

Securities and Exchange Commission Historical Society
interview with Andrew Barr
Conducted July 17, 1992 by Dr. Gary Previts, Introduced by Dale L. Flesher

Video 4

Dr. Previts

You had become Chief Accountant.

Andrew Barr

That's right.

Dr. Previts

In November of 1956. Do you remember anything about that episode, perhaps about-

Andrew Barr

It was pretty clearly fixed in my mind, that's why it was done. Earl had what he thought was enough. And they were considering selecting someone to replace him. We had invitations to two professional meetings in Seattle. And the news that Earl wanted me to be the commission, came to me when I was out there. I think the Accounting Association and the CPAs all met in Seattle at the same time. But with a gap of three weeks in between. I used the three weeks to go to Alaska. They have a very fine tour of Alaska.

Dr. Previts

So when he announces his resignation, was there a selection process or was it, with all the experience you had at the commission, by that time you had been at the commission almost 20 years. And clearly you had experience outside the commission's office in public practice and education. It'd pretty hard to find somebody, I'm not familiar with all the people on the staff at that moment but sounded to me like you were the pretty obvious successor. Was there a formal search?

Andrew Barr

Well, there were others that had far more public practice or public confidence because I was only in that position for two years, but one thing Scobol did for me, [inaudible 00:02:04] was advise me to go to a smaller firm than the big eight were. You get more variety, wider experience, different problems. If I went to a firm like Gore. Who did Gore merge with? I think he merged with-

Dr. Previts

I'm not sure. [inaudible 00:02:33]

Andrew Barr

Anyway, he was one of the stalwarts in the profession in Chicago at the time.

Dr. Previts

Well it's interesting because often college professors are, up to today, occasionally find young recruiters from some major firms who are very aggressive, who come in and particularly say, professors, well, every firm has its own story. But occasionally in my capacity working with a smaller practice, they accuse the professors of steering just to the big firms. I know my own experience has been like yours, that every individual has their own talents and depending on what their interests are, they may glue them more readily to smaller practice units. Major firms aren't necessarily for everybody. That doesn't mean eventually you may not end up with a major firm. Carmen Glou ended up being a partner in, I believe, Anderson, after his SEC experience, and before he went to the institute. And so you may end up intersecting with a major firm some other time in your career, but where you start ought to be where your interests are. And that's interesting that Professor Scobol, hearing that he made those comments.

Andrew Barr

Professor Scobol, I think, was a very fine man. He and Littleton and Filby, a group of them, created a nucleus for building up the accounting work at the county [inaudible 00:04:15].

Dr. Previts

Now you have a photograph up on your bookshelf. Is that some of the-

Andrew Barr

I'm glad you noticed that.

Dr. Previts

I don't know how well I may photograph-

Andrew Barr

That is a picture that appeared in the daily line and I saw it. I was, I don't know what year it was, it must have been about the time I went to the commission.

Anyway, I puttered around the door [inaudible 00:04:52] offices, and there was a group came in, the usual counsel group, the lawyer, and the accountant and the executive of the corporation. And one of them came in the door and glanced at this thing. He said, "Who are all these jokers with Henry J. Kaiser?"

Dr. Previts

So he mistook-

Andrew Barr

Which one is Henry J. Kaiser?

Dr. Previts

The one in the second row, Schlotter, is that who he thought was Kaiser?

Andrew Barr

That's Shawn.

Dr. Previts

Schlotter, yeah, Schlotter the cost accounting professor.

Andrew Barr

I had all of the others, the cost accounting, Bailey, down in one court. This is the one I had, of course. Schlotter was just beginning to get some-

Dr. Previts

Notoriety?

Andrew Barr

... Stature in the field. And then of course, his son did too.

Dr. Previts

Yes, he did. Professor Beninger at Florida, when I was doing my doctor work at Florida, Professor Beninger was someone who would bring on Schlotter's text and we'd occasionally critique them and look at them, and that's true.

So the Illinois faculty were a prime ingredient in your preparation, and I think that's probably something-

Andrew Barr

... Started out, got ahold of Scobol, and asked if he had a picture. Of course, I'd done it. You see my history is spread around this room. Everything hanging on the walls or resting on the top of a shelf is some section of my life.

Dr. Previts

Well we know the military part is here.

Andrew Barr

Yep.

Dr. Previts

One thing we haven't mentioned, although we probably should, is the 1980, you mentioned Illinois, when Norton Bedford was department head, and Burns Irman was, I believe, dean at the time.

Andrew Barr

Yes.

Dr. Previts

Through their combined efforts, your collected writings were published under The Written Contributions of Selected Accounting Practitioners Volume Three. I think it's important to recognize that in using a technology of the moment and having the opportunity to do a video interview, a conversation with Andy just begins to focus on the real depth of the materials that you find by looking at the particular papers. And a little bit later in our conversation, we're going to talk about some of the papers that are in the volume. Because they emphasize his contributions in the areas of independence, in the matter of

the investment tax credit, and of course a summary paper at the end which Andy and Paul Grady presented in 1979 at the Southeastern Triple A Meetings. All part of understanding the development of Andy's contributions, but the profession surrounding it.

You were mentioning-

Andrew Barr

Volume One and Two are up there.

Dr. Previts

Volume One and Two are Ralph Johns and -

Andrew Barr

And Grady.

Dr. Previts

... And Paul Grady's collections, that's right.

Andrew Barr

They were contemporaries of mine. Grady [inaudible 00:08:17].

Dr. Previts

You mentioned that there are a number of items around the room that are here in your apartment that are significant in your achievements. And while Dale is panning the cameras, we may not be able to quite get to everything, but on the wall, there, is your president's award from 1960. I believe that was awarded to you by President Eisenhower.

Andrew Barr

On the recommendation of the SEC.

Dr. Previts

And that particular award was given in March of 1960. That's another example of how you distinguished yourself during those years at the commission. Maybe it's time to shift back and talk a little bit about technical issues here, and let me get my note cards up to date since we've moved kind of quickly.