DAVID DURENBERGER

Former U.S. Senator for the
State of Minnesota

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EPA Interviewer: Today is Thursday, July 21, 2005, and we are in the Ariel Rios North Building. We're interviewing the Honorable David Durenberger, former Senator in the United States Senate. Let me start with your name.

Durenberger: My name is David Durenberger and I served in the U.S. Senate from 1978 to 1995.

EPA Interviewer: Great. And what was your first involvement with the Superfund program?

Durenberger: I'm sure the first involvement was with the original bill, because I came in and it was my very first term; 1979 to '80, as I recall, was the initial authorization of Superfund. I wasn't on the Environment and Public Works Committee at the time, but I was on the Finance Committee, so I dealt with the tax aspects of it, and that's where I learned about some of the issues that were involved in the initial authorization.

EPA Interviewer: Do you find that you're involved with it at all anymore in your current career?

Durenberger: No. Everything I do now is [health policies]. Like the flight attendant on the airplane coming out here today was complaining about the high cost of health insurance. She thinks she is about to get laid off or fired from Northwest Airlines as they start falling apart and all she got was her health insurance. So I deal with that saga, health policies.

EPA Interviewer: She had the right passenger captive, right?

Durenberger: Right, for that purpose she did not bring up Superfund. Nobody has talked with me about Superfund in quite some time.

EPA Interviewer: As I mentioned to you before we actually started recording, in what I've read and in looking at how you were involved in the program, you were really in a catbird seat in the Senate Finance Committee, and of course, as one of the original cosponsors of the original bill. I wondered if you can give us some idea of your recollections of what you saw as some of the significant obstacles to passing Superfund back in 1980 and 1979.

Durenberger: I think the times as I remember them, '78, '79, '80 were the time of environmental policy formulation. It struck me that in my past, which included a four-year term as the Chief of Staff to the Governor of Minnesota from 1967 to 1970, I got exposed to the first environmentalist. That's about the period of time when we first heard about environmentalists, and there were a lot of people trying to preserve, at that time, the Mississippi River from a riotous encroachment in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and so forth, and then there were stories of dumping iron ore tailings into Lake Superior, and on and on and on. So I became familiar with what an environmentalist was and I began to get familiar with the challenge to the role of government back in the late '60s. This has been a state in which probably the environmental movement—Minnesota in the main, basically—were just getting started, so I had that in my background. And I was attracted obviously because the Democrats still controlled things in the Senate, and I was attracted to the work of [Senator] Ed Muskie. I sought a seat on—I was on the Government Affairs Committee—so I sought a seat on Intergovernmental Relations, which was the committee that Ed had, in effect, started at one period of time, and I think [Senator] Jim Sasser chaired [it] at the time, so I was in the middle of federal-state responsibilities for formulating policy, like environmental policy. I[t] was familiar because of my background in Minnesota with the challenges to clean air and clean water, and so forth, that were inherent in a variety of clean air acts and water acts—that sort of thing.

But the idea of preserving the land and the water—groundwater—was something new to me. The whole issue of groundwater was not something I had ever focused on before, so my learning curve had to be really steep because the debate was already on. President Carter at the time favored this kind of legislation. Ed and others were strong proponents of it. [Senator] Abe Ribicoff, who was Chairman of the Government Affairs Committee, was very, very interested in it; he was interested also in the ozone hole and all kinds of things. When he took his day off one day, a week off from the committee, all the committee did was hear from scientists about airborne pollutants and the ozone hole and all that sort of thing. This was way before anybody else thought of it as a problem. I was living in that kind of an environment. The specifics of building the case for Superfund were not something that fell to me at the time, but I was pretty well a sitting duck when it came to helping, from the Republican side, helping pass the legislation.

EPA Interviewer: Well, that's a very good summary of what shaped your experiences and your beginning views of the Superfund program. Do you recall what your expectations were in terms of getting this bill passed? I mean it was so very different from the regulatory efforts that had been enacted to set up permitting systems for environmental regulations. This was a response to problems out there and I wondered if maybe you had a sense of what you hoped to achieve or what the Senate hoped to achieve when they enacted this bill.

Durenberger: I think the best I can do is speak to my experience of that time, as reflected again in 1986, when we did the reauthorization. A whole lot of this was—this was not as much about the science of pollutants, which we got into on clean air, but—it was really about whose responsibility was it? How much was public? How much was private? Where was the responsibility between the national and the state governments? And at that time, we were into, obviously, mandates at the federal level and the states were into complaining. And we were also in the middle.

I recall particularly the Finance Committee and the big battle over the state capacity issue, as far as taxes were concerned. And at that time, we had the energy crisis, big energy crisis, second big energy crisis, and people in Minnesota and other states would complain about the fact that Montana, Wyoming, Texas, [and] states like that were exporting their tax burden to the rest of us in the form of lower, high-sulfur coal. We pay their taxes in the form of buying coal and it would get shipped back. You know, Alaska was the worst example, just to focus on coal. It was oil, natural gas. It was Texas and Montana, and I, myself, had famous fights with the then-Governor of Montana over the debates on fiscal capacity.

So in that context, it seemed to me that some of the more difficult issues—after you get by what's the owner's responsibility—the most difficult issues were going to be with how does the national government follow its mandates with the funds to carry out the mandates, because not all states were created equal, and not all cities and communities were created equal. And so, that's where the notion that we had to raise a tax [came from]. We had to set up a subcommittee process by which we knew how much money we could spend on what, and I forget all of the words here connected with it, but it got to be an elaborate exercise in federal, state, and public-private policy making, which nobody seems to get into today, but it was critical at the time. And it was also, as we went along—not just regarding that period but a couple of years—in the terms of implementation, we ran into the challenge of the federal deficit. People would love to borrow from funds in order to save, and we'd go on and increase the deficit, and we'd go into the Superfund or we'd go into the airport trust fund, we'd go to these various places and say you can't touch that money and things like that. I recall Pete Wilson and I. Pete had been the Mayor of San Diego, got elected to the Senate, [and] subsequently became Governor of California. But he and I introduced a bill in '81 or '82 to require the national government to fund their mandates, and nobody signed up. We were the only two. It was that environment that really played strongly in this.

EPA Interviewer: One of the areas of the tax that is always a curiosity to people today is the unique treatment of the oil industry. Gasoline and fuels [industries] are not covered by the CERCLA law, and they are treated very differently than other potentially responsible parties (PRPs). I wondered if maybe you had some insight into how that came to be or what the rationale was behind that becoming the law.

Durenberger: I don't have a very specific recollection, but I have a presumptive recollection, which is: You don't get a tax through the Finance Committee with—whether it is [Senator] Russell Long or [Senator] Bob Dole, [Senator] Lloyd Benson, you know whoever it is—you don't get a tax that might affect oil and gas through the Finance Committee that looks anything like a tax on some other commodity. I'm guessing that's its origin.

EPA Interviewer: Can you maybe share with us one of your favorite stories or one of your most vivid recollections about the Superfund program specifically?

Durenberger: Well I think most of those came later on. I mean, the early, I don't recall being that big a player in the beginning. I didn't get on [the] Environment and Public Works [Committee] until '85 or maybe it was '83. Then the challenges became more challenges with my own colleagues on the Republican side. I never seemed to have a good Republican on the other side at least, excuse me, a good Democrat on the other side of the committee, somebody that the Republicans liked or appreciated. And so when, for example, [Senator]

Frank Lautenberg, now back in the Senate, became Chair of the Superfund Committee, it was obvious he was taking care of New Jersey, and to heck with the rest of us. The rest of us would try to say we needed some kind of a balanced approach to all of this, and Frank was only interested in very specific sites in New Jersey, which really made it difficult to try to persuade people that we were dealing with the national interest as opposed to some kind of more localized interest. And that happened with increasing frequency. As you know, the Fund has a certain size to it, but the problems are growing way beyond the finances that were available. At that point we had to start trying to think creatively about other sources of money that might supplement the Fund.

EPA Interviewer: You're thinking of the insurance industry and other kinds of things that were thrown around during that time?

Durenberger: Yep, exactly. And I am trying to remember specifics of their involvement, but because insurance was a very critical part of dealing with liability, there were always proposals, not necessarily from me, but proposals from other people to find ways in which to involve the insurance industry to a greater extent. Some people—again, this is a vague recollection—some people in the insurance industry also thought that was a good idea because some of them were carrying a lot bigger load—liability load—than others, depending upon what they had written in their plans and how long it tailed. They were always interested in, "Is there another way we can approach it as an industry?" that might help keep the burden off of certain individual companies.

EPA Interviewer: That brings to mind the fact that you were there while all of these liability issues were being worked out, and would you be willing to talk a little bit about the role of industry in all of this, as a big stakeholder during the reauthorization process?

Durenberger: To the extent that I can, and my recollection, again, is that this varied with the industry. There were—we always seemed to either face site-specific challenges—I mean the so-called famous ones, and…

EPA Interviewer: Like Love Canal or Valley of the Drums?

Durenberger: Yeah, all that and there was someplace in Indiana, I remember, and I don't know whether it was Gary or where it was, but there's just some in the back of my head. There are some famous sites of which [Senator] Pat Moynihan would say, we still haven't ever proven that it was a problem or anything like that. But this always got mixed up. I mean, are we talking about some of the specifics, or are we talking in more general terms about specific polluting industries, most of which were—again in my reflection—were in mining or minerals, some form of mineral industry, because that's where the chemistry works to do the polluting. And so it's again why I focus on the kind of, in my memory of this, of always having to fight battles on two fronts, one of which is over in the Environment [and Public Works] Committee—how tough the standards are going to be and all the rest of that sort of thing; and the financing role and over on the Finance Committee side where the industry often had either their second shot at it or one of their best shots at it. So they had the liability issue in one committee, and they had the funding issue in another committee and different people would have different stakes depending on the committee you were on, but everybody had a stake in whether or not they were going to get touched by the CERCLA taxes.

EPA Interviewer: We often hear about the extensive hearings that have taken place. Perhaps you could talk a little bit about the role of the Senate staff in these deliberations. Did they bring options to the committee or did the committee direct them to do the work, and just how did that work?

Durenberger: Not only in my case, the person in my staff [who] was probably one of the more influential people on the staff, Jimmy Powell. It certainly became that way over time. By the time we got to the Clean Air Act, people started calling him Senator Powell. He was able to carry a fair amount of weight even though he did it in a nice, deft way. I thought the staff on the Environment and Public Works Committee, in the '80s as I experienced it, was as good a committee staff as any I saw in my experience in the Senate. I mean they were really professional. They were really, really good. We had a personal staff or committee staff assigned to somebody like [Senator] Al Simpson or somebody like that who just didn't believe anything the rest of the staff came up with. But most of the staff, whether it was Republican or Democrat, given the leadership we got from people like [Senator] John Chafee and others, really worked at the science, as well as the policy logic—trying to link up a new, always looking for new, policy logic to tie in with science, which was not always as precise as you might want it to be.

This also got in the politics, as I said earlier, of being intergovernmental politics and the different burdens on different communities and on different industries. But in Superfund and in many of these the more complicated challenges, we get into safe drinking water; you get into non-point source pollution, as well as the big air-water issues. The staff had to be good at what they did. And one of the things that I can remember not only about Superfund but it almost always came up in the course of "How do you get the policy to match the science and stand off the objectors who didn't want anything?" was the ability of people like Jimmy Powell and others on the staff, Democrats and Republicans, to find examples of industry people that wanted to comply. I wish I could think of specific names to give you, but I was, as the Member [of Congress] who got to do the lifting after the staff did the heavy lifting, was always impressed by the fact that they could show you examples. Whether it was in the electric energy business or the gasoline business or where it was, they could always show you examples of companies that decided it was better to find a technological way to remedy the problem, to prevent a problem, whatever it was, than to fight the problem. And we would use that both on the Senate side and when we got to having to fight with [Congressman] John Dingell or somebody else on the House side.

You then used that example as leverage against others in the industry or against people who would disagree with you. And that's one of the things that they, I think all of the people who were on the staff then prided themselves on; that American industry was not as bad as some of them would imply by criticizing any role of government, whether it's protecting the groundwater or something else. I mean, the implication in fighting it is, "We're good guys and we know you're not good guys," so you went looking for good guys and when you found them you used them, in effect, to try to affect solutions to these problems.

EPA Interviewer: Do you recall either one of the good guys or one of the circumstances that resulted from one of the good guys?

Durenberger: Yeah. I can't think of an example in Superfund.

EPA Interviewer: OK.

Durenberger: I have an example in my head that involved Aarco in the Clean Air bill, which was—the Clean Air bill was even more controversial, particularly in 1990 when you had a Republican President and a Democratic Congress.

EPA Interviewer: It was more controversial than Superfund?

Durenberger: Yeah, believe it or not. It still is. It still is controversial.

EPA Interviewer: It is. Indeed it is.

Durenberger: Superfund accomplished a fair amount over a period of time. I have no idea exactly where it is at today, but I mean it was, whereas the Clean Air bill—I mean some of those people have never let up on that. I mean, they've just—they won't let go of the excesses that the images of that one citizen of Cuyahoga County, OH, chained to the chain link fence dying from whatever the emissions were in the plant.

EPA Interviewer: Well, over the course of your career, can you think about a high point of your involvement with the Superfund program, either as a Senator from Minnesota or as just a general Member of the U.S. Senate?

Durenberger: Well, to be practical about it, I think the high points were not necessarily legislative; they were in implementation.

EPA Interviewer: OK.

Durenberger: It was, whether it was [a] Republican Administration when we had our problems with the initial implementation, because we had [EPA Administrator] Ann Gorsuch, and people like that who…

EPA Interviewer: And [Assistant EPA Administrator] Rita Lavelle?

Durenberger: Yeah. Not picking on her individually, but I mean there was a, Jim Watt, Secretary of Interior, and there was a presumption that the excesses of the '70s were going to have to be undone by the new Administration in the '80s. There was that presumption overhanging everything. If you got below the political appointees, you got to the agency itself where you found the people with the science obligation and the people with the analytical obligation and the people with the implementation. You went out to Rural District 1 or wherever it was, out into the regions. My impression is that the folks out in the regions were doing a whale of a job with backup support from the Washington staff in the implementation.

So the successes, to the extent that you needed those successes to illustrate why certain modifications or the amendments were needed, or when we got the reauthorization, how we were going to justify whatever it was. It was really very important to know that there was an EPA professional staff doing the kind of job that needed to get done to implement the bill. And to the extent that there were weaknesses in legislation that couldn't be remedied by rules and that sort of thing, the professional staff was available to the committee all the time

for testimony. I don't know how much time I spent once I got on [the] Environment and Public Works [Committee], listening to EPA Assistant Administrators on this subject, but it seemed like a lot. Only because— again my vague recollection—everybody knew the extent of the challenges when they got around to reauthorizing. And you know that you are not going to get a whole lot of help from the President or from the White House on something like that, so, whatever you're gonna do, you're gonna have to do it on your own. So it became really, really critical that there was a professional—there was a substantial commitment by professional staff. And this included, once we got passed the—I'll just characterize it as the—Jim Watt/Ann Gorsuch period in 1981 and 1982, I think.

Once we got through that period of time, things kind of settled down and the politics switched from being "We're just against those liberals that enact all this goody-goody legislation," to the financial issues, which were, "We've got a huge deficit. Where are we going to get the money?" The states were in a tough economy in the '80s ('83, '84, '85) that period of time was really, really bad, and there were states on the verge of going belly up. So it was really tough times for the financial commitments, whether it was staffing commitments or it was funding cleanup, funding commitments. It was a tough time trying to implement a large piece of legislation like this, in which some of the implementation was going to be in the eye of the beholder and the prioritizing process was going to be in the eye of the beholder and that sort of thing.

I really can't say enough—again thinking back 20 years—I can't say enough for the comfort level that I always felt as a Republican Senator going into hearings with the quality of the staffing of the committee plus the quality of the EPA. And right up to the political appointees, I mean, including the Assistant Administrators and so forth. And after that first year or two it kind of got straightened out, and there were some good people coming in there. It's to the credit of the Agency that we were able to do as much with that legislation as we have been able to do with it. Later on—and again because of some of these financing challenges—some of us had to start thinking. Again, this is a staffer [who is] trying to think creatively about how you, where do you get funds? I mean, as funds are being accumulated at the state level and, again, as we began, we did the Safe Drinking Water Act, I guess in '86 at the same time as we were starting to think about leaking underground storage tanks—great acronym called "LUST." Everybody all of a sudden discovered leaking underground storage tanks.

EPA Interviewer: Yes, you were one of the original sponsors?

Durenberger: And then we had a few explosions. We had the pipeline legislation, and I remember writing a famous speech about—which I think Jimmy must have given me the metaphor, the analogy—but writing about groundwater in the context of the water we drink today fell as rain on the colonists in the first colony before the Articles of Confederation or something like that. I mean just to give you a picture of how long it takes water to become drinking water.

EPA Interviewer: He was referring to the whole cycle of how it goes up in the air and comes back to use again.

Durenberger: Exactly. In order to make the case for groundwater and the challenges to groundwater pollution that came from this wide variety of media, so in the mid-'80s we had the fiscal challenges, we had the ideological or industry challenges, we had a variety of other challenges to groundwater, in particular, that we were dealing with. And then the question was, well, whose got the money to deal with all of this? I mean, where's the money gonna come from? So you've got pipelines, you've got storage tanks, you've got this, you got that, you know you got the contaminants that are covered by the Superfund. And so it was—well, on the one hand, we seemed to raise a lot more problems that should have been dealt with. We had a way in which to talk about the environment, which was an invisible environment on the drinking water side that we hadn't had before, because we had these other events that were getting publicized like the underground storage tank problem; so that's what helped us keep it all in line.

EPA Interviewer: One of the really positive impacts was the recognition of groundwater as a resource and the need to protect that or clean it up. Were there other positive impacts that you have seen as a result of the Superfund program?

Durenberger: You know you have to suggest one to me to jog my memory but…

EPA Interviewer: Oh, perhaps business management practices of their wastes or state practices in terms of really trying to protect their groundwater or states…

Durenberger: Yeah, that's where I was headed, thank you.

EPA Interviewer: State cleanup laws like dry cleaner laws or that sort of thing.

Durenberger: There's something else that I'm not thinking of that's important as well, but that's where I was headed with my thought about drinking water and underground storage tanks and things like that. Again you have this example where several states are getting out ahead of everybody else and passing some of these things in response to events that are occurring at a state level. So the states are using somewhat more creative mechanisms like insurance and acts on insurance and things like that that create funds for multiple purposes, and it's at that point that the staff—again I am thinking of this in the latter part of the '80s—the staff was starting to think creatively about how can you make the mandate—the federal mandates—work against state flexibility.

This was always a challenge, because this was something Jimmy Powell did all the brilliant thinking on, and I was the guy who had to try to explain this to a bunch of Democrats who wouldn't trust the states to get the job done. So I was trying to say "Why can't we loosen up the requirements on the states—give them some flexibility so they can make these judgments for themselves? The environmentalist crowd, obviously, didn't want the flexibility, and the Democrats who were their spokesperson didn't want the flexibility. But by that time we were, we Republicans, were having to think more creatively about the partnership between the federal and the state governments.

Jimmy once gave me, and that's why I was trying to reach him, a figure about unspent resources in various states that were accumulating because they just couldn't be spent. Whatever the problems were, you couldn't get the permitting process to work or some darn

thing wasn't working properly so there were. He gave me some huge dollar figures that were bottled up in various of these funds that got—that were designed to deal with underground or with safe drinking water in one way or the other, or the underground water supply in particular. And, so he would look at that, and say, "Can't we, by changing the law in some way or the implementation requirements, can't we loosen up some of that money because it isn't doing anybody any good right now?"

EPA Interviewer: Just sitting there?

Durenberger: Right. So that became our challenge, and I wish I could get you the specifics of it, but that does stand out in my memory as a [*pause*] sometimes resources weren't the problem, it was trusting.

EPA Interviewer: The process?

Durenberger: Yeah, somebody along the process the pipeline process, if you will, at the state or local level. States were getting a lot of pressure from local governments also, to give them flexibility, and the states didn't necessarily trust. The feds didn't necessarily trust local governments not to bend to the will of the feedlot owners, or whatever the case may be.

EPA Interviewer: Whatever the economic interest was.

Durenberger: There was some evidence of that. So, again, having lived in this a period, which was really the height of the environmental movement in the United States, the challenge, as between Republicans and Democrats, I think, was doing good environmental policy and then this intergovernmental challenge. It was a very exciting time. And it's to the credit of a whole lot of people to make this thing work—not the legislators—the people [who] had to make it work, that things would happen, you know, things would come along as well as they did.

EPA Interviewer: Was there a low point in your time of being involved with Superfund, a time when you felt the program wasn't working or that the job just wasn't getting done?

Durenberger: Yeah, my recollection at that time was in the latter part of the '80s and somewhere in that period of time—and that's why I don't lay this on [Senator] Frank Lautenberg obviously, but probably on environmentalists and some other people—there came a time when you had to rethink how do you make Superfund work? And at that point, you run into the same thing we run into now that I'm doing health policy financing: You run into the problem of the folks that helped to invent the policy in the first place are afraid that in the process of changing the policy, they're going to lose some constituency—going to lose something from the original. If I had a frustration in all that, it was when we got to that particular point in time—but we got to that point in lots of other areas as well as in the environment.

And it was a—just looking back or thinking back on it—one of my most humorous memories is early 1992 when George Bush was President of the United States and running for reelection, but unenthusiastically, but he won't admit that he is unenthusiastic about it. And he's sinking in the polls and everybody—all the Republicans are running around, "Gee,

how can we help?" So I got this brilliant idea that he would capture some part of the middle ground, which he was losing faster than anything else, by proposing that we actually move the EPA from an Executive Order status to a real cabinet department; in other words, we'd pass a law creating the Department of Environmental Protection. And I talked to [Senator John] Chafee about it and he thought it was a great idea and would help Bush with a part of the electorate that he really needed. So we took it to the Republican Policy Committee, which was the noon lunch on Tuesdays. When we got to the part of the program when we're talking about—and Dan Quayle was there because the Vice President was always there representing the President—we got to the part of the program where we're talking about the President. Does he need any help? What can we do? That sort of thing. I said, "I've got a proposal that I think would really help the President." So I get up and do a two-minute pitch on, do you know that the background of this is that Richard Nixon signed an executive order and people are sorta like listening up and so forth and I get to the part about my way of saving George Bush and the whole room just breaks out—it's like "Boo! Boo!" Get out of here. Dave, you're nuts," you know that sort of thing. There was no way Republicans. Number one: they didn't want any more government. Number two: they didn't want EPA to be anything.

And that was—times had changed—so by the time we got to the reauthorization of the Clean Air Act in 1990 and then into the period I'm talking about, 1991 to '92, the times had really changed. Ideologically, the not-so-nice side of the Republican party was emerging and becoming—what the hell—particularly the people on the House side, at that point it stopped being fun doing this kind of legislation. It stopped being fun fighting for old 1980 legislation or 1976 legislation or whatever it is. It really, really, got to be a source of so much frustration because you had almost like—and I don't know how [Senator John] Chaffee ever did it. I mean God bless his soul, but you know how John took the crap that he had to take all the way right through his death, you know from Republicans. Anyway, the times changed and the compassionate conservatives—or whatever the current President said that he would be—you know, [they] really were there in the '70s and '80s among Republicans. Either they disappeared or they were a lot less tolerant than they once had been.

EPA Interviewer: You've talked a little bit about the complexity of putting together the fiscal scheme to make this work between the private parties and the insurance indemnifications and the states and the feds. Do you think that the scheme that you folks came up with has been successful?

Durenberger: Yeah, I think it. You know, I have asked myself that question a few times in the latter part of the '80s as we were trying to think of some of these alternatives where you might allow more flexibility for the states and things like that. But on reflection, you know looking back on it, I think the original design, the 1980 design, was a good design. I mean, it made things happen. After that, it became a question of priorities and resources and how much proof do you need of this, that, and the other thing. But prioritizing, as I recall, was always some kind of a problem. So, I don't recall that this one stands out.

When you get to air, it's another thing. You can think about how the original construct didn't quite meet the objective, and you can think about that Clean Water [Act] missed the whole non-point [source] thing. But I think, with regard to this one, where problems are fairly specific and the responsibilities are fairly clear but the capacity to exercise your responsibility

is very different from one site to another, you just had to have a public for a risk-spreading mechanism, financial risk-spreading mechanism and financing. You just had to have something in regard to this one because it is just like health insurance. If you charge everybody only their own costs, who carries the chronically ill, the terminally ill, and so forth? So we always had that problem and I think the original and I think…

EPA Interviewer: It takes a village.

Durenberger: You're right. It does. But it's that. So I think the original design has really stood the test of time.

EPA Interviewer: Do you think you've talked [about] how important protecting and cleaning up the groundwater resources was to your involvement. Do you sense that the program has been successful in that arena, either in helping diminish the amount of pollution that gets there or in cleaning up? Has it been successful in meeting that expectation?

Durenberger: Whether the program itself is [as] successful a program as Superfund—I haven't visited recently, so I wouldn't know. But I, you know, you can't go a month or so in a community like the community I live in, when you don't read about some issue that has given rise to some issue in redevelopment—you know land, land use, land redevelopment, particularly urban areas, fringe areas, the old factory areas, even out in the rural areas where we sent some of the polluting industries, and so forth at one time. You still read about the challenges to public health that come from the way we used to think, you know, in the '20s and '30s and the '40s and all the rest of that sort of thing. I'm sitting on, I'm living in a community with a huge Superfund site at the Twin Cities Arsenal where they made half the munitions in America. They were manufactured in a suburb of the Twin Cities, which is now surrounded by megamalls and things like that—which was a huge polluter. But there isn't a voice any longer to say "I want to live on top of that kind of a [pause] or I even want to play on that." I mean, people know that out-of-sight is not out-of-mind when it comes to these kinds of pollutants, and I think that it's to the credit of Superfund.

EPA Interviewer: That's a success—yeah.

Durenberger: And so it's now become like, OK, that's the way it should have been.

EPA Interviewer: Well, the Superfund removal program started as a quick response to some of the explosions you were talking about and that sort of thing. Do you think that that's had an impact on emergency response capabilities and preparedness across the country?

Durenberger: I have no idea.

EPA Interviewer: OK. Fair enough. Let's see.

Durenberger: There probably is a real good answer to that, but this is not the source of your answer.

EPA Interviewer: Here's a question that fits right into your discussion of what you consider one of the successes. And maybe you could elaborate a little bit on what the role you have

observed the waste management programs—and Superfund in particular—[are] playing in the redevelopment of properties. The factory properties, are they—other than the general recognition by the citizenry you mentioned that wasn't there twenty years ago?

Durenberger: Yeah, it's the cost of community. It's a very, very important part of the cost of community, and we went through a period of time after the second World War, a big development in this country in which expansion to meet population growth and so forth all took place somewhere other than central cities and it took, expansion took place in suburbs, and suburbs and suburbs, and so forth. At some point in time, the cost of that having still fallen on central cities, raised the cost of the Minneapolises and St. Pauls of this world or the center cities of this world beyond the point where it was affordable to live or work there. At that point, people had to rethink how do we do it? Not just, we went through the urban renewal phase where we knocked things down and rebuilt on them. But then out of that, the question really was, "How do we reorganize metropolitan communities and how do we build transportation systems?"

There are a whole lot of issues, but one of the important issues was, of course, the availability of land, which was convenient to other economic enterprises. And so I think—I don't know if anybody ever measured this—but I think one of the great values of the Superfund cleanup program and the waste management side of it has been to restore the capacity of core cities, central cities, the older cities, and so forth to do their own economic development without huge amounts of either public subsidies or statewide subsidies, and made it affordable for businesses to come back downtown rather than to continue the move out with the burbs. I couldn't prove that other than experientially. But all my experiences have demonstrated that, if you look over a period of time from the '60s and the '70s to the present time.

EPA Interviewer: That's an interesting observation. That kind of ends my formal questions that I have and I wonder if there's anything else you'd like to share with us before we turn the recorder off.

Durenberger: Well, it's just—it may be repetitious—but when you're celebrating, I guess you're? What are we doing?

EPA Interviewer: Twenty-five years.

Durenberger: Twenty-five years or something like that? It is really, really important to say thank you to your forefathers and foremothers. It's critically important. And it is, like now that I got, in my case, eight grandkids—you know, you have to keep reminding them that people to whom they are indebted like their grandparents, their great grandparents, politicians. I mean, this is not a good time to be a politician. It is not a goodtime, you know if you aren't "red in a blue [state]" or "blue in a red [state]", or something like that. It's a horrible time. Public confidence is way down and so forth. You need to use an occasion like this to celebrate both the willingness of people in political life—Senate and House and all these staff and Administrators and things like that in the EPA that we have been talking about—to take on really difficult issues against a variety of forces that said, "We don't have the money, we don't have the resources, the science, we don't have the time, this isn't a priority." And in the '70s and the '80s in particular, probably the latter part of the '80s, we really came to grips with that

issue: If not us, who? If not now, when? And we created solutions in government that are lasting solutions.

Now, ideologues can be critical—you haven't kept them up to date, you ought to be changing the way you administer things, you know consumer choices—you know all that sort of stuff, but somebody, on occasions like this, really needs to thank the guys that did the heavy lifting, that took the time to think it out. The folks like—I use the example all the time—that [Senator] Abe Ribicoff just called everything off for a whole week and said, "We're going to call in all these scientists that claim to know that we're burning a hole in the atmosphere. Now are we [or] aren't we?" Now, over time we have dealt with that, I mean we're still dealing with it. I mean are the oceans rising? Is Antarctica melting?

We're still dealing with those [questions], but there was a person [who] made it possible for younger guys like me to focus on an issue that has become increasingly important. I took one of these polar discoverers/trekkers, Will Steiger, who is the first guy to go back to the North Pole after all these years. He did dogsleds with some buddies all the way across Antarctica, you know things like that. After they came back from Antarctica—first time anybody had ever done that again—I took him to the White House when George Bush (the first) was President. And he said, "You know, Mrs. Bush wants me to be the education person" and so forth. "Do you think I could speak to her about what I saw in Antarctica, what I experienced in Antarctica?" And I said, "By all means, let's talk about it." So he talked about the melting, I mean like a scientist might, but here's a guy who trains dogs and then had the courage to run them across Antarctica. Those kinds of people are no longer rewarded in the political process. And Senators that would do the hard work of converting what people like that know is going on into legislation or whatever it is—they are not rewarded for that anymore. They just aren't rewarded in the political system for that. And so I think, "Thank God that I lived in almost a bipartisan period of time in which environmental health, public health, and acute care and so forth, we did a lot of bipartisan work. And those people need to be saluted rather than criticized by the "no new taxes" folks we live with today.

EPA Interviewer: Well, thank you, Senator, for your contribution during that time. Thank you for coming today.

Durenberger: Thank you for asking me. I appreciate it.