

**Transcription of Oral History Interview with  
WILBUR W. MAYHEW**

August 10, 1998

Erickson: Professor Mayhew, would you begin by telling us where you were born and a little about your family, please?

Mayhew: I was born in Yoder, Colorado, March 17, 1920. My father came from Kansas, my mother came from Missouri. They met in Colorado and were married there. We came to California when I was a year old, so I feel like I'm a native.

Erickson: What brought you to California? What was your father doing?

Mayhew: My folks had been out here earlier. My grandfather had come out earlier. They decided farming was not going to make it for them in Colorado. They were out on the flat lands of east Colorado.

Erickson: Uh mmm.

Mayhew: So they came to California—thankfully.

Erickson: Yes. (chuckle) And did they try farming out here?

Mayhew: Yes, we owned a ranch in Turlock, California, for a number of years. My grandparents had purchased the ranch, and my father was a carpenter up in the Bay area building fancy homes.

When my grandfather passed away, my father had to go down to Turlock and take over the ranch with my grandmother. That was 1929, we got there just before the Depression.

Erickson: Oh dear.

Mayhew: We were there then until my parents died.

Erickson: Was that a good place to be?

Mayhew: At that time it was great because we could raise our own food even without making any money.

Erickson: Right, right.

Mayhew: My dad figured one year that he had made a total of \$400 that year. We were just barely getting along, but we had our own food and so we made it all right.

Erickson: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Mayhew: I have two brothers. One of them passed away in 1951 from polio, just the year before vaccines came out.

Erickson: Oh, that's too bad.

Mayhew: My other brother went into the service the same month I came back to the states, and he stayed in the service. He was with Patton in Europe and then he was in Korea. I thought I had seen some combat, but he could tell stories that curled my hair.

Erickson: Really? Now you were in the service, too.

Mayhew: Yes. We had a lot of pretty rough combat, but we were in the air. It wasn't like what it was on the ground.

Erickson: How long did you serve?

Mayhew: I was in five years. I got tired of going to school so when I finished junior college in 1940, I enlisted in the Air Force (Army Air Corps in those days). I was sent to Salt Lake to the oldest bombardment group in the Air Force.

On Thanksgiving Day of 1941, we shipped out on a troop ship headed for the Philippines for two years.

Erickson: What was the date, I'm sorry?

Mayhew: Thanksgiving Day, 1941.

Erickson: Oh, so right before the bomb.

Mayhew: Uh huh. We went through Honolulu and instead of going straight to the Philippines, we turned south to go down to Australia to drop off two diplomatic bodies who had passed away in this country. This saved us because we crossed the equator the day before the attack at Pearl Harbor, nine days after we went out of Honolulu.

Luckily, it's an awfully big ocean out there. A Japanese battle group got within thirty five miles of us.

Erickson: Oh my.

Mayhew: All the protection we had was a light cruiser, "Pensacola," that President Roosevelt used to use for a fishing vessel off Florida. Five-inch guns were the biggest guns they had. But they had these two catapult planes with a top speed of 90 mph, and they launched those to search the area after the war started.

About the second or third day after the war started, one of these fellows stumbled on a Jap fleet just thirty five miles from us. We had no guns. They could have just sat there and used us for target practice.

I don't know whether he got a Congressional Medal of Honor, but he should have, because he turned and flew the other direction. This turned them around, and they didn't find us. Whether they shot him down or he just ran out of fuel, we don't know ...

Erickson: Oh.

Mayhew: At any rate, he saved our *convoy*. We had eight ships in the *convoy*. So we got to Australia, and we were the first American troops in Australia. We put together a large number of P40 fighter planes that we had in cases in the *convoy*. These were flown toward the Philippines by green pilots who had a maximum of four hours in P40s.

Erickson: My goodness.

Mayhew: Here they had been on the water for thirty two or thirty three days, hadn't been in an airplane at all, so they were cracking up right and left. None of them actually got to the Philippines.

So the last batch of the fighters that were assembled—about thirty of them—were flown across Australia to the western shore at Fremantle and were loaded aboard the old aircraft carrier “Langley.” This was the first American aircraft carrier that had been converted to a sea plane tender by that time.

We started for Java once the planes were all assembled. We had to go south of Australia because the Japanese had closed off the northern route. By the time we got to Fremantle, we tied up beside the aircraft carrier “Langley” with our P40s up on the deck of the ship.

The next day we took off for Java. Just as we got out of sight of land, they turned us around again because the allies were beginning to evacuate Java that day.

So we sailed the next day for India. The Dutch commander in Java insisted the “Langley” *continue to Java* to bring those fighters that they needed so badly. So the second day out, the “Langley” pulled away from our convoy, and two days later it was sunk. Before it got to Java it lost all hands and all the planes, of course.

The “Sea Witch,” which was a liberty ship, that was with the convoy left us the following day to run a blockade. They actually got to Java, but there was no one to take the planes to assemble them. They just dumped them off in the bay. The “Sea Witch” got away all right, but the planes were lost.

We got to India and finally got airplanes: B17 Flying Fortresses. I was assigned to a crew at that time flying with a squadron commander as a ball turret gunner on a B17.

Erickson: A what?

Mayhew: Ball turret gunner. That's the gunner that hangs down in the belly of the plane. We fought in Burma for a while, bombing Burma.

Then when Rommel began going through North Africa in the summer of '42, we had seventeen B17s in India. They had no heavy U.S. bombers in Africa, so we got shipped to North Africa on temporary duty—which turned out to be permanent. But we finally got Rommel stopped.

My pilot had taken the first four engine plane over the "Hump" (Himalayas) to China to bring out some of Colonel Doolittle's men from that Tokyo raid.

Our crew got called back to India to lead a special mission into China, because he had already flown over the "Hump," we went back to bomb some coal mines up near the Manchurian border. Five-and-a-half million tons of coal was produced there a year, which supplied more than two thirds of the high quality coal for the high grade steel industry in Japan ...

Erickson: Oh, I see.

Mayhew: and all the coal for the Manchurian industry. It happened to be what they called "wet" mines. They fill up with water when the power goes out, and all ten mines operated from a single power plant. That's what we were sent in to knock out. We pulled it off, knocked it out all right. We went back and bombed Burma some more and then went back to Africa to follow the big push at El Alamein.

In our last mission (*31 January 1943*), we were shot down in a mission over Sicily. We got back as far as the island of Malta before we crashed, which was about four hundred miles behind the German lines. The British maintained the island throughout the war, and it saved an awful lot of us.

Erickson: So you were saved by the British there.

Mayhew: We were saved by the British there, and were flown back to our base the next day. After our wounds healed and enough new crews arrived, we were able to be taken off combat.

Erickson: Were you wounded, too, Bill?

Mayhew: Um hmm. I got some 20 mm. cannon fragments in my leg.

Erickson: But you didn't get to come home from that injury?

Mayhew: Not until the North African campaign was completed, which was the summer of '43.

Then I was a gunnery instructor back here in the states because we were trying to train gunners by people who had actually been in combat. I ended up with ninety instructors under me for a while, and that's when I finally decided that teaching was a pretty good thing.

There were two things I was never going to do: I said I was never going to teach, and I was never going to live in Southern California.

(laughter)

Well, in teaching these young gunners, it suddenly dawned on me that this was a good way to go. We were helping to protect the lives of those young fellows as much as we could.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: It seemed like a good thing. So that's when I changed my ideas about being a teacher.

Erickson: Um hmm. So how long did you do that, the teaching part?

Mayhew: Until the end of the war.

Erickson: So '45?

Mayhew: '45. At the end of '45, with the GI Bill, I was able to go back to school, and I went to Berkeley.

Erickson: You said you had already completed junior college. And so you went to Berkeley then. What did you study?

Mayhew: In '48, I got my Bachelor's degree in Zoology, and in '51 I got my Master's degree there, and in '53 I got my Ph.D. at Berkeley.

Erickson: Hmm. You are a UC product.

Mayhew: The whole way.

Erickson: What interested you in that field?

Mayhew: I can't remember when it was I became interested in biology. As a kid I was collecting butterflies, and I had ant colonies. If I go home to meet some of the people I grew up with, they still say, "Hi Bugs." That was my name in those days.

(chuckle)

I've always been interested in animals. It's changed over the years a bit that I'm only interested in certain groups over others, but it's always been animals.

Erickson: Did you have a mentor when you were at Berkeley?

Mayhew: Yes. Dr. Starker Leopold. And Dr. Alden Miller was another on my committee.

Erickson: And what did you do with your degree then? What was your first position?

Mayhew: When I was finishing up, this was in '53, jobs were extremely rare. I'd look in the want ads for a shoe salesman and all sorts of things to see if I could get a job.

Mayhew: One of my friends who was at UCLA in the atomic energy project called me and asked if I'd be interested in hiring on as an ecologist at UCLA in the atomic energy project which later became the Department of Nuclear Medicine and Radiation—I'll get the right title yet! Department of Nuclear Medicine and Radiation Biology, that's the big fancy title for something we were doing.

I had charge of one laboratory where we were studying the effects of Strontium 90 on living tissue. That was one of the main byproducts of atomic blasts.

Erickson: Oh, I see.

Mayhew: It replaces calcium in the body, so we were trying to determine just exactly what effect that was having. I was there for a little over a year.

I had applied at Riverside before that. When I was finishing my degree, I had heard through the grapevine that Riverside was going to have a campus pretty soon.

Erickson: Um hmm. Just through a conversation with somebody—that's how you found out?

Mayhew: Through the grapevine at Berkeley, one of the students that I heard talking. So I sent my application in as soon as I got my degree. Things were held up because of the Korean War, so it didn't get started (the campus). So I took the job at UCLA.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: But I would come over here periodically just to see where I stood in the line.

Erickson: Oh, who did you meet with?

Mayhew: Herman Spieth, who was the Chairman of the Department of Life Sciences at that time. The first time I came over to see him to see just what chance I might have, he said, “Here’s your competition.” He pulled open a file drawer that was full of applicants.

Erickson: Oh dear. All with Ph.Ds probably?

Mayhew: All applying, they had ten positions at that time in the department.

Erickson: Uh huh.

Mayhew: Provost Watkins told us later that they averaged eighty five applicants per position ...

Erickson: My goodness.

Mayhew: when we were opening up, so we felt like we were the cream of the crop ...

Erickson: Absolutely.

Mayhew: when we were selected. But I had a couple things going for me in that Herman wanted somebody from the Berkeley campus on the faculty, and I happened to be one of them who had applied. And I had this friend from UCLA who had already been hired over here who was putting in a good word for me.

So between that and my visits over here periodically, I was fortunate enough to be hired. I left the ground about that far (gesturing) ...

(laughter)

when I got the phone call at UCLA that I had been hired over here. I was so glad.

Erickson: Who called you, Bill?

Mayhew: Herman Spieth.

Erickson: He did?

Mayhew: Um hmm. That radiation biology was not my cup of tea. It was all right as a job, but it was not what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing.

We had to have Q Clearances, which is the highest clearance available at that time. We used to wonder why the heck that was necessary, because we didn't have any secrets to tell anybody. If the Russians ever got us, they'd probably shoot us because we couldn't give them any secrets.

But it was so secret that the day I checked out to come to Riverside, I turned everything in and I got outside the door and suddenly realized I'd forgotten something in my lab. I went back in, and they had to send a guard with me to my office before I could go back in to the building.

Erickson: Hmm.

Mayhew: It was a real Gilbert and Sullivan opera, the whole operation. But they've done many good things since then. At that time, we were just sort of stumbling around in the dark.

Erickson: But you got things started.

Mayhew: We got things started, but it wasn't because we were very good at it. It just happened that way, we lucked out.

Erickson: Were you married when you came to UCR?

Mayhew: Yes. I got married right after I got my Bachelor's degree.

Erickson: Oh, so all the time you were in the service you were married?

Mayhew: No, this was in 1948 after I had gotten back to Berkeley.

Erickson: Oh, sorry.

Mayhew: I graduated one day and got married the next day.

Erickson: Oh my goodness.

Mayhew: I had two children when I came to UCR.

Erickson: Boy and girl?

Mayhew: Um hmm. Another boy was born later on.

Erickson: Are they here in the area?

Mayhew: Two of them are. The oldest boy is here and my daughter lives in Riverside. My youngest son is in San Jose now in the Silicon Valley with one of the computer companies up there.

Erickson: Oh. Perfect place. You mentioned that one of the two things you didn't want to do was live in Southern California. What was the reason for that?

Mayhew: Coming from Northern California, we didn't think much of Southern California up there. But when jobs became so scanty, you would take a job anywhere.

Erickson: It didn't seem so bad then.

Mayhew: I was very happy to come down, and now I wouldn't live anywhere else. I really like living in Riverside.

Erickson: When did you actually come to Riverside?

Mayhew: '54.

Erickson: Before the campus was actually opened?

Mayhew: It was just getting ready to open when I came over.

Erickson: So what kinds of preliminary things did you do then to prepare for the students?

Mayhew: I was hired to teach parasitology.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: I had never had a course in parasitology. I had bits and pieces in a variety of courses, but I had never had a total course.

Erickson: Uh huh.

Mayhew: I was about three chapters ahead of my student.

(laughter)

I had one student that first year, and he was a real grind.

Erickson: Only one student?

Mayhew: One student, and he wanted an exam every week. He wanted a reading assignment every week. I had to send him out of the laboratory so I could catch my ride home with the carpool at that time. He would have worked all night, I guess. He worked me harder than I have ever worked in any course.

Erickson: Isn't that something?

Mayhew: The next year I had twenty five students in that class, and it was a lead-pipe cinch.

Erickson: Sure.

Mayhew: He wanted a lecture, so I had to prepare lectures. We went right through it as though I had a bunch of people there.

Erickson: Was he in your office? Is that where you held your class?

Mayhew: No, in a classroom, in a laboratory.

Erickson: Well, he certainly got individual attention, didn't he?

Mayhew: He did, he sure did.

Erickson: Do you know what he went on to be?

Mayhew: Optometry. He went to Berkeley to optometry school afterwards.

Erickson: That's interesting. Well, what was a typical class size then?

Mayhew: Oh, about five to ten students at that time. That was one of the reasons that Riverside got that excellent reputation as being a tough campus. We weren't any tougher than any of the other campuses. I have been at Davis and I have been at Riverside.

Erickson: Oh, what did you do at Davis?

Mayhew: After I got my Bachelor's degree, they didn't have a graduate program at Davis at that time in Zoology. So they hired what they called associates. They were glorified teaching assistants, full time on the staff. There were four of us hired to teach laboratories.

So the summer I graduated from Berkeley—'48—I was hired up there, and I spent four years on the Davis campus doing graduate work. Some of the courses were at Berkeley and some at Davis. The degree was coming from Berkeley, but I spent four years there.

Erickson: I see.

Mayhew: So I knew what the other campuses were doing, and we weren't any tougher than anybody else. We were trying to be as tough but not any tougher. We would have students transfer in from Berkeley for a year or a semester, and they'd say I'm going back where it is easy. They'd go back to Berkeley, and we couldn't understand that.

Finally, it dawned on me. In classes of 100 to 200 or 300, at Berkeley you could sit and hide in the group and study just before exams and get through without any trouble. But here

Mayhew: you had to be prepared every day, because the classes were so small, you stuck out like a sore thumb if you weren't prepared.

Erickson: I see.

Mayhew: And this was the difference. It helped us get our reputation established very quickly, that it was a tough school—and we did everything we could to maintain that.

Erickson: Um hmm. Did you like the small liberal arts college?

Mayhew: Yes, that's one of the reasons I was wanting to come here because at that time it was supposed to be a small liberal arts school with an enrollment of 1500 and essentially teaching. This was great. I thought that would be fine. Then it kept going up and going up. But that was one of the reasons most of us were here.

Erickson: You've always maintained a special relationship with students. Did you make an effort to try to get to know them individually?

Mayhew: Oh I made an effort. By the end of the first week, I knew the names of all my students.

One of the courses I was teaching was a field course in biology where we had field trips on weekends. Sometimes we would start on Friday and going through Sunday, so I got really well acquainted with those students.

The anatomy courses and the embryology courses and parasitology courses were small enough that you easily were able to learn the names of all the students. I always did that. I wanted to be sure I knew who they were and that I could talk to them.

Erickson: Do you think the students have changed over the years?

Mayhew: Markedly.

Erickson: Really?

Mayhew: The last few years I was teaching, I just couldn't believe what the students were doing. If I had demanded of those students what I had demanded of my earlier students, I'd have had a riot in my classes for sure.

Erickson: Oh.

Mayhew: I never had to tell a student to be quiet. I never had to do anything. We'd be out twenty to twenty-two hours at a time active in the field, and the students were still ready to go. We'd get three or four hours sleep and away we'd go again. But if I had taken these students on anything like that, I'd have had nothing but trouble on my hands.

There were a few students during those years that were like the original, but the bulk of them were just ...

Erickson: Were they just not prepared as well?

Mayhew: Their attitude. I never had to tell anybody to be quiet, but in the last years, it was two or three times a lecture that I'd have to stop the class and quiet them down. It was just nothing that I had ever gone through before. They had no respect for faculty, or at least it didn't appear to be that way compared to the way they had been earlier.

Erickson: That time period would have been what? In the 80s?

Mayhew: In the late 80s. I retired in 1989 from teaching, and I stayed with the Reserve System until 1990.

Erickson: In some of the better days then, you said you took field trips. What were some of those trips? What was the purpose of them?

Mayhew: I was trying to teach them the habitats in which animals live and how the animals were able to develop and successfully live in those habitats.

Erickson: What kind of animals?

Mayhew: Vertebrae animals, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Birds are my specialty.

Erickson: That's quite a range.

Mayhew: Yes, but the animals are out there. I would average about a thousand miles a semester on the field trips. We put in a lot of miles.

Erickson: Did the whole class go?

Mayhew: Yeh. Later on, 1970 was the first Earth Day, and that became the "in" thing to do for a while. My classes got quite large. In fact, I had a waiting list to get into the class for a while.

We would split the class into a lecture and a laboratory, because some of the students were just interested in learning about the animals. They didn't want to go out in the field. This made it easier. I could take twenty five to thirty students on a field trip without everybody being there, and the classes got to be fifty or sixty students for a while (the lecture part). So I split it into two.

Later on when that was no longer the emphasis that most people had (they were concerned about the environment for a while), I went back to having everybody go on the field trip. It was just much better that way that they all understood what was going on. When I'd give examples in the lecture of what we had seen in the field, they all knew what we were talking about.

Erickson: Do you have some stories to tell about those field trips?

(laughter)

Mayhew: We had some real deals! One of the first ones I can think of was 1958. I had been informed that it never rained in Truck Haven, a little wide spot in the road on the west side of the Salton Sea.. We were making a field trip to the Salton Sea that

weekend, so I told my class, “Oh it never rains in Truck Haven.”

(laughter)

Well, we got down there and camped that night, and all of a sudden the sky opened up. We had over two inches of rainfall that night.

Erickson: Two inches, my.

Mayhew: I never lived that down!

(more laughter)

Those students still razz me about that. But by noon the next day, the wind had come up and dried out everything. Then we were getting sand blasted.

Erickson: Oh dear.

Mayhew: It was very interesting to see—after we got back from these field trips, the ones in which we had the most difficulty were the ones you would hear the students talking about among themselves or bragging to their friends about. They didn’t talk about the ones where nothing happened, just those. And we had a number of them.

Erickson: Did you take medical personnel, or are you trained in first aid kinds of things?

Mayhew: I knew first aid at that time, but I was fat, dumb and happy. I didn’t really know what I should be doing. We carried first aid kits along, but no we didn’t have any specific personnel.

Erickson: You didn’t have anything like snake bites, did you?

Mayhew: We didn't use tents. We just put cots on the ground. We didn't sleep on the ground. I had been warned about that with sidewinders and scorpions. So we had cots that we slept on but out in the open.

Originally we cooked, but by the time we finished cleaning up from breakfast, it was time to start fixing lunch.

Then I began to take a little stove along, and we'd heat up water and put the cans of food in the water to get them hot, and we'd eat them out of the can.

I finally got to where I didn't even bother to heat the stuff.

Erickson: You just ate.

Mayhew: Yeh. We tried to do it as simply as possible. The students seemed to really enjoy that kind of life. And as I say, I had waiting lists at times.

Erickson: Right. Did you get up really early in the morning to catch the animals?

Mayhew: Yes, because we didn't know exactly what time most of these animals were active. You see, I spent six months in the Indian Desert and a year in the Sahara Desert. I swore I'd never go back to the desert again.

Well, I came to Riverside and the desert was much of the habitat that we had available here, so I would take the class out there as well as the mountains and the ocean.

Erickson: Hmm.

Mayhew: Much of our time was spent in the desert. I learned to like the desert after a while, and most of my research was done in the desert. But it wasn't my choice at the beginning.

Erickson: Well, how did you get involved with the NRS, Natural Reserve System?

Mayhew: Well, on these field trips, I would go out to various locations and show the students what was there. The next year I would go out and a house or subdivision had been built there.

One spot I had on the coast where I would go up on the bluff and look down to show them what I wanted them to see down at the water, a big two story condominium was built right on the path that we used to go down to the beach. This happened in many of the areas.

Ken Norris was teaching a field course at UCLA at that time. He and I would commiserate with one another about losing another teaching site or another research site.

I never would have done it, I think, because I was a lowly instructor in those days. We weren't even professors to begin with.

Erickson: Oh, you started out as an instructor?

Mayhew: But he took the bull by the horns and went to see President Kerr to see if we couldn't establish some reserves around the state for teaching and research so that the faculty could continue to do what they had been doing for over a hundred years but they could do anywhere. But now we were getting restricted, and we had to have some places where we would be able to go back time and time again.

Erickson: Was it still in the '50s then?

Mayhew: It was 1962. What we were doing in the '50s was commiserating with one another. We hadn't gotten to the point where we were really concerned. I shouldn't say we weren't concerned, because we had acquired Deep Canyon by 1958. But that's another story I should tell you about.

Erickson: Do.

Mayhew: When the campus was established, Mr. Philip Boyd, who was the legislator who helped get the campus established and was the first mayor of Palm Springs, lived in the desert.

He had gotten a forty year lease from the Coachella Valley Water District for forty acres of land in Palm Desert that he wanted to establish as a reserve—which he called The Living Desert Reserve.

Erickson: Uh hmm.

Mayhew: Well, when the campus was established, he asked Frank Vasek and I to serve on a committee with him to administer that particular reserve. He had the idea that this could be used as it is currently being used—visitors coming in and looking all over. It could also be used by the faculty here for teaching and research.

And I was stupid enough to tell him that it couldn't be done, he had to do one or the other. Well, I learned from other people it's a wonder that he ever talked to me again, because usually when somebody crossed him, he was written off.

Erickson: Is that right?

Mayhew: For about six months he didn't talk to me. But then one day he called me up and said, "Bill, I've got some property further up the canyon. Do you think that could be used for teaching and research?" I said, "Well, let's go up and look at it." So I got in the jeep and went with him and my tongue practically drug the ground. It was Deep Canyon.

Erickson: So you knew the area?

Mayhew: I had never been in there before. Then he gave me permission to take a class in there in '55, so I took a class there for the next three years.

I was still on this committee administering Living Desert, and at one meeting he said, "You know, I want to save that area out

Mayhew: there after I'm gone, but I don't quite know what I should do with it, how we're going to do that."

Well, I didn't say anything at the meeting because we had representatives from Cal Tech and other places. The committee had expanded a bit by that time. The next day I called him on the phone and said, "the best thing you could do with that is to donate it to the University of California because they can maintain it in perpetuity the way you want it to be maintained." He was a Regent by that time, and by 1958 he donated two and a half sections to this campus for a reserve.

Erickson: So was his the very first gift?

Mayhew: That was before the reserve system was established at all.

Erickson: When did it become formal?

Mayhew: It was 1958 when we got this. Well, to begin with we had a terrible fight in the Department of Biology here on campus to get it accepted. Some of the fellows said, "We don't want that white elephant out in the desert. What would we want that for?" Fortunately, we won and so in '58 we took it over.

Then in 1964 the BLM was going to sell 160 acres up here on Box Springs Mountain where the Big C is located. They had offered it to the university earlier. They were selling the land at \$2.50 an acre to organizations like the university.

Herman Spieth was the Provost at that time, and he didn't have any idea that he'd have a need for that land. Suddenly on a Thursday, he realized that the Big C was on that particular piece of property, and he knew I had been doing research up there on that mountain with a local lizard collecting my samples up there.

So he got me to write a letter to him immediately because Tuesday it was going to go on the market. I got the letter to him and they filed it. The university had to demonstrate that the land was being used for research. Otherwise BLM would

Mayhew: not pull it off the market. So we got it pulled off the market much to the developers unhappiness. We got 160 acres up there for \$2.50 an acre.

Erickson: Isn't that something.

Mayhew: In 1964. In 1963 Ken Norris went to the President about organizing a system of reserves. In '65 the Regents approved it. The seven original reserves of land were already owned by the university. Box Springs and Deep Canyon were two of those parcels that were included in the first reserve.

Erickson: What other campuses have some of those initial ones of the seven?

Mayhew: Hastings Reserve from Berkeley was one. We had some property up in the Trinity Mountains, which was later sold. I've forgotten what the other ones were. It's been a long time. But anyway we had two of the seven. In 1966 we were able to acquire the James Reserve up in the San Jacinto Mountains. That was the first one acquired after the reserve system was established.

Erickson: Did you sit on that governing body?

Mayhew: I was on the original committee that President Kerr appointed. I represented the Riverside campus on that committee.

Erickson: I see. Was there a member from each campus?

Mayhew: Yes. I remember when it was because it was the day of President Kennedy's funeral. We were supposed to meet at Berkeley, and because we were coming from all over the state, we went ahead and met anyway since we were organized for that. So that's how I remember just when it was.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: Yes, I was on the committee then representing the Riverside campus on the statewide committee for years and years and years.

Erickson: And you developed the policy then?

Mayhew: We were very fortunate at the beginning that President Kerr wanted an interim report in February with the final reporting coming due in June. But he was so happy with the original one, he told us that he took it to the Regents in February—March actually. They gave us another six months to decide which areas we wanted to try to acquire, what pieces of property we wanted.

Erickson: Oh. Talk about that. How do you make that decision?

Mayhew: What we were trying to do was get a representative of every habitat that occurs in California so that the students and faculty would be able to work with any of the habitats that are in the state. That was our ambition and we were able to nearly carry it out. The University currently has thirty three reserves and approximately 120,000 acres.

Erickson: Is that right!

Mayhew: So it's really expanded.

Erickson: Uh huh.

Mayhew: In those days we were setting out to acquire whatever we could. We needed some coastal sage scrub, we needed some coniferous forests, we needed this or that, because the animals that live in that habitat would be protected then. We weren't looking for a particular animal—we were looking for protecting everything that lived in that particular habitat.

So we drew up a list of about sixty properties originally, some of which we were able to acquire, others which we were not able to acquire.

Erickson: But when you were doing that you were looking for the entire university system. You weren't looking in particular for Riverside.

Mayhew: That's right. We weren't looking for any particular campus. These are administered by the campus nearest to the property.

Erickson: I see.

Mayhew: But we were looking throughout the state for whatever property we could find, and so I looked at property all the way up to the Oregon border for the system at one time or another and to the Mexican border the other way to see if these would be suitable reserves, some of which we were unable to acquire even though they were excellent. Others were acquired that were not necessarily the greatest, but they were something that was available.

Erickson: Did developers want to – was that your main competition?

Mayhew: Primarily, yes. Sometimes we would get property that we knew was not going to be a reserve for very long or if it was going to be a reserve at all. But if we could sell it then that money could go into acquiring property that really was suitable for the reserves.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: For example, the Etiwanda Reserve over at Rancho Cucamonga was owned by Union Oil Company. We had a two million dollar fundraising drive in the early '70s.

They were saying, "We'll give you \$10,000 or this 160 acres of property." Well, at that time we were so strapped for money, I almost said, "Take the money." But I was asked to go over and look at it, so I did. While looking at it, I saw a sign for fifteen acres for sale right beside the property. I called that person up to see what money it was valued at. He said, "Well, I can't sell you that land, more than twelve acres. We've already sold three acres to the state for the Foothill Freeway right of way.

Erickson: Oh.

Mayhew: (chuckle). Oh, oh! That puts a different picture on it.

Erickson: Uh huh.

Mayhew: I called Berkeley and said, “Grab the land, because it looks like it’s going to be quite valuable.” It wouldn’t be a reserve very long because the development was going on all around, but it certainly would be a reserve for a while (which I used for several years personally and found out it was quite useful). Anyway we took the land, and it was appraised for \$750,000—it was far better than the \$10,000.

Erickson: I’ll say.

Mayhew: It was recently sold for \$2 ½ million.

Erickson: Oh. Why did you decide to sell it?

Mayhew: Well, it was going to be developed all around. It was not going to be a reserve. We knew from the beginning that we were going to have it for sale eventually. But if it had been sold at the proper time, we’d have gotten \$5 million for it. Unfortunately, the date passed and recession hit, and then things didn’t look so good.

Some of the other areas we wanted to acquire to sell, but we couldn’t convince the director up there. He was a lawyer who was very conservative and he wouldn’t take these parcels. I think we could have had the reserve system on easy street today if he would have let us get that land and sell it.

Erickson: Is that right? Do you use some of the money on the sales of these properties for maintenance?

Mayhew: Yes.

Erickson: Is that a very costly thing?

Mayhew: It really is. This is one of the things that still sticks in my craw from 1963. When the Regents approved this—they were all businessmen. Pat Brown was Governor at the time. These were all financially sound businessmen, and they established the reserve system, but they didn't establish a single dime for maintenance. Well, I guess they figured that getting the land was all we needed, we didn't have to have anything else.

We're still trying to get the system into the university budget. It should be in the teaching budget, because much of the teaching is done on these reserves. But we still haven't gotten it in the system.

Erickson: It's still an issue.

Mayhew: Yes, it's very costly, especially those reserves that have buildings on them—facilities. We find that they are used much more intensively if we have buildings on the reserves than if we do not have.

Erickson: And you have people actually living in them.

Mayhew: Yes, we have managers living on the reserves—most of them, but not all of them.

Erickson: Would you talk about the ones that Riverside has?

Mayhew: Deep Canyon, Box Springs and James were the first ones we acquired. And then I've forgotten the exact sequence of the others, but we've got the Motte Reserve down in Perris, we've got the Emerson Oaks down in Temecula. We've got the Oasis de las Osis out near Palm Springs. We've got the Granite Mountains west of Needles. We've got the Sacramento Mountains near Needles. UCR had eight when I finally turned the UCR reserves over to someone else to administer.

Erickson: Um hmm. What was your title then?

Mayhew: Director of UCR Reserves. It was a title we made up ourselves. It was nothing official.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: This was the title we went by.

Erickson: Did you try to go around to each of those reserves then? How often?

Mayhew: (chuckle) It depended on the reserve. I was the only manager much of the time.

For example, when we were putting in the fence at Deep Canyon, I was out there nine days out of a month to see if the fences were going in the right position. Several times they were putting the chain link fence where we had mapped it out for barbed wire, and they were putting the barbed wire where we had mapped it out for chain link. So we had to have somebody right on the job.

Erickson: Just all the time.

Mayhew: So I was there a good part of that time. At the James Reserve, I was able to hire someone to stay up there at the James Reserve so I didn't spend that much time myself on that reserve. At the Motte Reserve, I spent time down there because I had nobody else to do it. We didn't have any money to do these things, so I supervised a C.C.C. group to put in \$45,000 worth of fence around the Motte Reserve.

Erickson: Was that your idea? I mean to involve the prison system?

Mayhew: Well, I wanted to fence, and I could get the money for the fence, but I couldn't get the money for the labor. There was the California Conservation Corps operating at that time where I could get them to do the labor.

Mayhew: I was told later that it would have cost the university \$45,000 to install that. It's about ten miles, I think, around the whole perimeter.

I quit counting after 85 cuts in the fence. I had to go out and do all the repair work myself. We hauled out thirty four tons of trash from our land before the fence went in—everyone was dumping trash out there.

Erickson: Oh, my.

Mayhew: So I got a prison crew out of Norco to come and haul the trash away, except that they could load the trucks, but they weren't allowed to go with me to the dump because the guards were afraid they'd escape. So I had to unload all of it.

Erickson: Gosh.

Mayhew: We got it out anyway. Yes, it varied from one reserve to another. But we had no other people, so I just did it.

Erickson: Uh huh. Your life sounds so busy though. How were you able to do that and teach and do research?

Mayhew: I often wonder that myself, because right now I'm barely able to get a newspaper read! I don't know how I ever got any work done before.

(laughter)

Erickson: Did you have some graduate students helping you?

Mayhew: I had some undergraduate students helping.

Erickson: Undergraduates.

Mayhew: In fact, they've gone on to better and higher things. Several are faculty members at other universities. One is the State Director for Nature Conservancy (*Nevada*). You know, I've had some really great people.

Erickson: And how long did you do that—with the NRS? All those years from '60 on?

Mayhew: Yes, all the way up till '90.

Erickson: All the way until you retired?

Mayhew: Yes.

Erickson: Am I correct that Riverside has more reserves than other campuses?

Mayhew: It has, but I'm not sure it does now. But it did have more for years.

Erickson: Oh, uh huh.

Mayhew: It was a standard joke among the statewide committee. When I'd attend a meeting, they'd say, "Well, how many more pieces of property did you bring this time, Bill?"

(laughter)

I took in five on the average each year.

Erickson: Oh my.

Mayhew: They were accusing me of being the governor of the fifty-first state. They thought I was trying to establish university land from the Mexican border to the Oregon border where we could walk *on university land* all the way to Oregon from the Mexican border.

But I was in a location where I could see down the line that we were not going to have places for faculty and students to do these things. And if we didn't do it, it was not going to get done.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: So I made a conscious effort after I got my Associate Professor position where I had tenure that I could devote my time to that instead of publishing two or three more papers. It would do biology much more good by going out and saving land for other people to do the work. So when I finally got my professorship in 1969, from then on is when I really *went after land*.

Erickson: Really concentrated.

Mayhew: I wouldn't take over the Deep Canyon management until after that. I took it over in 1970 and did that up until 1990. But land was the most important thing at that time. It's the biggest operation in the world among universities. We have a reputation around the world.

Two of our reserves are UNESCO "Man and the Biosphere" Reserves—Deep Canyon and Hastings Reserve.

I had not realized how important it was to other people until when Chancellor Hullar was here, he wanted me to write a letter to him so he could try to get more money out of the President's Office for operating these reserves. He wanted to know how much use we were getting on these reserves.

Well, I had never stopped to figure it up, so I had my three managers at the James Reserve, at Deep Canyon and at the Granite Mountains Reserve to figure up from the records they had of how many people had used the reserves and when.

We went back three years, and from those records, we were all flabbergasted. Every campus in the university had used one or other of the UCR reserves during that three year period. Thirty-three colleges and universities in California, both public and private, had used them.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: Thirty *seven* universities around the United States (*33 states*) and Washington, D.C. had used them. Twenty *three* foreign countries, alphabetically from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, had used one or the other of those reserves during that time.

Erickson: How does that work for them to use it?

Mayhew: Anyone who has a legitimate project can use these things if it is accepted by the manager of that reserve.

Erickson: Oh, I see.

Mayhew: They submit an application and say what it is they want to do. Then an area would be assigned to them where they could do this without other people walking all over their project.

That's the problem with any other place. We have people who have come in to Deep Canyon, for example, who were doing work at state parks and things of that sort, but people were walking all over their reserve sites not realizing what it was.

So they would move into an area where they knew the area was going to be protected. This was the big thing.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Mayhew: In selecting these areas, we tried to get as many habitats in one area as we possibly could and get them as big as we possibly could to make sure they were going to be maintained.

One of the big problems was protectability—if they couldn't protect it, there wasn't really any use in trying to get it for a long-term reserve because there weren't people who would be willing to go in there and do research without having their area be protected. This was one of the criteria.

The size of the reserve—we were really hard up for property originally, so we were taking things that were not necessarily going to be reserves in the long run. But they were better than nothing, and we could hopefully expand on those. So we took

Mayhew: some that were a little smaller than we would like, but in more recent years they have been fairly sizeable.

The Granite Mountains is now about 9,000 acres and Deep Canyon about 17,000. Other ones are only 200 or 300 acres in some cases. But those are big enough that if they have forest service or BLM land around them, this also serves as a buffer that protects them.

We use all these things as evaluation points as to how we decide whether we will try to acquire that land or not.

Erickson: Now did you establish some scholarships for the reserves?

Mayhew: I did for Deep Canyon. Mr. Boyd, being a Regent, had been able to get Chancellor Hinderaker to establish a budget for Deep Canyon. It wasn't very big, but it was a budget. For the first few years, I'd have to rob that budget to keep the James Reserve open or keep something else open.

In fact, I threatened to close the James Reserve down twice, and Berkeley came through with some spare money. I don't know where they got it, but I didn't have to close the reserve.

For some reason, he (Mr. Boyd) didn't leave an endowment when he passed on, nothing came out of his will. I had sort of expected he would give something to Deep Canyon. So I established this scholarship fund for Deep Canyon in 1996. It came about at the "old timers reunion" down here of the '54 to '60 students that had graduated at that time.

Erickson: Oh, uh huh.

Mayhew: They had invited back all the original faculty to attend their ceremonies. Two of the fellows that were in my 1958 class said, "Boy, I'd sure love to go back to Deep Canyon to see that area again."

Erickson: Oh.

Mayhew: I had taken them in there even before, as I say, ... even before it was university property. They said, "Do you think we could do that?" I said, "I don't know. I'll check with the manager down there and see." Because I was no longer the manager and was no longer involved, I contacted Al Muth, who was the manager, and we arranged it.

We had about twelve fellows go down that came out of that '58 class. Five of them were doctors, one was a veterinarian, two were lawyers, one was a dentist, one was the vice president of a bank—they were really excellent people in those early classes.

Anyway, we took these fellows in. I thought ... I wondered what we could get these fellows to do for Deep Canyon, so I talked to Al about it.

The thing they really needed was a scholarship to bring in graduate students to do their work at Deep Canyon. So I said ok, I'll establish one, and I put in several thousand dollars and gave Dr. Erickson a list of the addresses of the students I had had in class. I still had all my old grade books, and I gave him the addresses who were contacted. Today, we've gotten over \$11,000 from students to apply to this particular scholarship.

Erickson: That's wonderful.

Mayhew: It's really going all right. I'm going to put more money in later, but I've got other things that I'm putting money into.

Erickson: Sure. Sure.

Mayhew: But that was the reason that we established it.

Erickson: When did you decide to retire?

Mayhew: Well, I enjoyed what I was doing. I really liked it, but the students started to get under my skin the way they were changing.

Erickson: That's right, you said that.

Mayhew: And I had to retire at 70 anyway. I was 69 when I quit teaching. I maintained it one more year as manager of the reserves.

Erickson: That's no longer in effect, is it (mandatory retirement)?

Mayhew: I don't think it's in effect now, but it was at that time. But I just all of a sudden ran into a wall and I said, "I want to get out. I've had it. I've done everything I could possibly do. I just want to get out." The age thing forced me out anyway, but I was ready to retire when the time came.

Erickson: Do you still maintain an office here?

Mayhew: I still have an office on campus, yes.

Erickson: Do you go in periodically?

Mayhew: Yes.

Erickson: And what do you like to do? Reading or writing?

Mayhew: Well, I'm working on some books right now. In fact, one book is coming out, hopefully, next month.

Erickson: Good.

Mayhew: I'm just sending in the last galley proofs when I leave here this morning.

Erickson: Oh.

Mayhew: In 1992, the Seventh Bombardment Group Historical Foundation, -- the group I went overseas with that I was telling you about before ...

Erickson: Right.

Mayhew: decided we were finally going to get our history book out. You see, the group goes back to 1918. It was the oldest bomb group in the Air Force.

In fact, the squadron I was in had seven battle stars from World War I.

We wanted to get this history out before we were all gone, so I was selected to choose the pictures for the book. I don't know how many I looked at all together, but I quit counting at 3,000.

Erickson: And where did you get all the pictures? Individuals?

Mayhew: They shipped them in. We were collecting from everybody in the organization. I also got some from the National Archives and the Smithsonian Institute and some other institutions. Anyway, I quit counting at 3,000. There are I don't know how many over that. We could only put 300 in the book.

Erickson: Oh.

Mayhew: I thought, "Boy it's a shame to waste all these pictures. They're either going to get disbursed or lost. So I asked General Horace Wade, *President of our Foundation*, if we could do a pictorial history in addition.

Erickson: That's a good idea.

Mayhew: Unfortunately, a lot of the pictures came with no information. I don't know who they were or when they were taken or anything. But I was able to select 1,580, which are in this book from 1918 though 1995, which is the cut-off date we were using for the other book.

So this book simply complements the history book. I'm able to illustrate many of the things discussed in the other book that we couldn't illustrate in the other book. I restricted the pictures in the first one to those things that actually were talked about, but I had a lot of other pictures that fit those same things—they just couldn't be included.

Erickson: Did you do some of the writing for that first book?

Mayhew: The author that we acquired was going to do it really cheap apparently, because the other bomb group that I was in that we formed in North Africa when we moved from India to Africa, they had a three year history. It was 470 printed pages in that book, (*plus appendices*).

This book for seventy seven years was 192 typewritten pages. General Wade and the rest of us just went through the ceiling. So General Wade asked the rest of us to put in the parts that we knew about personally. So, yes, I've got quite a bit included.

Erickson: Oh good.

Mayhew: When I get this book finished, then I'm going back to write the one that I've been threatening to do for years.

Erickson: And what's that?

Mayhew: Well, as I said, we were in twenty eight countries on five continents around the world during the war. I plan to write up my war experiences for the first half.

I taught in Egypt for a year under the Fulbright Program. I taught in India twice for shorter periods. I went back to China. I've been back to Australia and back to India as a tourist, and so I'll write what it was like to be a civilian in those places in a later period compared to what it was like as a GI.

Erickson: That's interesting.

Mayhew: Eventually ... I'm in the mood now with this other book. I wrote over a hundred pages of captions for this book, so that's essentially a book in itself.

Erickson: I'll say.

Mayhew: I'm in the process of getting material for that one.

Erickson: Do you use the computer for that?

Mayhew: I have voluminous notes on the civilian part of it. I didn't take very good notes *while in the Air Corps*. I started a diary when I was overseas, but I didn't write down everything I should. I'd write home letters—after I got back to the states, I'd write to my folks about what had happened. This was immediately after I came home.

As I looked at those letters (my Mom saved them for me) and then look at my diary, and I didn't say much, if anything, about some of those things.

So the diary is helpful and useful, but it wasn't as good *as the letters*.

When I went overseas after that, I made sure I kept very accurate and voluminous notes so I have acres for that part.

Erickson: You are prepared.

Mayhew: That will be very easy to put together.

Erickson: Good.

Mayhew: Much of the military, I've already put together for these other books. It shouldn't take me terribly long.

Erickson: Um hmm. How interesting. Is there anything else that we didn't talk about that you'd like to bring up?

Mayhew: I can't think of anything ... other than the reason—well I already brought that up. The reason I was so aggressive in acquiring the land.

Mayhew: People said how can you go in to talk to these people and get land. Well, I couldn't do it for myself. If I were out trying to make some money on land, I couldn't do it. But doing it for the university, I could talk to the devil himself to try to get the land. So we were successful.

Erickson: Well, you have acquired some wonderful properties for the university.

Mayhew: Yes, we've got some good ones.

Erickson: Yes, you have. Thank you very much. This was really interesting.

Mayhew: You're very welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

Text in *italics* has been edited by Professor Mayhew.