd make applications for this or that but I had no status because I didn't have a college degree . . . and yet when I was deputy director of agriculture I was supervising all kinds of Ph.D's and so on.

Fruit and Vegetable Inspection and Standardization

Knaster: Could you describe how the office functions, the powers of the agricultural commissioner's office and how each person in the staff, you and the other people, fit into fulfilling those functions and duties?

Dick: Well it would take me about a week to describe all of them in detail, so I think I would try to put it in a nutshell . . . the other day I mentioned the six or seven types of work, so I might take a couple of them as examples and show you just how the men would go about it. The inspection of fruits and vegetables to assure they meet minimum standards of law in terms of standarization, used to be more than 50% of our work at that time in this county. Now what that amounted to was that each inspector working in that area had a certain territory to cover . . . he would go into packing sheds and to farms where they were packing fruits or vegetables and inspect them to determine their compliance.

If they didn't comply then he had several alternatives. One alternative was to write a rejection notice and require that the men recondition them. Repack them, or if there was a case of immaturity, why then there wasn't much you could do . . . or if it was excessive mold and rot and they were beyond redemption, there wasn't much you could do except dispose of them. The other alternative was to cite the person into court and swear to a complaint against him, charge him with a violation of law for which he could be tried and fined if found guilty. That was not very often done because people make mistakes.

The law, now this isn't exact, but a generalization, allowed 5% of one defect in the shipment of the individual fruits or vegetables, or a total of 10% of all kinds of defects. In other words, you could have 5% worms and you could have 5% some other defect and it would still be all right, but you couldn't have any more

than 5% of any one. Well there was language in the law that allowed for the accidents of grading, that is people couldn't be perfect no matter how good their intentions were, so you didn't generally prosecute anybody unless he had a series of violations and you felt he just wasn't paying enough attention . . . he wasn't trying. There were some individuals who would deliberately try to get by and then in that case you'd prosecute him.

Now I'm going to digress here a moment, and I hope I can keep my finger on my place. But as an example, it was a guy that we'd never prosecuted because he was a nice guy, and he was a joke. In fact the reason that I didn't have anything to do with prosecuting him was that I knew him mainly during the period when I was working in a cold storage plant before I became an inspector. His first name was Martin, I don't know what his last name was, and he was a big Yugoslav with a big bristly mustache and he sorted apples out of cold storage for a person that owned the fruit. Martin would put one box over on his left and he'd put one box on his right, and then he had a box in the middle that he was working from. He'd sort these apples as they were coming out of cold storage, it was a slow job because it was off-season—there was no hurry. We used to like run along and slap him on the back and say, "Good morning Martin, how are you doing?" Martin would greet us and then he would pour all the apples back into the center box and he'd start counting again, because he was keeping count of how many bad ones he'd put in, you see, he was trying to stay within his 10% tolerance and he had those figures in his head that he had 72 good ones and 9 bad ones, or something like that and we'd spoil his count and he'd have to pour them all back. Now there was a case of a man who never, to my knowledge, exceeded the tolerance but never to my knowledge did he ever have very much

less than the tolerance—he was being very exact. But that was impractical on a large scale.

Knaster: Do you remember what cold storage plant that was?

Dick: That was the Pajaro Valley Cold Storage plant in Watsonville. I worked there back before I went to work for the county for Mr. Beasley on a seasonal basis, and then in the off-season I would work in this cold storage plant.

Now to get back to where I think I tried to leave my finger on the page. The produce then that we rejected, I mentioned that if it was beyond recall, why it was supposed to be disposed of, and disposed of legally. It could be disposed of legally by dumping or by using it for a by-product purpose, in other words it could go to a vinegar plant, to a dryer, to someplace where it was going to be made into a byproduct.

Knaster: Were they making juice then?

Dick: Oh yes. They were making juice. However the apple juice in those days was made by Martinelli principally and it's my recollection that Martinelli didn't juice the substandard products to make juice—he used good apples. But the Speese or Jones Brothers Vinegar Company, did make some apple juice and they didn't use quite as good apples as Martinelli, but most of that went to the vinegar factory, and was made into apple juice or apple cider . . . I shouldn't say apple juice at all. Even Martinelli in those days, they hadn't yet invented that process that they have now where it tastes like a fresh apple. They made apple cider which was oxidized, it had that brownish color to it.

The first apple juice I knew about was made by S & W Packing Company, not here but a San Francisco outfit, Susman and Wermser. They had adopted a

process that had been invented by a man named Dole, who was a descendent of the Dole pineapple people. He had a process of grinding this juice with quartz so that the quartz ruptured the cells of the fruit in such a way as to allow the true flavor to get out, and that was filtered to get the quartz out. No it wasn't filtered, I guess it was allowed to settle out because I remember now they couldn't filter it, and it had a kind of a milky color to it, tasted just like a fresh apple . . . I suppose they had pasteurized it, I don't know, but they couldn't filter it because in the process of filtering it had the chance to oxidize, and as soon as apple juice oxidizes it turns brown. You know yourself when you cut an apple and let it sit awhile, it'll turn brown. So that was the first apple juice.

Knaster: Today they're selling apple juice that way.

Dick: Yes, today, well I don't know how.

Knaster: Natural, unfiltered apple juice.

Dick: Are they still selling it that way?

Knaster: Yes, it's brown.

Dick: Well the brown is just plain oxidized, that's all . . . the air has got to it, whereas that white, milky colored stuff is where they've prevented the air from getting to it.

Knaster: Well, you were talking about the standardization and inspection . . .

Dick: Yeah, all right. Now I had mentioned where by-products went and the alternatives that an inspector had when he found something out of grade. Now when we took a person to court . . . it was only once or twice in my career that anybody ever asked for a jury trial.

Knaster: Do you remember what those cases were?

Dick: One of them I believe was in Santa Cruz and had to do with strawberries. I can't remember the other . . . I think there were two, but I had a pretty good record as agricultural commissioner. I don't recall that I ever lost a case, although the district attorney used to ridicule me and say, "Well Charlie, you don't bring anything in except the cinch cases." Well naturally I didn't want to be hounding people and annoying them, and trying to get them convicted on a technicality or such. I remember the first case I almost had was, I walked into the office as a brand new agricultural commissioner and the inspector said, "Well, Charlie, we got that so-and-so; we caught him today with some bad apples and we want you to swear out a complaint against him and prosecute him." They said, "We've been laying for him for six months." I said, "Oh well, you've been laying for him for six months and I'm going to let him go. I don't want you laying for anybody, and I'm going to call him in and chew him out and when you catch him sometime in the routine method of inspection, then I'll get a complaint for you . . . we'll go to court.

Knaster: Why do you think they were doing that?

Dick: Well, because he was a consistent violator and he was an ornery sort of a person. So I called him in and chewed him out and told him that my boys wanted me to prosecute him but I wasn't going to do it this time but I sure would the next time. So the next time came and the boys caught him that time in a routine way, you know, just inspecting him as often as anybody else. So then I had to keep my promise and we prosecuted this man and he had a pretty bad record of violations.

Knaster: Is he still in business today?

Dick: Well, he's not still alive, but I think his family's still in business. That's why I don't want to mention his name. The judge was so impressed by the case that he fined him around $200, but he gave him a ten-day suspended jail sentence, which meant that any time within a year, if this man violated the law in any way he had to serve ten days in jail. Of course, I thought that was wonderful stuff in those days, but as I grew older I questioned the constitutionality of it because I don't think the judge should've hung a sentence over him that was longer than the maximum jail penalty he could have gotten anyhow. I think 30 or 60 days was the maximum under the law, and yet the judge was hanging this over his head for a year. Then I really had problems, because this guy was just a careless individual that my men kept consistently finding in violation and not real bad, but minor violations. And violations and violations. Here I was faced with the problem that if I took this guy in now on any of these violations, why then he had to go to jail for ten days. It wasn't worth going to jail for ten days. (Laughter) I had an awful time sweating that one. That year was near as hard a year for me as it was for him, because I didn't want to have to put the man in jail for ten days, and yet I had boxed myself in so that's what had to happen to him if I caught in that jurisdiction, at least.

Knaster: Did he ever go to jail?

Dick: Not that I recall.

Knaster: Did he ever improve in his work?

Dick: Oh yes. You know you can wear a rock down by dripping water on it and it was a question of whether he wore down first or I wore down first. I think he got better, you know he began to decide that there was some reason to the law

and that I was a reasonable guy. So, he got better, but he never got the way I would like him to be.

Nursery Inspection and Quarantine

Dick: The next largest part of our work was quarantine and nursery inspection, and that meant in those days that all incoming shipments of plants had to be held for inspection. We inspected nurseries and required them to clean their major pests, but the nurseries were so dirty in those days, so full of pests, that it just wasn't economic, it wasn't politic, it couldn't all be done in one fell swoop to get the nurserymen to clean up their nurseries. But, all the shipments of plants that came in, whether they came into a nursery, or came to an individual, had to be held for inspection. The post office held all shipments of plants, the express office, the freight, trucking offices and . . . or trucking agencies and individuals who brought shipments of plants in were supposed to report them and hold them for it. Then the inspector would go out and open the packages and examine them and make sure they didn't contain insect pests or plants diseases and so forth.

Now the nurseries began to get cleaned up. I think I ought to touch on it, although I can't say it was done while I was agricultural commissioner. During this period while I was agricultural commissioner there was a movement statewide initiated in Los Angeles County and in some of the southern counties, called the "pink tag system." That "pink tag system" meant that a certain nursery would make application to the county agricultural commissioner and undergo a series of rigid inspections and clean his nursery up. Then he was issued pink colored shipping tags, which allowed him to ship within that county without destination inspection. Then around 1945, (and you will recall that is the year that I left here and went to work for the state) this pink tag thing had

proved itself pretty well in Los Angeles County, and therefore the next step was its adoption by the state regulating inter-county nursery inspection certificates. They called them “pinto tags” because they were pink with a green stripe across them or something, and one of the wags, a brilliant but witty fellow, said, “All those damned pinto tags of yours,” and so the word pinto tag stuck and I think to this day they’re called pinto tags. But the system there was that they’re under a series of state regulations and standards. A nursery in a particular county could qualify and get a certificate of cleanliness, and then could ship anywhere in the state.

So, the theory was then that a nursery in “x” county would qualify, clean up and could be issued pinto tags and could ship to other counties without destination inspection. Well at first it had to be done with agreement of the destination county, because the county agricultural commissioners as a statewide group were pretty suspicious people and many of them were not willing to let the commissioner at the point of origin make the determination that this stock was clean. So it took quite a few years before there was a substantial number of destination counties that were willing to accept this.

Knaster: Was Santa Cruz part of this?

Dick: Well, I don’t know when Santa Cruz got involved because this happened after I left. But by now, as far as I know, all the counties will accept pinto tags. There may be some exceptions, some may not accept a certain type of tree or something under it, because of some peculiarity in their own county they want to protect. But, generally speaking, they all accept pinto tags, and generally speaking, most of the nurseries in the state are cleaned up and qualified.

Knaster: Is this still in existence?

Dick: At least the cleanliness is still in existence because now you can go and buy nursery stock out here at any nursery and you know it's clean, and you don't have to report it to the agricultural commissioner every time you move it or take it someplace to plant it.

But that system was a long time growing, and I can remember when I was commissioner, way back in those days, the nurseries were really dirty. We used to inspect them and tie up whole blocks of plants and make them clean these up, but then on the minor pests common in most everybody's yard, we didn't do much about these in the nurseries because it didn't make sense to make a nurseryman clean up the aphids in his nursery when they were going to have aphids as soon as somebody took them home and planted them. That's all.

Knaster: So what were you most concerned with in that case?

Dick: In those days, we were very frightened of root-knot nematode. I don't know whether our fright was justified or not, but we didn't have root-knot nematode. Nematodes are small animals. Trichinosis of pork is a nematode. That's, of course, not a plant nematode. But these are very small, microscopic animals, they're not insects, not a fungus or bacteria. There was one that got in the roots of plants and caused them to have little nodules.

Knaster: What plants did it attack most? Or was it any plant?

Dick: It attacked almost all plants except the monocotyledonous plants, now I'm starting to talk two-bit words again. The "monocots," or monocotyledonous are the grasses and the things of that nature. The "dicots" are the kinds that have regular leaves on them. So it could be carried on almost anything. It was considered bad on tomatoes and lettuce, and any fruit tree could have it, but if

you got a good infestation in the soil it could affect the productivity of annual crops, like tomatoes and stuff, because it tended to destroy or weaken the root system of the plant. Well now it's more generally spread around the state and also they have chemicals that can sterilize or control it in the soil. We didn't have them in those days.

Knaster: You had your inspectors going out and doing that work but I recall, you said you went out on inspections as well?

Dick: I did as time permitted or as a backup. When I started as an inspector, certainly I did all those things. That was my job. When I got to be commissioner, even though I had a staff of only five or six people, I was a department head. As a department head then I had dealings with the board of supervisors, the county purchasing agent, and the district attorney, the administrative work and the public relations work. You had to be sure you gave the newspaper guy something, and you had to belong to the Rotary Club; and there's a certain amount of public relations in the thing. So then, if there was a work load, why I'd go out in the field and work along with the men. Or if it came to training a man, I would very often try to assign my deputy commissioner, Matt Mello, who ultimately became agricultural commissioner. Or else I'd be doing it all myself. Then there was supervision. I'd go around and occasionally drop in on the men just to see how they were doing or what they were doing, or go with them to see how they did it. I wouldn't know what percentage of my time went into actual inspection. I can recall one time when the men made me angry, as they did once in awhile, and they put a man out to inspect bees, a couple of men, and these bees had to be inspected because they required a certificate for the man to move them to some other state. They came back and said, "Well, Charlie it's too cold and windy to inspect those bees today, we can't do it, they're stinging us."

Honey bees, when it's cold, they're meaner than when it's nice and warm. When it's nice and warm they're out working and so on, and if it's cold, they come home and they're ornery.

Knaster: Didn't they wear those protective coverings?

Dick: They wear a veil, what they call a bee veil. Some people wore gloves on their hands but that wasn't sanitary and it was a nuisance. They would still sting you on the arms and so on. So these two fellows came in and said it was too cold to inspect the bees. So I said I'd take Owen Southworth who was one of my inspectors who had a lot of courage, and didn't know much about bees, I guess, to be afraid. (laughter) He was the least qualified as a bee inspector that I had. I said, "I'm going to take Owen, and Owen and I are going out to inspect those bees, and you two guys are going to come along and you're going to sit in the car and you're going to watch and see that we do it." So I just shamed them. The four of us went out there and I dressed Owen up in a bee veil and told him what to do, and put these two heroes over in the car with the windows shut and everything to watch us inspect the bees. Well, we inspected three or four or five hives, Owen and I, and pretty soon they were just so ashamed they came out there and pitched in. So I ought to do things like that for psychological reasons sometimes.

Professionalizing Agricultural Inspection

Dick: It was a small-scale office and, after all, when you are a boss and you're running an office, no matter how big it is, you have the responsibility, you have to face the public, you have to justify what you're doing. Then I'd dress my boys all up in olive-drab uniforms and forest ranger hats and that created a little furor. My predecessor had been lax, I think. At least he had that reputation where one

of his inspectors would reject something, say a carload of apples, so he'd call the boss out. Well, that was another thing the boss had to do—when the inspector made a big rejection, why they would appeal to the boss and the boss would have to come out. He'd come out, and according to stories that I got, very often he would reverse the inspector, or say, "Well, this wasn't so bad," you know, and let it go this time. He was an easy-going, very fine person, but he was somewhat of an indecisive man, and he didn't stand up too well under pressure. But he was absolutely honest and a very fine person.

So the result was that people were kicking inspectors around. In fact, they'd try to throw them out once in a while, and things like that when they got mad at them. So the first thing I did was, I made them all buy uniforms and dressed them all up like forest rangers. They had boots and forest ranger hats, and badges that they pinned on their belt buckle, and some of the wags called them Charlie Dick's Rangers. (Laughter) But what I was trying to do was to make them look dignified and establish some respect because they hadn't even looked dignified, you know, they'd all be dressed in various ways in casual clothes and you couldn't tell who was the inspector and who was the truck driver or something else around there. This way they'd march in there and they had a dignity and everything. Well, people laughed for awhile, but that, plus the fact that whenever they would appeal to me, the inspector might have found 7% worms, for instance, in the shipment and so right away they'd appeal to me and I'd come out there and I'd go over it with a fine-toothed comb, and I'd always find 9 or 12%. I'd always manage to look hard enough that I got it looking worse than the inspector had. Well then they'd decide there was no use calling that hard-nosed guy out because he was tougher than the inspector. (Laughter) And that, plus the fact that they were dressed up in uniforms, within two or three

months, they were respected. People didn't push them around or anything, they looked like policemen, which, of course, made it look like a police state, I guess, but nevertheless they created some respect for themselves. I never had a problem with people pushing my men around.

Annual Reports on County Agriculture and Crop Statistics

Knaster: What records and written materials did the agricultural commissioner provide?

Dick: Well, we had two kinds of reports, we had to make a monthly report to the board of supervisors.

Knaster: What did that consist of?

Dick: Oh, it was statistical, it didn't really say too much, it documented how many man-hours at this kind of work and that kind of work and we made so many inspections and so on. I don't think anybody ever read it. Then we had two reports of a similar nature to the state director of agriculture, because as I told you earlier, we were under supervision and direction of the director of agriculture.

Knaster: Was that on an annual basis?

Dick: It was monthly, as I recall it. And then, of course, I had to write press releases occasionally. If you had a good newspaper man you could just go and talk to him., but generally you had to write your own press releases to make sure it was accurate . . . a press release on such things as . . . Pippin apples are now mature and may be picked, or press releases on a watch for certain bugs and that sort of thing.

Knaster: Did you have to write an annual report?

Dick: Oh yes. We did write an annual report which was quite comprehensive. And then another report that took a lot of work, I mentioned in our last interview, that we were required to gather crop statistics. And so we had to make an annual report separate from our regular, normal annual report. We had to make an annual crop report, which showed the acreage, production and value of the crops in the county. That took a lot of work; it had to be accurate. We did that by taking samples, going to sample growers and finding out how much their orchard had produced and how much money they got for their crop. Then we had cold storage records, there were four or five cold storage houses, and we had pretty good records from there of what was

[inaudible section of tape]

County Fruit Tree Census

Dick: It was back in the '30s, during the depression . . . WPA was the one where they just sort of made work for people—the federal government did. Well, back in those days under the direction of the state, we compiled a tree count of the state. In other words, we determined exactly how many acres of apples there were in Santa Cruz County, how many acres of apricots, or whatever the case might be. That was done with this WPA labor, which, I think I had eight or ten assigned here in this county. We trained them to go out and take a census. They'd go to every farm and take a census of the fruit trees.

Knaster: And this was done every year?

Dick: No, it was done once, basically.

Knaster: Do you remember what year that was done? And if it was repeated?

Dick: It has been repeated since, on a sample basis, to make sure it's still up-to-date. But it was done between '39 and '45 . . . It was perhaps closer to '39, I guess it may have started before I was commissioner.

Knaster: So in other words, in order to compile your reports, you had to compile all the basic statistics rather than go to census data that already existed?

Dick: Oh, that's right. This tree census done that one year determined our base, and then, as I say, I believe there were a couple of times several years later where on a sample basis it was checked up, or ratified. But we had that basic information then, as to exactly how many acres of apples there were, how many trees to the acre and what age they were. They were all by age groups, so we knew there were so many apple trees that were 35 years old and there were so many 10 years old, or older, and there were so many 10 years old, and so forth. From that time on we kept adjusting that. In other words, if a man would pull out ten acres of apples, we'd try to encourage him to let us know, and we generally did know on any sizable pull-out because we'd see it as we went by. So we'd adjust for that. Then when the new trees came in, say Mr. Jones got 500 cherry trees and we inspected them, our inspection records show that we got 500 cherry trees, and we had the varieties and so forth, we'd adjust now Mr. Jones got so many more acres of cherries. That as far as I know is still current and valid and serves as a basis for our statistics on how many acres of trees there are.

Knaster: You mentioned the other annual report . . . you said there were two annual reports, and the one that you prepared on a yearly basis—is that the one that's been going on since 1940? I understand there's an annual report that was begun in 1940.

Dick: That's the one I started, I think in 1940.

Knaster: Well before then, what kind of reporting was done?

Dick: I don't know. (Laughter) It used to be there was a monthly report that went to the board of supervisors, and as I mentioned a moment ago it was a few figures, so many hours of this and so many hours of that. Then in somewhere along about 1939 or 1940 a state law was enacted, that said that the county agricultural commissioner shall annually compile figures as to the acreage, production and value of the crops in each county. I was appointed commissioner in 1939, in December, I think it was, and so here we faced 1940 with this law that says the commissioner's got to compile an annual crop report.

So in 1940 I compiled the first county crop report, which showed acreage, production and the value of crops. Well since I was compiling that, I had learned since I became commissioner that many other of the progressive agricultural commissioners around the state were also compiling an annual report for public distribution that told about what was going in their office, what they'd done during the year, and what some of the trends were, and so forth. It was good public information, it was good propaganda, it was a good public relations gimmick. So along about the same time I started putting out an annual report of the agricultural commissioner's office. Attached to it was the crop report. Then I worked a fine little gimmick to get the crop report printed, I got it all printed on one page by going to the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* and saying, "Look, I'll give this to you so you can scoop the Santa Cruz papers on this crop report, but you loan me the type later so I can print it and save typesetting for printing my report." So I made a deal with him and I think that, as I recall all the four or five

years I was commissioner, I'd get this crop report all compiled beautiful and then I'd take it down to the editor of the Watsonville paper.

Agricultural Commissioner's Consultation Services

Knaster: Did your office provide consultation for growers or other people?

Dick: Yes. In pest control, that is insect pest and plant disease control we provided consultation, on weed and rodent control, and then information on the laws that we were enforcing, say the standardization laws and so forth. Now I told you before that the UC Agricultural Extension Service or farm advisor was really the educational and advisory people. So we didn't provide information on fertilizing or pruning or cultural things, but merely on pest control because we had a responsibility to see that infestations didn't build up. For instance, we could go out under our own pest control and if we found that a man's orchard was breeding up pests he wasn't taking care of it, and it was breeding pests for his neighbors, why we could serve an abatement notice on him, and if he didn't spray that orchard within the designated period of time, we could go and hire it done and the cost became a lien on his property. First one of those I did was on a member of the local grand jury, which people told me I was crazy to do.

Knaster: Who was that?

Dick: I don't want to mention his name. (Laughter)

Knaster: Well, it's public information, isn't it?

Dick: Well yes if you want to go back and dig it up. But really I don't think his name matters. The man is long since dead and all that stuff. I got to be commissioner and his first name was Randolph, I'll tell you that much, I won't

tell you his last name. My boys not only wanted me to prosecute this man Bill that I told you about before, but they also had this guy Randolph so-and-so, whose orchard was full of bugs, and I forgot what kind of bugs they were now, and they couldn't get him to spray them. But they said we can't do anything because he's a member of the grand jury. They said the agricultural commissioner couldn't go out and serve an abatement notice on a member of the grand jury because the grand jury would find him . . . his office wasn't being run right or something. Well, the hell we can't, it's got bugs! So I served an abatement notice on him and the poor man didn't have much cash at that time, I guess his cash flow wasn't good. The result was that I hired a pest control operator to go and spray his orchard and it became a lien on his property and filed it with the banks, a lien over everything except taxes, and as soon as that lien gets on his property the banks get quite upset because it takes precedence over their loan. So it was a good device because as you file a lien the bank gets on the guy's back, see, and they say, "Look boy, here's a lien that takes over precedence over our loan to you, now'd you'd better cough up." Well, it didn't, in his case, he didn't cough up and spray, so we had to spray and it became a lien and it was eventually paid with his next taxes. We were good friends, even though I prosecuted him months later for something else. But, you know if you treat a person honestly and forthrightly, unless he's a vindictive, mean person, that doesn't make an enemy.

Knaster: Were there other reports or information that you compiled and disseminated to the public or was it basically the monthly report to the board of supervisors and to the head of the Department of Agriculture and then the annual reports?

Dick: I think that was about it—the annual report and the crop report were our two main reports to the public.

Santa Cruz County Exhibits at California State Fair

Knaster: Did you ever have to put on exhibits of any kind? Was that a function of the office?

Dick: Prior to the time I was commissioner, the agricultural commissioner used to put on an exhibit at the state fair in Sacramento. It became the commissioner's job to put that exhibit on. The result was he went up there and spent two weeks, so it not only took quite a few days of preparation, it took the entire duration of the fair. When you'd have the agricultural commissioner himself, sitting up there in a booth in Sacramento and displaying this stuff, and so on. Well, the county had set aside a certain sum of money to do that, I don't recall what it was. It was big money in those days, but little money by present-day standards. They were getting a little tired of it, and they . . .

Knaster: Of providing the money you mean?

Dick: Well, wondering if it was worth it. 'Cause after all it was merely promotional. Really what these commissioners liked, at least my thinking was, they liked the idea of being able to get up there and sit here and hobnob for a week, you know, with their friends and go out drinking at night and it was a paid vacation just to go up there and sit there and put on an exhibit. Then, of course, it was a competitive spirit of how many blue ribbons you brought back, and how you beat Max Leonard, the commissioner of San Mateo County, on delphiniums, or something else. It was a game.

Knaster: How much stuff were you exhibiting at the time?

Dick: Well, each county featured certain things. They'd go up there . . . Santa Cruz County would try to win in apples and artichokes and lettuce, they never won in lettuce but apples and artichokes, and then we'd have tuberous begonias, delphiniums and I forget what else. But, you know, it'd be five or six featured items that you'd try to compete with.

Knaster: So it was mostly, in other words, it would be plants rather than—it wouldn't include livestock or anything like that.

Dick: No, livestock was a different thing. That was entered by the individual. But there was one building at the state fair, which was called the County Building, and each county that had made arrangements for it, had its booth in there. That's the part the commissioner had. Well, the supervisors were getting kind of tired of this and they thought, "We're spending so much money every year and we don't see what we're getting out of it." So when I became commissioner they were just trying to discontinue it and I helped them try and discontinue it. So Santa Cruz County withdrew from this exhibit at the state fair. I think it was just wasteful. But if they did get back in it later, it seems to me that a more proper way would have been to have hired one individual to go up there and do it . . . not have the county agricultural commissioner, who is the head of a department. He's got work to do. Go up there and sit for ten days watching time go by and it used to happen at the busiest time of the year here, around the first of September, when we're getting ready for the apple harvest and all that stuff, and where was the commissioner—he's sitting up there at the state fair. And so, a more logical way to do it would be to let the Chamber of Commerce put it on, or somebody like that. Now I don't know what they're doing now, whether they're even in it.

Knaster: Besides the trip to Sacramento for the fair, did you have to do a lot of traveling?

Dick: No. I told you in our last interview we had two annual meetings of all the agricultural commissioners and then we had our monthly regional meetings, which might be in San Francisco or Salinas or Hollister or Watsonville or what. Then occasional trips to visit some other commissioner. Say I'd get a certain problem on pear trees. I'd visit Mr. Cody, who was the agricultural commissioner of Santa Clara County in San Jose. He was perhaps the best man around on pear blight—which was a bad disease at that time, it just ruined pear trees in this general area. Why sure, I'd call him up and see if he was going to be there and get in the car and go over and spend half a day with Mr. Cody while I learned from him, you know, that type of thing.

Annual Budget and Department Staffing

Knaster: Well, what kind of budget did the office have?

Dick: When I was agricultural commissioner the budget was around $13,000 a year—big stuff. (Laughter) Let's see, my salary was $250 a month, that's $3000.

Knaster: And then you quit when they . . .

Dick: I quit when they wouldn't give me $300. And my deputy was $175 a month and I had four inspectors, as I say they ran from $140 to $160, and a secretary, I don't remember what she got, it was $100 or $110 or $120. Each of the inspectors had a county car. We were supposed to drive it only on official county business. We were allowed to take the car home with us, for two reasons: One, it was just as easy, or no more costly, that is if you would just take it home and do it properly, than it would be to take it to a central repository. And the

other reason was that we were subject to call, at any time. You never knew when—just about the time you got home, why some guy'd call and say, "Look, there's a truck here and I need a clearance certificate on a truckload of apples." And so, it was nothing unusual for my men to be out before 8 o'clock in the morning, or after 5 o'clock at night on sudden calls, or some guy'd just get a shipment in that needed to be released from quarantine, and so on.

Knaster: And each one had a car? They didn't work in teams. They would go out separately?

Dick: Oh no. You'd be very inefficient to work in teams, because the travel distance so often was, maybe take you 15, 20 minutes to get there to do 5 minutes work, or 10 minutes work. So we had cars. I tried during the war years to get George Morgan, the chairman of the board of supervisors, to let me buy a few bicycles, and he wouldn't let me do it. I had an argument with him when I left about their theories too. But during World War II, we were trying to save rubber. I don't recall that gasoline was the problem, but the problem was rubber, you know, and you weren't supposed to drive cars, we used every device we could to cut down on automobile mileage.

Knaster: Why rubber rather than gasoline?

Dick: There was gasoline rationing. But we were just short of natural rubber, and synthetic rubber wasn't considered as good. So, with this gas rationing and the rubber shortage, why we tried to cut down and so I went to George Morgan. I told him that during the packing house season I had three men working in the same area in Watsonville, and each man had a sort of "beat," of 5, 10 or so packing houses where he just traveled around amidst them. Each man took his own car went down there and drove around his "beat" in that car, and the only

time he needed that car was to come down to where his "beat" was, to come back from his "beat," or to transport evidence, if he happened to need to take evidence, a box of apples or something to prosecute somebody. So I told him if he'd buy me two or three bicycles, why I could arrange it so that we'd throw those bicycles in one car, and one guy would take them down and dump the inspector and his bicycle out and then go to the man's "beat" and dump him and his bicycle out and so on."

Knaster: Oh, what an excellent idea.

Dick: And, well, poor old George said, "You've got a real good idea as far as saving gasoline and rubber but I can't go for it, 'cause everybody around the court house will want bicycles. Well, I'll be establishing a precedent that we just can't get along with." Well, I'm not so sure he was right, you know, there's so many people like this, they're afraid of change, they're afraid to deviate from precedent. They don't know what is going to happen and they're afraid to face it. But here I just thought I had a brilliant idea.

Knaster: Do you recall the state and federal legislation at the office that you as commissioner had to enforce?

Dick: Well, we didn't enforce any federal legislation at the commissioner's level. The state legislation . . . I don't really know what you mean by the question.

Knaster: You talked about plant quarantine and I imagine there were laws regarding . . .

Dick: Oh yes, there were.

Knaster: But was there any other legislation . . .

Dick: Well, there was . . . in our first interview, I told you that everything that the commissioner did, except what he did under a county ordinance, or direction of the board of supervisors, that he did either under a requirement of state law or an authority of state law. So there was a state law on every one of these functions that I mentioned in the earlier interview. In addition to that, the state director of agriculture has the authority to make regulations, to clarify, to implement the law. So, therefore not only did we have the law, but we had many regulations that had been made under authority of the law. An example would be when the law said the director shall adopt regulations to prevent the introduction of insect pests and plant diseases. Then under that authority he made a regulation that might say that all potatoes that came from Colorado had to be screened to make sure there were no Colorado potato beetles in them, or that all citrus fruit from citrus trees in Florida had to bear a certificate that they were inspected and didn't have citrus canker or citrus melanose. So we had a book about an inch thick of quarantine regulations that each inspector had to carry with him. Then in addition to that, he carried the volume on the agriculture of California, that was the law, which was in those days about half an inch thick, although all of it didn't pertain to the commissioner's office, and so those were the two books that an inspector had with him all the time.

Enforcing Agricultural Regulations

Knaster: As problems arose did you see a need for formulating certain regulations or laws?

Dick: Well, I can't quite think of any as commissioner. Let me divide this answer into two parts. One part you're not interested in so we'll give you that first and get rid of it. When I was with the state department of agriculture I did a lot of

that kind of thing. But when I was the commissioner I only recall one or two things that I did of that nature, and they were, rather than saying we need a law, they were more in the nature of saying that this should be done to improve the law, or to strike out some unnecessary or unreasonable part, or to strengthen it. There were occasions when I did go to Sacramento and testified before the legislature in opposition to what some other segments of the state wanted to do.

I can remember one time that I arrested nine different artichoke shippers in one night, who were shipping frost-bitten artichokes. They thought that they could overwhelm me by their numbers, but I wasn't overwhelmed; I managed to catch nine of them and got evidence on them, and so I had a sort of mass prosecution where I prosecuted nine different people on nine separate charges. They all got one attorney and all finally entered pleas of "guilty." Well then it was just shortly after that that the Castroville artichoke industry wanted to relax the standards on artichoke frost damage. Well Castroville got more severe frosts than the Davenport area did, and the Davenport area in those days was a big artichoke-growing area whereas now it's more Brussels sprouts. In those days it had a big artichoke growing area; it didn't produce the quantity per acre that Castroville did, it wasn't as good a producing area, but it was much more frost-free than Castroville. So the Castroville people were upset because too many of their artichokes were getting condemned or rejected from frost damage, and they wanted to liberalize the law, because by making the law more liberal, more lenient, they'd suffer less competition. So the irony was that after I had arrested nine of them, it was only a few weeks later that two carloads of us went to Sacramento to testify against weakening the standards, and in the group that went there were two or three of those nine that I had prosecuted for violating this stronger standard.

Knaster: Did that get passed or did it . . .

Dick: Well we prevailed, I mean they didn't weaken the standard. Then there've been others, I just don't remember others, but there were other occasions when I had to testify or made suggestions to improve the present laws.

Knaster: I remember you mentioned various incidents that you had with growers when out on inspection. I was wondering whether you found that you had difficulties enforcing regulations? Were people were uncooperative?

Dick: No. I can't say that they were. Before I became commissioner I had heard from my predecessor that, (who was incidentally my boss) you know when I was deputy inspector some of these people were ornery, and that it was almost impossible to get compliance out of some of them, and things of that nature, sort of a defeatist attitude, but I never found that to be true. I found that people are people and, in my opinion, people generally are good. You have bad ones, of course, once in a awhile. Now here's a guy, Pepino, I don't remember what his last name was, but Pepino was his nickname . . .

Knaster: Was he Italian?

Dick: He was Italian.

Knaster: Because *pepino* in Italian is cucumber.

Dick: Yeah. He had a ranch up the coast and late in the season after the big shipping part is over, why he used to bring artichokes down to the grocery stores. There was a grocery store, I don't recall the name, located about where that controversial Bianchi building was torn down here at the corner of Pacific Avenue and Mission Street. That old ramshackle shack that was torn down

recently and they're building the savings and loan place there. Well it was a grocery store and that's where I caught him. But anyhow, the supervising and state inspector was in town that day and so he said, "Let's go out and see what we can see in the wholesale produce market." So we had an early breakfast and, about 6 o'clock we went to the wholesale produce market and looked it over and I said, "Let's go down the avenue and see who's delivering to the stores." And so here comes that guy, with some boxes of artichokes delivering to the store, and I said, "Pepino, I want to take a look at your artichokes." He says, "All right, Charlie. What box do you want?" I said, "Well, give me this second one from the top." So he got it down on the sidewalk and I was down on my hands and knees on one side of it and he was on the other, and I would get ahold of a wormy one and I'd say, "Well, here's a wormy one," and I put it over on the side. "Oh, here's another one, Charlie," and he'd hand it to me to put it over there. And he was helping me find the bad ones. "Too many, Pepino, in this box. Let's look in another one." "So which one do you want Charlie?" "Well, this one." So he gets that one out and put it down and here we are going at it again. I'm on one end and he's on one end and he's helping me find the wormy ones and put them out. So after two or three boxes I said, "Well, Pepino, you know what that means." "Yes," he said, "What time do I come?" I said, "Well you better be in Judge Hawkes's chambers at quarter to ten o'clock." Well, okay, what do I do with these artichokes?" I said, "Well, I'm confiscating them for evidence, and you just pile them here and don't take them anyplace." I confiscated two or three boxes and told him to take the rest back to the ranch. I knew he'd do that . . . and recondition them.

So then I went and got a complaint against him and just about 9:30, Adolph Costello, who was in the insurance business at that time, with John Battistini,

called me in and said, “Pepino just called from the ranch, he wants to know if you can postpone his trial until 10:30 because he’s changing his clothes and he’s having problems up there.” So he came down, and we went in Judge Hawkes’ court and Judge Hawkes read him the complaint and said, “How do you plead.” He said, “I’m guilty, Judge.” And the judge said, “Before I sentence you, do you have anything you want to say?” “Well I want to say Charlie Dick is a fine man, Judge.” And the judge soaked him $100 or something and that was fine. I mean, you can’t call that trouble.

But, of course, every case wasn’t like that. But they’re good people. Just because they happen to be breaking a law of that nature doesn’t mean they’re really criminal. Many of them break it inadvertently, or through carelessness. Now with Pepino, it’s just plain darn carelessness, that’s all, and he knew it when he was caught, and when he was caught, why, he was good about it.

Knaster: Right, he was pretty good then. What would you say was the greatest challenge you faced in your work?

Dick: Well, I don’t know, that’s kind of a sticky one. If I had several hours to think about it, I might think of something that was the greatest challenge . . . I considered everything a challenge, because my educational background was such, that this was all a challenge to me. My natural inclination toward innovations and changing things made everything challenging. I just didn’t accept something because it was there, I wanted to know why and so forth. Certainly it was challenging to go to Sacramento and testify before the legislature; it was challenging to go to court with these people and not lose any case. I think what you’re really looking for, and need, is what was a challenge in a project sense. But I can’t think of . . .

Knaster: No, it's whatever you feel it is, not what I'm looking for.

Dick: Oh, not what you're looking for?

Knaster: It's a straightforward question.

Dick: Well, I think every day was a challenge.

Knaster: Then that's the answer.

Dick: I just liked this work. I liked it. I liked it because when I went to work in the morning, I didn't know what I was going to face that day. And, I had learned not to worry. When I was an inspector I used to worry about what was facing me tomorrow, that is, tomorrow I've got to go out and inspect so-and-so's place, it's about time and he's an ornery guy and I know he's going to give me trouble . . . so when I was an inspector I did a lot of worrying about the next day . . . was I prepared for the next day, had I done my homework well enough and so forth.

When I got to be commissioner, I just took myself, figuratively by the back of the neck and shook me up a little, and said, "Look Charlie Dick, if you worry as much when you're head of the department and you got the whole darn business to worry about; if you worry as much as you did when you were just merely an inspector, you're going to go bananas, you're going to go nuts." So I just drilled myself on not worrying about tomorrow. That served me in good stead all through my commissionerhood and later when I got to be chief deputy director of agriculture, where I was supervising about 1600 permanent employees, and an equal number of seasonal people. The challenges that came from all directions many of my contemporaries had ulcers or heart attacks or strokes, or something else along the way, and here was little old Charlie Dick that would go home at night, when he'd go home and just shake all the office off and leave it there and

go home and have a couple of snorts and eat dinner and feel fine and not worry about anything ‘til tomorrow. So, that was a good philosophy.

Well, back to challenge . . . everything was a challenge, not that I worried about it the day before, but every day was interesting, I didn’t know what was coming up, and as soon as it presented itself, the problem, then I would attack it with vigor and enthusiasm, and, of course, it was a challenge.

Knaster: Well, it sounds like maybe that’s what you liked most about the job. Were there any other particular aspects of the work that you did that you enjoyed the most?

Dick: Oh, I think what made me like the job was that . . . I don’t want to say I was a born leader, because I’m not a born leader, but I think I was a born supervisor, or something. I mean even on the baseball team, why heck I hadn’t played baseball very long before I was the manager, or the captain, or even when I worked for Mr. Beasley, I was the only one in the office that didn’t have civil service status, and I was the one he left in charge when he went out of town. It was just my nature, or something, to gravitate to the top of the pile of what little pile I was in. It wasn’t ambition, I never could recall saying, “I want that guy’s job, or I want to get to be the boss.” In fact I had my whole life . . . when I was an agricultural inspector I was set on being the highest thing I ever aspired to was the chief of the Bureau of Plant Quarantine in Sacramento, and I said if I could ever get that job, boy, would I have it made. When I started going up the ladder I jumped right past that job without even gettin’ it. (Laughter) I mean I was on an equal salary basis with it and the next thing I jumped over the top and was the boss of that job. The challenge, I guess to me, I guess that was it.

Knaster: Yes. We were talking about what was the greatest challenge you faced in your work, we discussed that for a little while, and then I was about to ask you, what aspects of your work you enjoyed the most?

Dick: Well, that's a little hard too, what aspects, I think I hinted at this, or maybe did more than hint last time, that I liked administrative work. I like the idea of making the decisions and calling the shots. Times when I was not the boss I would get a little upset because the boss couldn't make up his mind, and I hardly ever had a problem about making up my mind. I don't know that I always made the right decisions, but, nevertheless, I made them and then I didn't worry any more. I think that was the aspect that I liked the most. As to the various fields of work, I think I liked the ones that involved the biological sciences better than the ones were purely physical. I mean, for instance, standardization inspection, while I did a lot of it in my early days, was more or less routine. You just went out there and looked at so many apples, or so many heads of lettuce, and graded them and scored them, and kept some mathematical scores on them. Of course, you had the challenge of somebody disputing you and wanting to fight about it, but I think it was more interesting to work with plants and insects and things where the elements, the climate, the environmental conditions affected what was going to happen, and that, of course, was very interesting and very challenging.

Knaster: What did you like least about the job?

Dick: Least about it . . . going to work every day. (Laughter) I think that was all. I can't say there was anything about the work . . . well it was unpleasant, of course sometimes to reject something and cause a financial loss to some poor individual. That was unpleasant. But the mere fact that I had to get up every morning and go to work was the part I liked the least. If I could've gone at 6

o'clock or 10 o'clock or any o'clock I pleased it would have felt nicer. When I was working for the state I used to go to work at 6:30 every morning just to get a lot of work done before the other people came. I didn't have to, but that wasn't unpleasant, but the mere fact that I had to go at a certain time was unpleasant.

Knaster: What would you say was the most difficult situation you got into during your time as agricultural commissioner.

Dick: Oh, I don't know. It doesn't all come back to me. A lot of little incidents. The first week or month or something I was agricultural commissioner, people started getting up a petition to have me fired. That worried me a bit, but it wasn't sticky.

Knaster: What happened?

Dick: I don't know, they just didn't like the change from a lax administration to a stricter one.

Knaster: Well, who got up the petition?

Dick: I really don't know who the individuals were, but I know that they approached one prominent apple grower and he said, "Oh hell, let the boy have a chance first before you try and throw him out." It was growers.

Another time I had a case where I prosecuted a guy and his son was FBI so he demanded a court trial without a jury and he brought in his son, who was an FBI man in San Francisco or someplace, and was an attorney, and brought him in to defend him in his case. It was a real interesting thing because the judge, Roscoe Taylor, was one of those old-time judges who had learned law by what they called "reading law" in a lawyer's office; he hadn't been to law school, but he had

studied law that way. So this FBI lawyer came in and started throwing a lot of Latin talk around there, and poor old Roscoe didn't know what they were and the district attorney had to translate for him. That didn't make it too easy for this FBI guy because he was trying to show how smart he was. Well, of course, I had a good case anyhow but, nevertheless, they lost the case. Later then, this man wrote a letter to the board of supervisors wanting to get me fired and the board referred it to me for an answer and I drafted the answer which they sent to him. So I got off that pretty easy. Those are about the only two times people tried to fire me. But that isn't really what your question . . . your question was more on the nature of something that kind of tore me apart . . . having to make a decision, isn't that what you were after?

Knaster: Well, it sounded to me like the two incidents you just related—you knew very well how to handle.

Dick: Well, I got into one difficult situation that I got a handle on finally. It was during the war when there was this rubber shortage, and as you later reminded me, there was gasoline rationing. I still lived in Santa Cruz, I hadn't yet moved to Watsonville, and I had been appointed agricultural commissioner, and my main office was in Watsonville. Each day I would drive in this county car from Santa Cruz to Watsonville. The district attorney had wanted a car for his department and the supervisors didn't want to give him a car because they didn't think he needed one. He had repossessed a car from somebody who had falsified about his parents' welfare or relief, and was getting welfare from the county and the district attorney had prosecuted the case, and the man was an automobile dealer and didn't have any money but he had some extra cars—so he settled by giving the county a used car. Well the district attorney wanted this car and when he was having his budget hearing he told the supervisors that he wanted a car, and they

said, “No,” and he said, “a repossessed one, can’t I have that?” and they said, “No, we’ve given it to Charlie Dick’s department.” and he said, “Oh, so Charlie Dick can use it to drive from his home in Santa Cruz to his office in Watsonville.”

Well then that hit the newspapers. That night the paper came out and there were two great big headlines. One was that Rommel chased the British 8th Army back to the Egyptian border and the other was, “District Attorney accuses Agricultural Commissioner of misuse of County car.” Of course, that shook me up quite a bit. I was new then and I was a friend of the district attorney’s and I thought I really was in trouble. So the chairman of the board got ahold of me and said, “Yes, this has caused consternation that Lloyd Pringle, who was chairman of the ration board in the county, had threatened to cut off the county’s gasoline, because of the misuse of the car by Charlie Dick. So I had to straighten that one out.

The first step was to approach the board of supervisors, and tell them that I felt that this driving was justified, that I had an office in Santa Cruz and an office in Watsonville and that I had to be in the court house several times a week and that I didn’t see where it made any substantial difference which end of the county I lived in and started out from in the morning. Well, I think I flavored it a little bit in my direction, but nevertheless, that was my argument. So the board finally concluded that it was essential driving. So then I went to Lloyd Pringle myself, and smoothed it out with him and he wanted to argue. I said, “Now look, who can best determine what is essential driving, you or the board of supervisors?” Well, he had to admit the board of supervisors were the ones who made that determination. So I got off the heat there. Then my friends got real angry, and the district attorney was just running for re-election, and the chairman of the Republican Central Committee chewed him out, and the chairman of the Democratic Central Committee chewed him out, and I caught him out on the

highway one day, and stopped him and talked to him and told him I thought he ought to make a public retraction. Well, he said he was sorry he ever said it. What he said was just in a moment of thoughtlessness, and yet he couldn't very well make a public retraction and he wouldn't do it.

Knaster: Too much pride?

Dick: Well, the election was coming up—and he thought it would hurt his chances. Then some of my friends started a write-in petition for me for district attorney. I wasn't even qualified to be district attorney—I wasn't an attorney. It took a little while before I woke up to the fact of what they were doing and got them to stop because they were embarrassing me; it might look like I was serious about it. But, nevertheless, I got a hundred, or so, votes for district attorney—I was second highest man for district attorney.

Knaster: Without being an attorney?

Dick: Without even being an officer. So then, the San Jose papers, and the local papers picked that up—that was quite a joke.

Knaster: That is funny.

Dick: The district attorney kicked Charlie Dick, or the agricultural commissioner, in the shins, and so he had to run for district attorney and got 180 votes, or whatever it was. Well that was kind of a traumatic thing—it took several days to go through that. If I had been older in the ways of the world it wouldn't have hit me quite as hard as it did. I guess that's perhaps the worst single event.

Knaster: Okay. Do you think that carrying the commissioner's job would be more difficult in 1977 than in your time?

Pesticides as an Emerging Regulatory Issue

Dick: Yes, in several respects. In 1977 it's more technically complex than it was in my time. That is, the commissioner has a broader field, broader scope. Another thing is the entire pesticide and ecology complex that we have nowadays. In the old days the people weren't so much concerned about pesticides; they accepted them as a fact of life and didn't seem to sense that there was any great danger to them as individuals. The pesticides were less complex and simpler than they are now.

Then I think another factor is the public, generally, has even more distrust in public officials. It used to be they'd say, "Oh, they're all a bunch of crooks and that's all they'd do about it." But, now they say they're a bunch of crooks and nitwits, and they want to fight back all the time. They've got their rights, and you can't push them around. I think the people are a lot harder to deal with in law enforcement than they were back in those days. Cops used to be the kings and now they're not. Sometimes you go to court and it's the officer who is on trial rather than the defendant.

Knaster: Have the functions of the agricultural commissioner's office changed over the years or have they basically remained the same?

Dick: Basically the same. But in this great area of pesticides they have changed a lot. When I quit, why these organic phosphates and chlorinated hydrocarbon chemicals and synthetic chemicals were just coming in. DDT had just been invented, so to speak, I had a little sample in my office that I was trying out on a

few plants. Now we've got so complicated and the science of chemistry has become so sophisticated, that the chemists now can find minute traces of a pesticide in a product that they didn't even have the chemical means to find in 1945. They can find such minute traces—the chemist in Sacramento told me that if they dumped DDT, I forgot how many ounces, in the ocean at Santa Cruz that the chemical methods were such now that they could detect it as far away as Alaska. I mean, get it in such small amounts, well, those amounts are so insignificant, but they can still detect them.

Well let's see, I had a point that I wanted to make right there that was important and it escaped me. Oh, that also the laws and the tolerances that have been established by the Federal Food and Drug Administration and the state government have become so minute, so small, that it requires a lot of effort to control the pests and still not have any residue on the product. When the tests for these new pesticides come out, they have to screen it, the manufacturer does, and spend a million dollars or more—it costs him—by the time he gets a certain pesticide on the market, because a lot of its brothers have been screened out and fallen by the wayside, and of course, that cost is considered too. The testing that they finally do, as to its effects on humans, is done on rats and so when they finally find that "x" amount is a safe level on rats, then they take 100th of 'x' amount and establish that as the tolerance, as the amount that is allowed on food. In other words, it's all calculated into kilograms of body weight, but if one milligram were a safe level, then it would have to be 100th of a milligram would be the tolerance. The theory is that there might be a cumulative effect of two or more pesticides. So that has put an awful burden on the agricultural commissioner; he's got to regulate and control the use of these pesticides so as to make sure that the products aren't carrying a residue.

Knaster: Well, if pesticides weren't such a major issue in the [1930s and '40s] what environmental issues were in the forefront then? What kinds of burning issues excited people in those years? About land, or chemicals in the soil?

Dick: We had chemical problems back in those days. Lead arsenate was a great thing that kept us excited all the time. Lead arsenate was the spray that you used to . . .

Knaster: For apples wasn't it?

Dick: For apples. Both the lead and the arsenic were poisons. So these moths built up a tolerance, a resistance, to lead arsenate. In other words, the individuals who were most susceptible were not the ones who reproduced, and the individual moths who reproduced were the ones who had not succumbed to lead arsenate. Consequently, their offspring had the characteristics that made them a little bit resistant. So, over a period of years, they began to get resistant strains and then we'd have to use three, four, five, six and up in the Pacific Northwest, as many as seven lead arsenate sprays in a year.

Well, there was always the problem then about the spray residue on apples, and apples being rejected. There was a man named Dr. Cardiff in the state of Washington, who also owned apple orchards, who fought this thing in the federal courts and nationally . . . fought these restrictions on the use of lead arsenate. So that was always a burning question amongst the Watsonville apple growers. "All those damned restrictions—worrying about lead arsenate, my goodness, I been spraying apple trees since I was twelve years old without a mask on or anything, and I'm just as healthy as anybody else, and here they're all excited about some person eating an apple someplace got a little on it."

Well, they had one case in Watsonville, this happened before I was agricultural commissioner, where the State Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Chemistry, was headed by a man named Dr. Cox. There was some friction between Dr. Cox and the people in Watsonville. They bumped heads too many times or something and so anything that Dr. Cox said or did, the Watsonville people wanted to fight. Any chance that he got, why he persecuted the Watsonville people. It was silly. But, nevertheless, he caught some Watsonville grower with apples that had lead arsenate in excess of the tolerance, so he decided to prosecute. This Watsonville grower, I don't even remember who he was, got some of the best attorneys around in Watsonville, and demanded a jury trial in Watsonville. Well, of course, that was granted. So, he was tried in Watsonville with a jury of Watsonville people, and the prominent local physician, Dr. Henry Waters, testified that arsenic was used in the treatment of certain diseases. He gave them a lot of medical data as to dosages of arsenic given people for certain conditions, and so forth. Of course, this local grower was acquitted.

Some years later Dr. Cox deliberately picked his apples in San Francisco, or someplace, least he did something in order to bring the case to trial in San Francisco because he couldn't get a conviction in Watsonville. Well, all they had to do was hire a good San Francisco attorney who explained to the court that the reason these apples had not been tied up and rejected in Watsonville was because the state was afraid they couldn't get a conviction there. So the state lost that case. In those days lead arsenate was the burning pesticide issue.

Knaster: How did you personally feel about the use of pesticides?

Dick: Well, I have a lot of feelings about it. One, that if growers were not rather strongly restricted they would become very careless in the use of pesticides,

injuring, in some cases themselves and their employees and the general public, the neighbors, by drift, and so forth. Now a progressive grower is just as much interested in protecting the public and the neighbors as he is anybody else, because he knows he can get sued and he doesn't want to hurt people and all that. But there are, or used to be at least, and perhaps still are, a lot of small operators who were not well read and were careless and didn't understand the dangers of these pesticides. So we need very strict regulations. Now, that's one side of it.

Now the other point is that up until the 50's or 60's, California was checking more samples of produce for pesticide residue annually than the Federal Food and Drug Administration was, in the whole country. So we thought we were pretty smart; we were thumping our chests, and saying we're doing a wonderful job—we became a little complacent in thinking that we were perfection. We weren't perfection, but we were doing a hell of a good job—California, Florida, and one other state, I've forgotten which one, were outstanding in this respect.

We got shook up a little about the time Rachel Carson wrote her book *Silent Spring*—and that shook us up and we re-evaluated . . . I'm talking about times now when I was with the state and had an overall statewide responsibility. We re-evaluated our position and put on a lot more staff and bought a lot more equipment and strengthened our regulations and so forth. We were doing, perhaps, the best job in the country at that time, but we were a little complacent over the fact that we were the best, and the best wasn't good enough. So we improved, and improved and I think that—well, in fact, we were rejecting milk.

I remember one of the jokes. One of our head chemists wanted to get some mother's milk in town someplace and test it for DDT. So he got one of the

employees, who had just had a child, to bring a sample of mother's milk and in testing the mother's milk in the laboratory, he found out that it had more DDT in it than we'd been rejecting cow's milk for. And you see, she had picked this up here and there and DDT is a pesticide that has a very long half-life. It takes a long time to self-destruct. And it accumulates in the fat of the body, and that's why milk is a hazard because it'll accumulate in milk fat. Nevertheless, we found out that here we were in all our glory out there rejecting things in the field that had far less DDT in it than this milk this poor little kid was drinking from his mother's breast. Now that's part of the bad side.

Now you get over to the good side, they had convicts in Atlanta, who in the interests of science and to be good guys and maybe to get paroled sooner, ate DDT in measured dosages over periods of years in a study by the pesticide center in Atlanta. They couldn't find any ill effects and these prisoners were all right after they had eaten these dosages that were considered serious.

So we get so involved in testing—I don't recommend anyone eating DDT, I don't want to eat DDT or any of these other pesticides, but we have a peculiar situation in this country, and perhaps in the world. These pesticides that are put through these severe tests, as I've just mentioned awhile ago, before they can even be put on the market or used.

When it comes to food additives and drugs, they have to be tested. Then we have food additives and the Delaney Amendment to the Federal Food and Drug Cosmetic Act of about 30 years ago says that any food additive has to be checked, especially for cancer, and all that stuff, and undergo serious tests. That's why they're trying to outlaw saccharine right now, it doesn't fit with the Delaney Amendment. So here they're going to spend a lot of time checking the cancer

properties of food additives and pesticides and what do we do about the natural foods?

We know salt is poisonous if you eat enough of it, and you know it's bad for people with high blood pressure. We know that rhubarb leaves are poisonous—we eat the stems and they're all right, but if we were to eat the rhubarb leaves they'd kill us. I always had my doubts about coffee, sometimes, I read an article once where char-broiled steaks that were sort of cremated a little on the outside were cancer producing. So what I think we ought to be doing, is we ought to be testing a lot of our normal foods for these same qualities that we test food additives for. That would give us a benchmark. I can remember the cranberry scare one time years ago, they put some herbicide, the name just doesn't come to me right at the moment, on the cranberries back in the cranberry growing area in the east, and they almost put the cranberry growers out of business.

In fact the federal government had to give them a lot of emergency money. There was so little of this stuff on there that people would have had to eat a ton or ton and a half of cranberries to have got any significant adverse effects from it. I remember one time in New York State when they condemned a lot of Concord grapes suspected of having a certain pesticide; their tests indicated the presence of some pesticide, and then it wasn't until they condemned them all and the guy lost a lot of money, that they discovered that all Concord grapes, whether they've been sprayed or not, show that reaction on that machine. So, we didn't know enough of the chemistry of the Concord grape.

Knaster: Well, in addition to changes in pest control, what other significant changes have you seen in agriculture?

Mechanization in Agriculture

Dick: Well, the big change has been mechanization. When labor was easier to get and was less expensive and didn't strike, why people used to labor where they didn't need to—where they could have mechanized. Now there's cotton—cotton is practically all mechanized with cotton-picking machines. They've developed tomatoes for canning, and this happened twenty or thirty years ago. This particular variety all matures at about the same time and it's a kind of a thick-skinned tomato, and this tomato-harvesting machine just pulls the whole plant and shakes the tomatoes off.

Knaster: I've seen those machines out in the fields . . .

Dick: Yes . . . and I don't know whether grape-picking machines have ever really worked, I know they had some that would go along and shear the bunches of grapes off. Green bean machines, I understand, have been very successful in Colorado. Those are just a few examples . . . well we even have Brussels sprouts up here on the coast now that are picked by a machine. They grow a sprout plant that tends to make the sprouts come in a fairly uniform size and at the same time, and this machine clamps some . . . I haven't ever seen it . . . it hooks around the stalks some way and goes up and cuts them all off at once. So, mechanization has been important.

Farm Labor Unionization

Dick: Unionization of farm labor has become an important thing. California, Oregon, and Washington have traditionally, as far back as I can remember, paid higher farm wages than the rest of the country. That's one of the reasons why California farmers resisted unionization. They said, "we can't afford to pay more

wages because we're already paying higher wages than our competitors." Well that's a good sounding argument but they had certain other advantages that the competitors didn't have in terms of higher yield per acre, and things of that nature. Now we have unionization pretty well established, and I used to laugh at some of these farmers that told me it would break them, because I could throw in their face the fact that the dairy industry in California had been . . . organized 50 years ago and they weren't broke.

Changes in Crops

Knaster: Have you seen a change in crops—that some crops have been phased out and others coming in?

Dick: Oh yes, although I just can't at the moment think specifically of them. Certainly there's been changes, changes here in Santa Cruz County, of course these changes occurred way back even before I was commissioner, and while I was commissioner of phasing out apples in favor of lettuce.

Knaster: Do you recall that they eliminated orchards to plant lettuce . . .

Dick: Yes. Then, another thing was the phasing out of the Bellflower apple. When I was a kid here the Bellflower, I think we mentioned that the first time we talked, was one of the favorite apples, only you can hardly find a Bellflower apple any more. So these changes take place for a number of reasons: improved variety, availability of water, competition from other areas, and . . . oh there are so many factors that make these things change. I imagine that many of the varieties are not the same varieties in the annual crops and so on, that we planted when I was ag commissioner. I know this tomato thing, where they've changed to a variety of canning tomato just to make them pickable by machine.

Knaster: You talked to me about the relationship of the commissioner's office to growers. What was the relationship of the office of agricultural commissioner to labor?

Dick: Well, back in the days of World War II when I was commissioner, we cooperated very closely with the state employment service in trying to get adequate farm labor into the community. We didn't happen to deal with labor itself; we dealt with attempting to get it and sort of acting as referee in some cases, and so forth. Now the pesticide deal does give the agricultural commissioner a sort of responsibility to labor, that is in protecting field labor from pesticides that are used in the fields. Labor criticizes the agricultural commissioner for allowing a certain pesticide to be used, and other times the growers are criticizing him.

Oh yes, see there have been cases where, and I don't think this is so much true here in Santa Cruz County as it is in some of the orchard areas in the San Joaquin Valley, where growers had put a pesticide on the trees and then didn't keep their picking crews out of the orchard for a long enough period, or at least there was a controversy over it. That's the place where the ag commissioner enters into the picture.

The Protective Function of County Agricultural Commissioners

Knaster: How do you see the county agricultural commissioner's office in the overall network of agriculture in the state?

Dick: I think, perhaps the agricultural commissioners are one of the most important offices in the whole state, in their protective function. Start with standardization—those laws were enacted by growers, they weren't enacted by

consumers. Now, of course, they do protect the consumers, but they were really designed by growers to see that the quality of the product gave consumer satisfaction, and thus, they were really protecting their economy. So, standardization is a protective function and it protects the reputation of the product. It also protects the product from unfair competition from inferior products from someplace else.

Seed inspection is also a protective function—it keeps the farmer from getting bad seed, or weeds in his seed. Plant quarantine certainly is a protective function—it prevents the introduction and spread of pests. Pest control is protective. And as you go through all these areas, the agricultural commissioner is very important to the agriculture in this community.

Then, there is another place where he is very important, and I found that out from both sides, that is when I was an ag commissioner and when I was in the State Department of Agriculture, that's the only way you get the "grassroots" feeling to big government. You've heard all this talk about government being close to the people, and so forth . . . but I found it very helpful, when I was with the State Department of Agriculture, to use these agricultural commissioners as a way to get a feel of what the problem was at a local level, what the needs were at the local level. Bureaucrats can sit in their ivory tower forever and not know what's going on locally and they can't get it from their own employees because their own employees only feed them what they think the boss wants to hear. There were only two ways that I've found of knowing what was going on when I was deputy director of agriculture, and one was just to take a trip for a week or so right out into the field. Or the other was to rely on these agricultural commissioners to feed me the local stuff, because the stuff they were feeding me was about 75% critical and 25% not critical. But it's good to get that kind of

feedback. So I'd say that feedback aspect on this is really important to the state government and the federal government and the members of the legislature and so forth.

Knaster: If you could revamp the office at all in its structure and its functions what recommendations would you make?

Dick: To revamp the office of agricultural commissioner?

Knaster: Yes. Do you feel that there was something lacking, some power that you could have used . . .

Dick: It depends on where you sit. As an agricultural commissioner certainly I felt that there was power lacking, but I think that might have been because I was young and unsophisticated. In other words I didn't like the limitations, you had the State Department of Agriculture telling you you could or should do this or that, you had the board of supervisors telling you you could only have so much in your budget, and you had people coming and criticizing you when you knew you were right and they thought you were a bum and an incompetent and they wanted you to do things this way and that way . . . and I think perhaps some of the agricultural commissioners feel that way . . . the younger ones.

But as I got older and as I got up into state government . . . I think all these controls are good. They're checks and balances and when I was deputy director of agriculture I had the unique situation of serving under four different directors in a fourteen month period. Some new directors that came in, a couple of them came in with the idea that this system was a horrible system. They said there's no central head to this thing, there's no organizational structure here. Here we've got the State Department of Agriculture that has to rely on the agricultural

commissioners to get part of the work done and yet it has no real good control over them. The statutes say that they shall do these things under direction and supervision of the director but the budget is controlled by the county and they are pretty much lone wolves in their own county and they kick us in the shins every once in awhile and this and that—it would be much better if they were employees of the State Department of Agriculture and we had a straight chain of command right down the line. Both of these directors, after a reasonable period of time and exposure to the system, said, "Why Charlie, I've revised my opinion of this thing, I can see now the advantage of having these people out at the local level. We're getting an honest reflection of what's going on out there and what the views and the needs are, and if these people were our own staff people, why it would be the same old bureaucratic story."

One more thing. I want to say that this county agricultural system is unique to California. They don't have it anyplace else. They have variations; in some states the extension service does some local enforcement work, and they have district managers and stuff from the state government, and they have boards and commissions and various things. The agricultural commissioner, you know, was invented around 1881 or 1883, as the county board of horticultural commissioner. I've answered letters from all over the country, when I was with the state and talked to legislators from various states and other people and they're asking questions about this agricultural commissioner system, and how it works, and how can such a thing as untied together as that possibly work? I heard criticisms from nurserymen in other states that the commissioner of Los Angeles County will pass a shipment with a certain pest on it, and the commissioner of San Joaquin County will reject the same shipment with the same pest. I wrote letters and letters explaining that—well, the reason is the

crops are different in one county than in another. So it's a unique system and I think it's a very good one.

Knaster: Good. If you were introduced to someone who was going to be a future commissioner, what advice, what recommendations, would you make to that person?

Dick: All right. Let's see. First the mere fact that he was going to go into this office meant that he was technically qualified because he had passed examinations and all that stuff. So, there would be no sense giving him advice on technical matters. The thing that I've tried to stress when I've been in this kind of situation is cooperation. A commissioner is generally a person who comes into a new community . . . like Jack Simmon right now, who is ag commissioner and came from Contra Costa County . . . he has to . . . get acquainted and cooperate . . . You have to cooperate with the board of supervisors certainly, because that's where your backing comes from when you're prosecuting or serving notice on somebody doing something illegal. You have to cooperate with other county agencies, particularly the [UC] Agricultural Extension Service.

For many, many years the ag commissioner and the farm advisor, as we called them in those days used to be like strange cats and dogs in some of the counties. They were jealous of each other, and there was room for both offices and the public wasn't being served if these two people were being jealous and fighting with each other. They'd be served only when their programs dovetailed. You have to cooperate with the press. If you don't, you're going to get a bad press. I don't mean you have to give them special privileges or anything, but you have to let them know what is going on. A newspaper guy just loves it when you call him up and say, "Look Joe, such and such happened, or such and such," break a

story for him, makes him feel good. Then the next time he's saying something editorially—he's happening to mention you amongst the good guys. You have to get along with growers' associations and the growers, and packers and the public. I always made a practice of talking to women's clubs, service clubs and things of that nature, telling them what the agricultural commissioner's office was there for, what it was doing, why it was there, how it helped them as consumers, how it helped the economics of the county, and all of that. Of course, there's no use trying to give technical advice, and there is no use trying to tell them how to be a manager. You can't tell them how to be a manager in three easy lessons.

Women in the Fields and Packing Sheds

Knaster: Speaking of women's clubs, that reminds me, did you work with women farmers?

Dick: No.

Knaster: There were no women growers to speak of?

Dick: No. Ella Teaweaster, I think on Beach Road and Theresa Hine, were the only two women farmers. There were some women who were nurserywomen. But there were very few women farmers.

Knaster: Did you see women helping, I mean as wives, or . . .

Dick: Yes, on the small farms, what we called the mama and papa type of farm, or the family farm. The women were certainly helpers there. They were sometimes out doing hard labor and they were involved in picking and packing

and sorting and grading fruit. In these small family units, the women were very active.

Knaster: Did you notice women out in the fields and the orchards? As laborers?

Dick: No. Not as hired laborers. Oh, I can recall the tomato picking and strawberry picking . . . that yes. Strawberries was a family affair, mostly people of Japanese ancestry, and they were mainly women out there picking the strawberries, because the men were smoking a cigarette or leaning on the shovel, or doing something important. In the tomato harvest quite a lot of women would go out and work. Then the place where women did work, in this county, was in the packing houses and dryers. Practically all the fruit grading and sorting and the hand-work in the apple dryers was done by women.

Knaster: Did you notice any difference among the different ethnic groups as farmers, in terms of how they dealt with the land, and how they raised crops, and their attitude towards agriculture?

Dick: There were some differences. The Portuguese tended to go stronger . . . the Portuguese and Danes, Hollanders, seemed to go stronger to dairy farming, than other ethnic groups. As far as actually handling the land, well, the Japanese tended to go strongly to strawberries and bush berries and truck crops. Yugoslavs were involved in apples, orchards. Italians were both in orchards and truck crops. But as to their actual farming, I think that most all of these foreign-born ethnic groups were all good farmers in their handling of the land, their productivity, their diligence; they worked hard and they had come from an environment where frugality was a virtue. They worked hard. They treated their soil well, they put manure back on it, they didn't abuse it, an so on. Now, I don't know what the next generation has done, I'm not too familiar with them, but in

my time around here, why almost all of these ethnic groups had at least one family where the senior family member was foreign-born. But I'd say that they were generally all good farmers.

Knaster: I was curious because some people who came here from different countries did not have an agricultural background in the country where they had previously lived, whereas some did. For example, the Japanese were noted for being excellent farmers. So I wondered if they treated the land in a different way based on that experience?

Dick: Oh, the only real difference I can think of was their . . . are you speaking of Japanese or any of them?

Knaster: Whoever . . .

Dick: Well, I think most of them were inclined to be small farmers and were inclined to do a great deal more hand labor, I don't know what you call them, the person who cannot be categorized into an ethnic group. You can't call them just Americans, that isn't quite the right word. Now, in some areas the Armenians in Fresno or the Yugolavs here and in other parts of the state, tend to go to pretty large acreages, fruits or grapes and lettuce or whatever it is. But, these Japanese and Italians around this neighborhood seemed to stay with sort of small acreage and a lot of hard work. With the Japanese farmers, the whole family was working. Mama, papa and the kids, and as I've said there were more women than men out there in their strawberry patches. Whereas some of the other ethnic groups, the women . . . the Italians up the coast . . . women were generally the cooks. They would hire a group of farm labor, or other Italians that might live there, or might not live on the ranch, but at least ate there, and the

women would cook for this big crew of men who would come in at noon to eat their lunch.

Knaster: I'm going to jump just a little bit from when you left the agricultural commissioner's office and went to Sacramento and I'd like to know when you returned to Santa Cruz County . . . and why?

Dick: Well, I returned to Santa Cruz . . . I retired in 1967 and I decided that now in my retirement I wanted to live back in Santa Cruz. So I bought a lot down here and then I got an assignment to go to Guatemala for three months to work down there. Then when I came back I built a house here. Well, it was 1969, I believe, when I moved back to Santa Cruz.

Knaster: Was that in this house?

Dick: No. It was in another house.

Knaster: How involved are you in agriculture today?

Dick: Not a bit.

Knaster: Not at all. Do you go around and give talks or . . .

Dick: No. I've sat on the oral examining board for agricultural commissioners and I was called back by the State Department of Agriculture about two years ago to hold a rather controversial hearing in San Diego where they didn't feel that they had anybody on their staff that they wanted to do it. I'm toastmaster whenever . . . a local agricultural commissioner retires, or something like that . . . but no, I'm not involved in agriculture, in fact, I don't even keep up-to-date.

Knaster: Have your interests taken another direction?

Dick: Well, I told you in the beginning, you know, that as a kid I hated agriculture. When I was immersed in it, I was immersed in it, and now that I'm out of it I'm, well, occasionally I'll attend a meeting of the Coast Counties Agricultural Commissioners Association, but it's more a matter of meeting my old friends than it is keeping up-to-date. Now, other interests, I don't know, I've always had interest in studying languages, reading books, traveling a little bit, tinkering with hi-fi, working in the yard. I've got a beautiful wood workshop out there with all kinds of tools, I don't make anything, but it's more of a house maintenance deal. I can't say that my hobbies have changed, it's just that I have more time to sleep and more time to goof off and more time to do what I want.

Future Trends in Agriculture

Knaster: Have you thought about what direction agriculture is taking in the future of California on a state level and on a county level? How do you see the agriculture developing in this area, in this county?

Dick: Well, let's assume that we're going to start getting normal rainfall again someday, because I don't want to base the picture on this. I just can't quite see any changes in direction other than changes in varieties of crops, or types of crops, which I can't anticipate based on some of these factors that I mentioned before. There's another factor that's happened, that has come along here, I mentioned mechanization awhile back as one of the changes in agriculture. Another great change in agriculture has been pre-packaging and frozen foods. Those are two things that they didn't have much of in the old days. So, now a lot of crops are being grown for freezing vegetables and stuff that we didn't have and we have frozen-food plants. Then consumer convenience packaging; it used to be that people would be willing to go and buy their peas and shell them . . .

why now, of course they buy them frozen already shelled. There's other types of convenience packaging where they're putting apples up, five or six apples in a little plastic bag and all that sort of stuff. That has been a trend that's taken place and as far as I can see that's going to continue because it makes it handier for the retailer; it makes it handier for the consumer to buy them, and all that.

With cellopack packaging, beauty is going to be just as important, and maybe even more important, than the old way of displaying things. It's got to be attractive. In a frozen food package the end product has to be just as attractive as it would have been had you bought the fresh product and shelled it or sliced it or whatever you did. Quality is still an important thing. I was just talking to a man the other day who had spent a great many years up until just the last year or so working in a food-freezing plant. Somehow or another I got on the subject of Safeway's brand of frozen vegetables, because that's the one I buy because I happen to trade at Safeway. He went on to tell me when we got into a discussion of quality, that Safeway had insisted on the best quality that came out of their plant. I sort of gathered from the conversation that there were some different ranges of quality that would come out.

Knaster: Do you think there's going to be a change in terms of size? That there's going to be greater crop production in this county, or that land will be taken over for other purposes? For example, real estate? Have you seen those kinds of changes in your time?

Dick: I haven't seen them much here, although I think perhaps there's some going on around Watsonville now. But I have seen them in places like Orange County and Santa Clara County and so on. Well, generally the increase in agricultural production that I can see in Santa Cruz County is going to be in

terms of efficiency, in other words, more production per acre due to better technology or in varieties or techniques.

Knaster: Rather than more acreage.

Dick: Rather than more acreage. I don't see the room for more acreage. Now when you're talking about the other direction, of it lessening, Watsonville, I think is in the most danger, even where the city of Watsonville sits is excellent agricultural land. So that any encroachment by urban development there would take away agricultural land, and the city of Watsonville has been growing very fast lately. How much the growth has encroached on agricultural land I don't know. When you get to a place like Santa Cruz or Soquel or Capitola, I don't know. I don't think it makes much difference. There isn't any broad expanse of agricultural land that's any different from some other little hill or valley around here.

Knaster: Well, let's say we are going to face some even worse drought disaster, what do you think that would do to agriculture in this community?

Dick: I don't know, I think you had better ask Jack Simmon, or somebody like that because I don't know what the water situation is here, and I'm not up-to-date enough on what the water demands are for these lettuce and tomatoes and things like that they're growing.

Knaster: Was there never a situation like this before, where there's a serious drought in this county? Is this the first time? I know they come in cycles of some sort.

Dick: I don't know. I've been back here since 1969 and it's only last year and this year that they've bugged us about water rationing.

Knaster: You didn't face that at all in the '20s and later?

Dick: No. We didn't face it then. Of course, we didn't have near so many people. But I don't recall that it was a problem with agriculture. See we don't have imported water here like some communities do. We develop our water locally through wells and streams. Now that Pajaro Valley area down there, that is mostly all irrigated by wells. As long as the water table is relatively high, why, no problem. But if we get these dry years, enough of them, the water table goes down and they may start drawing salt water out, as has happened in some parts of southern California, where you have wells that are reasonably close to the ocean, the salt water seeps into that lower area.

Knaster: Since your last position in agriculture was on a state level, what would you say about the direction of agriculture statewide?

Dick: I don't know . . . I think it will continue to become more mechanized, it has become and perhaps will continue to become more efficient because of technology. As to crop changes, I'm ten years behind the times now on what market demands and market trends are.

Knaster: Do you see agriculture expanding more in a corporate way and fewer and fewer small farmers being able to exist?

Dick: Well, yes, I think there's some merit to that contention. It's been argued now at least for twenty years that the corporate farmers were killing off the small farmers, and I did have some figures ten years ago, or so, about what had happened but I just don't recall them at all. There's always an argument as to which is more efficient, the corporate farmer or the small farmer. I'm inclined to think that actually from a production standpoint that the small farmer's more

efficient because he's using less hired labor per unit of production, less of that irresponsible or devil-may-care sort of labor. He's using his own family and his neighbors who are interested. But from the standpoint of marketing that's where the small farmer has his problem. A farmer . . . if a person made shoes and he couldn't sell all his shoes this year, he could put them away in the warehouse, assuming they're not going out of style. But when a farmer produces a crop he's got to sell it. The most successful farmers, I think, are the farmers who are most successful in marketing. I have a friend who is a farmer and agricultural official and a few other things, and I said to him one time, "Frank, why are you the only farmer that I don't hear moaning. All the other farmers are always moaning . . . how they're going broke . . . and all this stuff . . . and here you farming on a big scale with barley and rice and tomatoes and a few other things." He said, "I studied economics (he was an economist); the first thing they taught me was that you never plant a crop until you know where you're going to sell it. Consequently, before I plant a single crop of rice or tomatoes or whatever I plant, I have a commitment or a contract that somebody's going to buy it. Well, it doesn't necessarily mean that I'll get the highest possible price because I have to make this agreement so many months in advance, but it does mean that I'll get a price that'll pay me a profit, and it'll mean that I'll have an outlet." So that's the real problem that farmers have is that too many of them will grow a crop and then try to sell it. And they're at the mercy of the big people. Well now the corporate farmer, he's got this marketing advantage. He's got a big corporation that markets his stuff for him, or he knows what he's going to do with it.

Knaster: Along those lines, if you had the power would you break up these big corporate agriculture and let more people be small farmers?

Dick: No. It's a funny thing, I mean, I don't know what's wrong with me but here I am. I'm a Democrat; I'm a pretty liberal person and somehow or other I cannot get used to the idea of subsidizing inefficiency. We talk about putting the little farmer out of business, putting the mama and the papa grocery store out of business, putting this person out of business . . . I don't care how many of them you put out of businesses, so long as you don't deteriorate the availability to the consumer of a product at a reasonable price. We were supposed to try to pressure the legislature into giving advantages to some little inefficient farmer, or a little inefficient grocery, to keep them in business. Well, who is giving a benefit to the little inefficient carpenter, or the little inefficient laborer?

Knaster: Let's say that the small farmer isn't being inefficient.

Dick: I think they have to do it competitively. What is so sacred about a farmer? The trouble is that city people always looked upon farming as something that was . . . Oh, it belonged to everybody, or it was public domain. A farm is no more public than the ground Safeway's store is built on, or something else; it's a piece of land that this person owns and he's using it to cultivate crops on. I do believe we have to preserve the agricultural land, otherwise people will starve. But, I mean the idea of saying that we should make a lot of people into farmers, which is a hell of a way of life, a terrible way of life, if they're not good at it. I grew up on one of these farms. I've seen too many other people that had to grow up on a farm where they work from daylight 'til dark and they didn't have a very good life . . . We'd starve to death if we took all these city people out and put them on a farm. You know what they did in Mexico, where they did that a couple of times . . . well, one time at least, back in the days, I forget who was president of Mexico in the 30s. It may have been Cardenas. It was somebody who patterned himself after Roosevelt. He broke up all those big land holdings,

and of course, how the Mexicans would hold big acreages and then pick on the poor people, and so on. But, he broke all this up and gave this land out, and would take ten or fifteen years . . . the people had it all back again, these little guys didn't know how to farm it, they couldn't make both ends meet, it was just a noble experiment. And now, they're trying it again down there with one state.

William Volck

Knaster: Okay. There were a number of things that you wanted to get back to. One of them was that you told me to remind you about William Volck.

Dick: Oh, all right. I knew him by sight. But the thing I wanted to say about Volck was he was the first agricultural commissioner or horticultural commissioner after they got through having this board.

Knaster: What year would that have been?

Dick: It was in the 1920's, somewhere along in there, maybe 1914 or '17. He lived by himself in Watsonville. He'd go down into his little office, near where the Appleton Hotel is now, and they'd say he'd be down there at night cooking his meal with one hand and stirring arsenic with the other, experimenting. He invented lead arsenate—what they call summer oil, which was a light oil you could spray on plants during the growing season without burning them and kill the bugs. So then, he was so successful in just inventing things there in his spare time in the evenings, that a group of Watsonville people formed the California Spray Chemical Corporation just to market the products that Volk was inventing.

He went and became a big stockholder and a very important man in the company. I wanted to mention him because you still see Volck oil. Standard Oil

Company finally bought up this California Spray Chemical Corporation and so now they call them Ortho Products. But he was the first agricultural commissioner here.

The Decline in County Nursery Stock

Dick: In our other interviews when you asked me about radical changes in agriculture in this county, I overlooked some changes that have occurred to me. Back in 1930, when I started out as an agricultural inspector, this county was a large growing area for narcissus bulbs, gladiolus bulbs and a number of others. There was quite a large acreage of bulbs in this country. They were sold wholesale to other parts of the state and the county. Over the years that has dwindled considerably. At the present time we have Antonelli's Begonias, but back in the 30's there were three great big begonia operations. There was the Brown Bulb ranch on 41st Avenue, and Renie Roche, and Betterly. And Antonelli's is an offspring of Betterly. The Antonelli boys used to work for Betterly.

Then, in addition to the ending of the big bulb operation, we used to have nurseries growing shrubs. There used to be a nursery, Leonard Coates, which had quite an acreage for shrubbery-growing grounds. That's no longer there. The smaller plants at Islys Nursery and Bryant's Nursery used to grow the vegetable and bedding plants, plus a couple of them over in Watsonville, smaller. Alladin Nursery is still there in Watsonville, but I don't think they have the growing grounds they used to have. Most of these nurseries now in the county are buying their nursery stock; it's brought in from big producers elsewhere and we've developed a bunch of these small retail places, like K-Mart, places with no growing grounds at all. Eberts, Orchard Supply Hardware, they just wait for the

truck to come and get their stock. I think Harry Bryant still grows his own bedding plants. That's been a real drastic change in terms of nursery stock, bulbs. When they grew bulbs here they also had quite a flower business. They used to cut the flowers and ship them to San Francisco markets by truck.

The total number of sales in the county, of course, has expanded because of population. But the actual production of growing of the nursery stock in the county has decreased, because they bring in the stuff from other places. It's just a retail business now because the product wholesales and retails. Whereas back in the '30s and '40s they used to produce the stuff here and export it to other counties in other parts of the state. I suspect that one reason why the bulb business changed was that World War II may have had something to do with it. I know that they're importing certain bulbs, tulips and so on. Another change is, I think the Pacific Northwest is into producing some of these bulbs. But as to the change in growing shrubs and nursery stock, I think it's just a matter of economics . . . these big places have a different type of equipment, machinery, and facilities for growing on a large scale. Whereas, in the old days before they were so mechanized, why a little operation could grow effectively.

I don't know that it's hurting these nurseries. I think it's just a gradual change where . . . because obviously they start bringing stuff in as Woolworth's did way back in the 30s. They brought in some rose bushes from other places because they didn't grow here. But these chain stores can retail so much stuff, that it's difficult for a small nurseryman to produce it and to market it at that price . . .

Labor Contractors

Dick: I can't comment with any authority on what the farm labor situation is now. Sure from the social standpoint you right away think that labor

contractors, per se, are bad. I don't know what they are right now, but I know that in those days they were necessary and important to the grower. To take just one example. Carol Rogers was an apple grower, who had a certain labor contractor he dealt with, let's just call him Joe, I don't know what his name was. But, for instance, he dealt with Joe and when it came pruning time, or whatever time, Joe would show up or contact him. Joe might be in San Jose, or he might be someplace else, but Carol Rogers was one of his clients. "Mr. Rogers, how many apple pruners do you need?" . . . or, "How many thinners do you need?," and such. Or, when it came picking time and, "What are you paying?" So at the appointed time that man would gather the crew.

Now the alternative way of doing it is to hang a sign in front of your orchard and say, "pickers wanted," or "hired help wanted," and you don't know what you're going to get, you don't have any idea of their competence, or availability or anything. Whereas by dealing through this contractor, and I don't know how much he took out of it, but obviously he took enough to earn a living. But it resulted in a reliable source of labor. Now looking at it from the laborer's standpoint, he had the alternative of going around and hunting for a job, or he had the idea of tying on as one of the workers with a certain contractor. He knows if he ties on with Joe that Joe is going to find him work. He's going to have a job to support his family. So, some of the contractors were accused of being unscrupulous and exploiting the workers, and perhaps they did . . . but I think then, in those days, it was a good thing. What it is now I don't know because now labor's getting unionized, where you have hiring halls, I presume, or at least have methods of the union helping people to get jobs, and so the need for a labor contractor may not be as great or it may be greater, I haven't any idea.

I don't recall anybody ever being brought up on charges. But I do recall writers who implied, or even stated, that these labor contractors were gypping the laborers. I've read quite a bit of that in different places, in books and magazines. But in the Watsonville area, the only place I had any experience with them, I don't recall any of them having been brought up; it doesn't mean they weren't. I may not have known.

Thoughts on Farming

Dick: During our last interview you asked me a question somewhat along the lines of whether more people should be encouraged to go into farming rather than seeing farming develop into this corporate sort of thing that we were speaking of. And I said, "No." One of the points that I wish I had mentioned, is that many people have the idea that it doesn't take much sense or skill to be a farmer. They seem to think of a farmer as somebody with hay sticking out of his ears, who goes out and plants by the light of the moon, or whatever the phase of the moon happens to be right in his opinion, and it doesn't take any brains.

Well, farming is, in my opinion, an operation that requires a great deal of skill, some sort of ability that everybody just doesn't have. Science, of course, technology is very important and the farmer who's been to college and studied agriculture and studied farming from the scientific standpoint is undoubtedly a better farmer. He's better mostly on the side of the economics of the thing. He knows what crops to plant; he knows how to market them; how to buy his materials and when not to use fertilizer and pay a lot of money for fertilizer he doesn't need and so forth. But there's just something about growing plants. I think my ex-wife was an example. I had all kinds of technical knowledge, but I never could raise a garden as well as she could. My plants just didn't do that well

and hers did—you call that a green thumb. But there's just something about farming that—I know I couldn't be a farmer and perhaps that is one of the reasons I dislike it is because things just don't respond to me. I kill them with kindness. I insist on the rows being straight when it doesn't make any difference, and so on. So, the point I'm trying to make is that those people who think that farming is simple and easy are just badly mistaken. I think it's more complicated than building houses or repairing automobiles or many other things that we look upon as skilled trades.

There are intangibles. You look at the plants and know that they need water and there's just no rule of thumb. Those plants don't look good, they need to be fertilized. Or . . . the weeds are growing here . . . when should I cut them . . . if I cut them today they'll grow right back . . . if I let them grow too long they'll take all the water out of the soil . . . is it going to rain or not . . . and do I have to irrigate. All those things. There's something to it like being a winemaker; it's a feel that you have, as well as a skill, and the skill is developed, I think, a great part from experience rather than from reading books.

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