

Mayor Bill Levitt
Friends of Alta Water Symposium
Alta, Utah
August 20, 2008

For me to say a few words is difficult, but I will try. This is indeed a very interesting anniversary because in 1970, in August of 1970 the Alta community became the Town of Alta as a reincorporated, municipality. It was at that time we suddenly realized that from now on it was never going to be a dull moment, and I assure you it has not been.

This has been a long and wonderful experience in this community because we started off shortly after incorporation with being confronted by a timeshare organization, one of the largest in the country, had been told that they could have 400 timeshare units in a little area between the Town of Alta and Snowbird. They had a meeting and called us in and didn't bother to go any further then say the law now requires them to apply to the nearest municipality for their municipal services. Well, we were the nearest municipality, in fact the only municipality, and they said they were happy to join us as long as we gave them 400 timeshare units in that little area. I don't think they even waited for me to respond because they left and within a week we were sued. And it was an interesting experience, our part time lawyer was up against one of the largest firms in Salt Lake and well we lost. When people heard this, from all over this country in fact all over Utah money came pouring in so that our town was able to go and hire really a top lawyer in Salt Lake. And take them to the Utah Supreme Court which unanimously reversed the decision of the lower court.

And from that time on we knew that we had a problem and that we were going to have to struggle to maintain this beautiful community and especially the focus was going to be on Albion Basin. And that's when a great man Charlie Wilson who was in charge of water for Salt Lake City was the man that came and took us in hand. I might say that he wasn't too gentle about it either because he spent the time with our new Town Council and new Mayor to explain to us what our duties were to see that we not only protected the Constitution but we also had to protect the environment. And so he proceeded to give us a real education about Albion Basin which is the area we now sit in. And then he arranged for us to come down to Salt Lake City to meet with Mayor Jake Garn.

And Mayor Jake Garn was happy to know we now shared the same watershed because under the law 100 miles is the area for watersheds for Salt Lake City but for the little Town of Alta it was only ten miles. And so we were sharing this wonderful area, both of us sharing the same watershed. And we were talking about the plans and one of his aides came in and handed him a piece of paper and he looked at that and he started laughing he said "I should have had this about 15 minutes ago" and so I said "well what is it?" He said "it's a letter from our Attorney General that says that the City of Salt Lake precedes the Town of Alta in watershed." And he stood there waiving this piece of paper at me and I said "well, what are you going to do?" And he stood up and said "I'll show you what I am going to do" and he took it and he tore it up and put it in the waste basket and said "we are going to work together and not go through any of this nonsense of who's in charge". And I might tell you that ever since then we have had this wonderful working relationship with all of the mayors of Salt Lake City which followed our great Senator, he

became Senator, Jake Garn. He had been the water commission of Salt Lake and really knew what he was talking about, as he always did, and he was a great help in all the work we carried on from there.

And that's when Charlie Wilson, who was Mr. Water took charge of us. I am sure most of you know about Albion Basin, but this was 1970 and that was a great holiday when we reincorporated, and Charlie Wilson suddenly found it was his job to teach us how to behave and what to do and how to protect Albion Basin. Jake Garn was always a supporter of us and from the time he was Senator he helped. Well following that we had another helper and that was Wayne Owen who was in Congress, at the time, and did get a mitigation commission established by Congress with funding to help watersheds and endangered streams that needed help so that we could go ahead and proceed to protect the environment and that led us to form a wonderful committee made up of representatives of the United States Forest Service, Salt Lake City, Town of Alta, and the Friends of Alta.

And our job then was to see what we could do to keep and protect this wonderful area here which we know as Albion Basin. And that was the beginning of what happened and when people came and gave us all that money they also decided that it would be a good idea to form what was then called the Alta Defense Fund because it didn't take us long to realize that it was not a matter of just defending Alta but it was to look at this wonderful area here and find out what it was about, study it, bring up school teachers, children make it more into a laboratory and in that way learn how to protect it and preserve it. And so that was what was carried on.

And then with Wayne Owens having established the Mitigation Commission and with a committee getting together to work on these things we were able to provide new trails up here to protect the area, to identify over 100 different variety wildflower - and I would say to all of you that in the words of our great ski leader Alf Engen, who would often greet the day by saying "another beautiful day in the Wasatch" and it didn't matter if it was snowing like crazy and the wind was blowing, and then he would pause a moment and say "but stay close to the trees" which we all did. And I will say it's another beautiful day in the Wasatch and I hope that when we finish the work that is going on here today all of you will be able to go out and to enjoy this area and to see beautiful flowers, you know there are over 100 varieties of wildflowers in this beautiful community. And there is only one thing I would like to add, please do enjoy it, do look at it, but don't pick the flowers it's against the law. Thank you very much.