

Nevada Test Site Oral History Project
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Interview with
Peggy Bostian

June 28, 2004
Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Shannon Applegate

© 2007 by UNLV Libraries

Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews conducted by an interviewer/researcher with an interviewee/narrator who possesses firsthand knowledge of historically significant events. The goal is to create an archive which adds relevant material to the existing historical record. Oral history recordings and transcripts are primary source material and do not represent the final, verified, or complete narrative of the events under discussion. Rather, oral history is a spoken remembrance or dialogue, reflecting the interviewee's memories, points of view and personal opinions about events in response to the interviewer's specific questions. Oral history interviews document each interviewee's personal engagement with the history in question. They are unique records, reflecting the particular meaning the interviewee draws from her/his individual life experience.

Produced by:

The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project

Departments of History and Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 89154-5020

Director and Editor

Mary Palevsky

Principal Investigators

Robert Futrell, Dept. of Sociology

Andrew Kirk, Dept. of History

The material in the *Nevada Test Site Oral History Project* archive is based upon work supported by the U.S. Dept. of Energy under award number DEFG52-03NV99203 and the U.S. Dept. of Education under award number P116Z040093.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these recordings and transcripts are those of project participants—oral history interviewees and/or oral history interviewers—and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Energy or the U.S. Department of Education.

Interview with Peggy Bostian

June 28, 2004

Conducted by Shannon Applegate

Table of Contents

Introduction: birth, family background, move from Washington to Las Vegas, NV, education, work for REECo at the NTS	1
Observation of Sedan and other above-ground tests, familiarization with NTS and atomic testing through local high school programs,	2
Works for Claude Cook in REECo in Construction Department, life and sense of community in Mercury, NV (NTS)	6
College and university education, marriage, works for CER Geonuclear Corporation in Plowshare program	9
Work and family life for women at the NTS	11
Details position as executive secretary for CER Geonuclear Corporation	13
Professional and personal relationship with Herb Grier, president of CER Geonuclear Corporation, and his wife Dorothy Grier	16
Discusses pay and benefits earned while working for REECo and CER	27
Becomes Vice-President of Corporate Administration for CER,	28
Talks about change of focus and culture in CER after Herb Grier leaves	30
Memories of Herb and Dorothy Grier	31
Encounters with protesters while working on Plowshare in Colorado, work on Rio Blanco and Rulison	32
Conclusion: thoughts on atmospheric testing and peaceful uses of nuclear energy	34

Interview with Peggy Bostian

June 28, 2004 in Las Vegas, NV
Conducted by Shannon Applegate

Shannon Applegate: *So if you want to go ahead and start with your background.*

Peggy Bostian: I moved here with my family. I was born in Washington state, in a beautiful, green trees Washington state. When I was fourteen years old, my family came to Las Vegas, this dry, flat, not green desert. And as we were driving—there were four kids in the family—I think it was through Salt Lake, we came down where you see Las Vegas, I thought, what have my parents done? This is a *terrible* place.

It was in September so I immediately enrolled at Las Vegas High School, which at that time was the only *public* high school. Gorman, the Catholic high school, was just built, and so that was the only high school there was to go to. And once I got into meeting friends and so forth, Las Vegas became home.

And so I graduated from high school in 1958. As a summer job, I worked at REECo, Reynolds Electrical and Engineering Company, as I think, a clerk-typist in purchasing, typing purchase orders. And I worked out at the test site on a temporary basis the following summer. During the school year, I'd gone to Woodbury College in Los Angeles. Worked out at the [Nevada] test site as a secretary to the head of personnel, and from there went to sort of working my way up. I went to work for the head of construction, which was a very interesting job. The most interesting was to work for Dr. Clinton S. Maupin, who's the father— just learned a few months ago— of one of our supreme court justices, Bill Maupin. Dr. Maupin was the head of health medicine and safety. RAD-SAFE, radiation safety department, was under Dr. Maupin. And he was always a member of the test panel, which every time there was a shot he'd go out to

the control point, as was Troy [Wade] a member. We have some pictures of Troy Wade looking up at the instruments and so forth.

And I remember one day Dr. Maupin—we were young secretaries and we would sort of pester him and say, we would like to go to a shot. And this was in about 1961, 1962, 1963. He'd sort of just brush us off and so forth. And then one day we all came to work and he said, Tomorrow we'll all go to see a shot. We have a little shot tomorrow. We said, Oh good. So we went out to the control point and that shot was Sedan, which was a phenomenal shot to see. Have you been out to the test site?

Yes. The big crater?

The *enormous* crater. He waited until we had a significant shot to see, and that was very, very thrilling.

But he told you it was a little—

Yes, OK, girls. And then you could call girls “girls,” you know. We *were* girls, practically, so it wasn't politically incorrect to say. We're going to go out to the-- OK. And I've been so glad that I was able to be there and see that shot.

Now did it cave in after?

What it did, it raised up and sunk. It's what they call an excavation shot. And this was all part of the Plowshare program, the idea that you could build canals, the small power of a nuclear explosive could make these huge subsidence craters. So that was a big thrill.

Now where were you standing when you saw that? How far away were you?

[00:05:00] Very, very, very close. We were in a visitor trailer, as I recall, and, oh, probably, let me see, here we are on Flamingo Road. Probably at Kinko's [2-3 blocks].

So pretty close.

Yes, or maybe McCormick and Schmick, the restaurant. Yes, quite close.

And did the earth shake? Did you feel that?

Oh yes. And it made a noise.

Oh really.

Yes. Somewhere there might even be—I'm sure there's videos but there might be audio as well.

And I think that shot did what it was supposed to do. And the power that is so evident is pretty overwhelming.

Really.

Yes.

So when you left, you felt overwhelmed by seeing that?

It was very profound sense of what the power of a nuclear explosive can do. And it's interesting because Troy Wade assembled the device for that shot, and the device is what they called it instead of a bomb. But he did the assembly of that particular shot.

And was he in there with you when—?

No, because he would be one of the ones at the Control Point panel literally controlling the setting-off, controlling the countdown and so forth, so they were in a more important and closer area than we were.

Did you feel safe when the bomb went off?

Yes, because we had been so familiar with test site activity, simply being residents of Las Vegas, even though I was very young, well, that's the test site. They test bombs out there. And then you would see things in the paper and maybe your class would have a speaker come and talk about how safe everything was.

Oh really? You had somebody come in when you were in high school?

I went to school from 1954 to 1958, so I recall that somebody, maybe from AEC [Atomic Energy Commission] or something, would come; this little booklet here [showing booklet] was handed out. I had lost mine but one of my guy friends from school remembered that he had one of those little booklets and brought it to me. And one of our local citizens, prominent citizens in Nevada, particularly Las Vegas, her name is here, Thalia Dondero. She has just donated a bunch of these for us to sell in the [Atomic Testing Museum] bookstore. [*Atomic Tests in Nevada*, 1957, United States Atomic Energy Commission].

So you were exposed to this in high school.

Yes, even though it wasn't like we studied it in great depth because it also was very, very, very classified. But we got used to it. And somebody's parents would work out at the test site, so it just became something we were familiar with. We didn't understand it all particularly; we were interested more in high school things than what was going on out there.

Did you have drills at all?

No. But a lot of my friends who *were* born here, who are a little older than I am, remember the duck-and-cover things and hiding under the desks. And I remember going out right after we moved here, going out six o'clock in the morning or something and staring up north and you'd see a flash of light and so forth.

Now how did that impress you at that time?

Without wholly understanding and being new to Nevada—it certainly wasn't as profound, even though it might—as seeing Sedan when I was a little older. But it was—and we didn't understand the real scientific significance or political. I was fourteen or fifteen years old. But it was something that I look back now and I'm so glad that my parents [00:10:00] made us get up and watch. Some of my friends' parents would pile them in the car and drive up to somewhere

up closer to the test site. I think one of my friends said they would go up and park at Angel's Peak or something so they could *really* see.

But you saw the flash of light and—

Yes, I remember that, and I think after the first couple of times that we saw one of the shots we said, OK, well, we've seen those. We don't need to see them anymore. I have to go to school now.

So it was blasé?

Yes. And here's someone like you, didn't know about the test site. And that was just—I don't remember the figures but I remember, if it's correct, that EG&G [Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier] and the test site activities, they were, next to gaming, the biggest employer in Nevada. But I should check that fact before I say it.

No, that's—yes, that is right.

Is that right? Yes. And now it's changed so much, it's hard to believe, but everybody knew somebody who worked at the test site.

Well, and that's something that we're experiencing too, that as we're going out in the community talking to people, they're [saying]oh yes, my cousin, or my father [worked at the test site]. You bump into somebody that had some exposure to the test site who worked there.

Exactly. That's exactly right.

But new people, new residents that are coming in, don't even know that that's out there, hardly.

Yes. Exactly. And it is becoming now more visible to the community because of the new activities that are going on out there, like antiterrorist training and so forth.

Now you had said that you had worked for the construction department?

Yes, when I worked for Reynolds Electric I worked for Claude Cook . He's a member of our foundation [Nevada Test Site Historical Foundation]. In fact, he sent me a letter—I had written him a letter and he sent me a letter back and sent a picture of us at his farewell party from 1962.

You weren't even born then, were you?

No, I wasn't. My parents didn't even know each other then.

Oh no! Oh dear!

Now you said that it was interesting to work there. Why was that an interesting job?

Well, from the time you got picked up by your carpool—everybody carpooled and it was a two-lane highway then. I think there were a couple of buses but everyone I knew carpooled. And I'd get picked up at my house something like six o'clock in the morning and drive hell-bent for the test site, go through security. It was a small town. You've been out there?

Yes.

OK. So the town of Mercury was sort of a hustling, bustling town. It wasn't a town of skyscrapers. It was a town of buildings, sort of plain buildings, trailers, but it was a community.

And so that's what made it interesting to work for the construction, was that you were seeing this community being built or—?

Well, the construction really was focused on the outer areas. It wasn't like building Mercury, the town of Mercury. He, Mr. Cook, was in charge of the construction that was out in the areas where testing was being conducted. But I remember we would dress up like we were going to the office. I mean this [referring to her clothes] is *very* casual because I don't meet with the outer world very much. But we would dress up like we were going to the office in a bank. And it would be very much like we're working here [NTS Historical Foundation/Atomic Testing Museum], only it might be in a trailer, a big trailer.

Did you have air conditioning?

Yes, we did, thank goodness. I'll never forget, my parents worked a lot and one summer our air conditioning went out. My father never got around to fixing it—he wasn't very good at [00:15:00] fixing things anyway—it wasn't though we would call somebody from the air conditioning company to fix it because that would cost a lot of money. I remember that was a very hot summer. But yes, air conditioning out there. And as you've probably learned, there were sports teams, there were movies, there was a steakhouse—

There were sports teams?

Yes. In fact, in the last *News Nob*, our newsletter, there's an article about the director of the sports program, Bill Durkee. And there was a big swimming pool. I'll get you a copy of that *News Nob*.

Yes, that would be great.

Now, I didn't stay all night out there. I commuted back and forth, back and forth, every day, as did many people. But many people would stay out there all week, and *they* were really the ones that had the sense of community and got involved in the sports teams. It was very much like they were living a life here, only it was sixty-five miles out in Mercury, Nevada. And then they might come in over the weekend. But my parents would not allow me to spend the night out there, so I had to come back and forth, back and forth, but that was just fine with me.

So you would get up at six in the morning, do that hour or so commute, and then when would you leave, when would your day—?

About five. As I recall, it was about five.

Now how did that wear on you? Was that difficult?

When you're young, healthy and energetic—I remember I wish sometimes I could've gotten a little more sleep, but it was fine. Yes, it was fine.

Now were you in a trailer near Mercury or were you out more—?

In Mercury.

You were in Mercury. OK.

Yes. And I think the construction department was a building, not a fancy building, a very plain building and so forth. You'll see down in the museum a typical office, typical engineer's office, we're calling it. Not fancy but perfectly suitable. Perfectly serviceable.

And you would go down to the cafeteria for lunch and—?

Cafeteria for lunch, and I think it would cost a dollar. And again, it's sort of like being in a city, only it was kind of a plain place and out in the middle of the desert.

And did you know everybody? Did you get to where you recognized—?

Just like here, you know people over in the DRI [Desert Research Institute] building and you come to know the people in your environment, and the longer you work out there, of course, the more people you know. And because I didn't stay out there during the week like a *lot* of people did—I think Nick Aquilina—would stay out there. *They* got to know more in the Mercury community than I did because I commuted.

Now what types of things did you do in the construction office?

I was a typical secretary. My boss—there was a lot of, manual—no, not manual typewriters, by then they were electric typewriters. Taking dictation. Forms that were necessary because it was government work. What I remember mostly was interacting with the people down the line, and correspondence, memorandum, correspondence to the people in the department. And as I recall there was a lot of communication among the other different departments within REECO,

including the downtown office of REECo. But it was certainly not dull. It was always very busy. And it's interesting because it was not shrouded in mystery but you did have a sense that you heard a lot, well, that's classified. And so you just learned [00:20:00] to work in that environment and learned what you could about what wasn't classified and do the best job that you could.

How was the wage?

Well, let me see. I made a dollar an hour when I was in high school. I think I made maybe four dollars an hour, three dollars an hour, when I worked out there, *plus* five dollars a day *per diem*.

Oh, you got a per diem?

And *then* it went to \$7.50 a day.

Oh, that's great!

Yes, we thought it was fabulous.

So that was really the place to work, I would imagine.

Yes. That's interesting. I would be curious myself how much—and I know those facts are around—how much I made.

Now how did you get that job again? Was that just—?

I worked in downtown purchasing, and I just applied. I know, a friend who is still here in town, Frankie Rhodes, asked me—she worked in personnel out there and she suggested that I apply for the job of a woman who was pregnant who was leaving. So I did. So that's how I came to work out there.

Now were you going to go to college, because you said you went to that—?

I went to Woodbury College for a year, and hated working in downtown Los Angeles. And so I came home after a year, did the summer, went to BYU [Brigham Young University]. I'm not

LDS [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] but *lots* of my friends are. I went to BYU, and then came back, went another semester—worked a summer, then I went to school another semester and thought, I need to save some more money. So I thought, I will sit out a semester and work out at the test site. And that's when I met my husband-to-be, and I didn't go back [to school].

What did he do at the test site?

He and two other men, boys, had driven out from North Carolina to go to work at the test site. And he worked in accounting, then he became the budget officer for REECo, and had been in the financial end for a long time. Then he went to work with REECo for a long time. Actually at one time Troy Wade was his boss in Idaho. And we were divorced in I think 1978 or something.

But you were married for a long time.

Yes, fifteen years. Now the amount of time that I worked at the test site was not very long. It was maybe three years, and then I transferred to the Las Vegas office, and then was approached by one of the founders of CER Corporation. Have you heard of CER Geonuclear Corporation?

No.

One of the founders asked me to come to work and I did, at this company that was—the “C” was Continental Oil Company, the “E” was EG&G [Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier], and the “R” was REECo. Those three companies formed CER Geonuclear Corporation, which was totally focused on the Plowshare program, peaceful uses of nuclear explosives. The idea being that Continental Oil Company was an oil company, gas and oil company: REECo had all the skills to be a contractor such as they were out at the test site: EG&G had all the technological expertise. Those three companies could combine to use the big power of a tiny nuclear explosive to stimulate oil and gas reserves that were not conducive to being productive by [00:25:00]

conventional means. The idea being you put this down in the ground and it makes all these fractures and gas or oil would flow down and you pump it out. We conducted two shots in Colorado, Project Rulison and Project Rio Blanco, but politically and environmentally it was very, very, very controversial and eventually the Plowshare program basically died.

Now why did you transfer from the test site to the Las Vegas office?

Because I had a baby. By that time, I had had two little girls and I wanted to be able to spend more time being a mom.

Now you didn't have to leave your job when you were pregnant.

No.

I had talked to a lady in the 1950s that had to leave her job.

Really!

With the AEC. Yes, she got pregnant and they said, Sorry, you're going to have to [leave]. Yes. So by now, this is what, early 1960s?

Yes.

Did you have maternity leave and all that or—?

I think so, yes. I worked until—in fact, my daughter—I worked until the day before I *had* her, but it wasn't planned that way.

Did you really?

Yes, she was very small. So I didn't get any sense of discouragement about going to work as long as I wanted.

Really.

Yes. Who was that person?

Norma Cox.

Oh, that sounds very familiar.

Yes, she was the first person hired at the AEC in 1951. Really neat lady. Great lady. So when you were pregnant, were your bosses in your office understanding that you had small children and—

Yes. I didn't get any sense that if something came up and the babysitter wasn't available or something, I never got a sense that I was going to be in trouble if I had to take off if my children were sick. And I always felt if you work, the most important thing is your children have good care; if they were sick. I believe we were able to use sick leave, our own sick leave, if I needed to stay home because one of my girls was ill or something. So I didn't get any sense—but 1951, that was like day one, as you said, so they were probably just forming policies and so forth.

And I think too that a lot of things changed from the 1950s to the early 1960s. I think it was a real dramatic shift.

Yes. Absolutely.

But that's interesting that there was no—you didn't feel any kind of push or anything.

No. Not at all.

Well, that's really interesting. So now you start working at the Las Vegas office because you're not having to do that long commute.

Right.

And then from there where did you go to—?

Then I was approached by Hal Aronson, he's a member of our foundation, about going to work at CER Corporation, and Herb Grier was the president. He was the EG&G part. So I talked it over with my husband. It was going to be in Las Vegas, which was continuing to work in Las Vegas, and a new venture with exciting possibilities out there. And so I was one of the original five people. That was 1965.

And what was your position?

I was executive secretary to the two vice presidents. And then Jan Lusk who had worked for Herb for many years before, she was Herb Grier's assistant. We didn't call them assistants then; we called them secretaries and executive secretaries. And if you worked *really* hard, you could make your way up to be an administrative assistant.

Oh really? That's interesting.

So what were your duties when you started working for this other—?

Again, it was—oh, another piece of this CER Geonuclear Corporation was bringing in an industrial client like an oil company. The first one we worked with was called Austral Oil Company from Houston, Texas. They were the client. They had the property that they wanted developed. And so my job was as support to the two vice presidents who were working in bringing business in, coordinating with the AEC to get this project in Colorado off the ground. We would be working with officials in Colorado at the state, county and city level near where this project was going to be accomplished. And I don't know what to compare it to in the office today except if you've been an executive secretary, it's sort of the same. The only difference is this was so unique and challenging and exciting. It was a job I enjoyed really very, very much.

Was it due to the fact that there were new things coming up all the time?

Well, it was more—that this was such a profound—it had such profound possibilities. Nobody had ever—I mean the Plowshare program had been in place for a while. There was a Project Gasbuggy, I think that was in New Mexico, and the experiments were for peaceful uses of nuclear explosives. And at that time, we hadn't been discouraged by the political aspects or the environmental aspects, reactions we were getting from the citizens of Colorado. It was all new and had great prospects. In fact, that *feeling* about working, not all jobs have that. Not all jobs

give the feeling that we're doing great things, we're going to be accomplishing things that will help the whole country, and I have missed that element. When that element isn't there and when you have that kind of a job early on, it spoils you for other kinds of work. And so that was a very good feeling for me to have at such a young age.

Was it difficult to leave government work and the test site to move on to this new venture where—?

No, because the crux of that whole company really was connected with the site, because that's where REECo was, that's where EG&G—it was all so intertwined, it really didn't end. Because we partnered with the AEC, it really didn't seem that much different, because we still had the same interaction, although this was being formed as it went along because it was a totally new venture. But no, it was very much the same. I remained on REECo's payroll. Then when EG&G bought REECo, I think that was in 1968, that was just a continuation of the same group of companies.

So it was like you were still in the same organization and the same galaxy.

Yes.

But you were moving on to a different planet, if that—

Yes. Exactly. And our offices were up here on Flamingo Road. It was an office building. The MGM Hotel was not there, which is now Bally's, that was all desert. We had this three-story office building that now is not the Barbary Coast but it's one of those little [00:35:00] casinos there. Our offices were on the third floor of that building. And there were five of us that started. And we had very nice offices because we were having people from industry coming in to see us, and people in government and so forth. And so it was very groundbreaking, really. Very exciting.

And how would you characterize your relationship with the two vice presidents? How would you see that working relationship?

Well, it was quite, I guess I could use the word “formal.” It was always “Mister” and it was much more formal than here. And I would say they were very distinctively different men.

Oh really?

Yes.

How so?

One of them, Hal Aronson, was very orderly, very organized, documented everything, as you should, like trip reports. The other Continental Oil Company representative was a Ph.D. and scientific guy and was just the opposite. Sort of a brainy scientific guy, and you’ve heard that some of them have their own way of working and don’t follow any rules, and so that was interesting. And somewhere along the way, there would be conflict between them. And when I look back, I mean it worked pretty well for me, working [for] both them for as long as I did.

But—

Why did it work well for you?

I was able to stay out of the fray during the few periods of times when Hal would get very frustrated because Hank had been like six months behind in his trip reports. When I look back now it’s pretty funny, and Hal and I have talked about this. And I think it’s no different today than in offices where a lot of personalities, different personalities, have to work together.

But it sounds like you had to be very flexible to be able to work with both of these guys, and then it also sounds like you kind of held it together.

Yes. Well, I don’t know if I did that or not. I know I was in-between there, and trying to give each the amount of attention that they deserved, and be fair. And then eventually I elected to go

to work for—when our company began to grow and we had a very, very fine, brilliant man who became the general counsel—John Berlinger, who has since passed away. And I wanted to learn about the legal angle, the legal aspects and the way the board of directors was formed and how it governed what we did and so forth. So I transferred and went to work for John and really enjoyed that.

Were you almost like a paralegal?

I don't know if I was at that level—but the thing that I wanted to [do]—because there wasn't all that much legal research that needed to be done. However, one thing I really enjoyed was working closely with the board. And I remember on the list of officers, the very bottom officer was assistant secretary and that was who I was. I was *so proud* of that. I mean there's chairman of the board and president and so on, and down at the very bottom, that's where I was. But I really enjoyed it because you could be in on the really important stuff that was going on, and that was the board meetings.

Oh, so you sat in on all the board meetings?

Yes, and learned how to take minutes. And it sounds very simple and so forth. But John was a great, great teacher and a brilliant guy, and he was a very, very close friend of Herb's. Yes, really a wonderful man.

[00:40:00] *And is this how you came in contact with Herb Grier?*

Well, Herb being one of the original five. The two vice presidents, Herb, Jan, and myself, we were there in between this suite of offices, and I got to know him simply—he was Mr. Grier and this famous person, and so I was sort of like, Ooh, there goes Mr. Grier. And that's how I got to know him.

So he had notoriety.

Yes. I mean he was very in the community here and out in the world at large. In *this* realm of business, yes, he was a very highly respected guy.

And then you started working for him, correct?

Yes. His secretary, very long-time secretary, executive secretary, Jan, got married and moved away. And by that time, I worked for John Berlinger, for the general counsel. He told John—Jan wanted me to replace her. But my husband Bob—at this time Herb was also president of REECo—was budget officer for REECo. So he felt it was a conflict—my husband having that position, I shouldn't be working directly for him. He hired somebody from the outside and that did not work out. So when they had a new president, that's when he asked me to come to work for him.

Why didn't the other work out, do you recall?

[Recording stopped for off the record remarks and then resumed].

It's interesting because people either in school hated shorthand and didn't get it or got it. I wasn't a straight-A student but shorthand was sort of fun because it was highly competitive in that you had to go faster and faster and faster. My teacher, Mrs. Carruth, was very good at [it]—it was almost like being in a race. Then she'd post all the grades up and they're like, well, I'm the best in the class. But I've kept that all through the years, not nearly as fast as I used to be. It's so funny that sometime I'll be jotting something down automatically, without even thinking of it, and somebody'll say, what is that? Is that Chinese? [And I'll say] No, it's shorthand. [And they'll say] what's shorthand? Yes, it's pretty funny.

How many words a minute can you type?

Oh, you know I forget what even the [standard is]—I remember a hundred and twenty words a minute in shorthand was really good. In shorthand. But I don't know. I'm very, very fast, but not

as fast as I used to be. There's really not much *need* to type a lot of stuff *really fast* these days, it seems, or at least in what I do it isn't.

But back when you were working at the—

Oh yes.

You were typing all the time.

And you'd have sheets of carbon paper. Do you know what that is?

Yes.

OK. So you had copies of carbon paper, and every time you'd make a mistake, you'd have to erase and then—I mean erase very, very, very carefully so it didn't go all through the paper, and then erase all the carbons, and then type over it and keep going. Or rip it out and start all over again.

So you said you started working for Herb Grier in the early 1970s? Or, I'm sorry—

Nineteen sixty-eight.

OK, late 1960s.

Yes. I remember when I spoke at his memorial service, one of the things that—you know for a man who accomplished as much as he did, he was very, very undemanding. I mean he required a level of excellence, absolutely, but in a very quiet way. But sometimes, I would do a letter or a memo or something, and it would be all done, and then he would want to change a word, and I'd say, well, OK, I'll retype it. And that's what you did then, you retyped it. And he said, No, no, no, that's OK. And he'd sit and he'd think and think and think, and then he would come up with a word that has exactly the same number of spaces to fit in the space of the word that was being taken out, so that I wouldn't have to retype the whole letter.

So he had an appreciation for your job and he cared about not wanting to put you through extra—

Yes. It's fortunate that—I was lucky to be able to have a pretty high level of my own standards, so that didn't happen too often—that I *really* fouled up on something. But he was very, very thoughtful, very, I say “dignified,” but he didn't make waves in an obvious way. He didn't like noise. He'd didn't like furor. He didn't like lots of commotion that was uncivilized. He was very, very much a gentleman of the old school.

Now were you ever anxious if you had made a mistake? Was he easy to go to?

Oh yes. And because he was quiet and thoughtful I'd go—once I even asked Dotty [Dorothy Grier] when I didn't even know her that well but I liked her and respected her very, very much, Is Mr. Grier mad at me about something? She said, Peggy, I don't think so. He thinks you're just great. But it's my little bit of paranoia.

[00:05:00] *And he was so quiet.*

Yes, very quiet, very thoughtful, could sit and think and invent things in his mind by staring out the window for long periods of time. And then you would see that something, after those periods, something pretty significant would be coming forth, either in connection with his other activities—he always served on interesting boards, scientific companies, the bank. For a long time he was the chairman of the NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, which was the panel that was established, made up after the Apollo fire. This is probably before you were born again, when the three of our astronauts were burned up in the space shuttle before it got off the ground. And NASA formed a panel of non-NASA scientists and engineers to bring an objective look, a fresh look, at everything that had to

do with our space travel—all the vehicles that were going up, to look at nuts and bolts and the very basics of—and that was very, very interesting.

Now was he in the office a lot or it sounds like he was on different things.

He was in the office a lot but he also was on travel a lot, principally New York, Boston, Washington, Los Angeles and Nevada. We had moved to La Jolla, California. Dotty and Herb, when Herb became sixty-five—(and now it seems like he was like an older man and I'm going to be sixty-five in two years.) Anyway, they decided when he reached mandatory retirement age at EG&G, where he had more freedom to live somewhere else, they looked around basically to get out of the heat and live maybe in a more moderate climate. So they looked in southern California, they looked around Carmel, Monterey. And it was necessary that Herb be near a sizeable airport because he did travel so much. So they found a home in La Jolla. It was almost completed, not quite. I always say this is the easiest sale that this salesman at Willis Allen Real Estate Company ever made in his life. Herb had driven all around La Jolla, made a bid on one house, then found this one, asked Dotty and me to go down and look at it, and then he said, OK, I'll buy that one. And so then they did work on it and moved into it. And he said, Would you like to move to La Jolla? And my girls and I had vacationed in La Jolla before. We liked to stay at the beach club. And my girls would say, Mom, this is so pretty here. Can we move here? I'd say, Girls, I don't have a job here. And so as it turned out we moved down there. It was really difficult for my kids when it became an actuality because they were born here, raised here, were all involved in school activities, and they were in junior high school and high school, and that was tough. But they say now it brought to their attention how important it is when they see somebody who's out there and maybe lonely or maybe doesn't feel

they quite fit in, to make them feel welcome. And they say that was a very, very good experience for them.

And so you moved in—when did you move to La Jolla?

At the very end of 1977.

So you had worked for him for quite a while.

Yes, right, I'd worked for him since 1968. [Pause for telephone call]

OK.

Yes, so I had worked for him since 1968, and then I thought I wanted to continue my association with this unique job and unique person. And the person who replaced Herb asked me if I would stay at CER but it was a no-brainer as far as I was concerned. Herb had interesting involvements, he had interesting work, he worked at a very high level in each of these areas he was interested in, and La Jolla was a wonderful place to live.

And it sounds like you developed quite a relationship with Herb and Dotty.

I didn't know Dotty very well but I thought—she's a very quiet, brilliant, one of the smartest women I've ever met in my life. I had a great deal of respect for her. She was not—and I had come into contact in other areas where the wife is *very* present in the work and *very* present in this and *very* present—Dotty was not. She was when Herb wanted her to get involved in some area, but she is first and foremost a lady, and I had great respect for her and affection for her, particularly as I got to know her better.

And did you get to know her better when you were in La Jolla, do you think?

Yes, a little bit more when I got to La Jolla. It wasn't as though we were pals, quote, pals. Nor Herb either. There was a very professional boss-subordinate relationship. But when I began to really get more involved with Dotty was when Herb died. Although actually I will back up on

that. When Herb went to part-time work, when he was winding down—he thought he would work for two years or so and then retire totally. Well, one of the things about him was people in the areas he was involved in didn't want him to [retire]. I mean he would say, Well, I'm going to. I think you should get somebody younger. They're all saying, Don't go! Please stay on our board. And that's very unusual. It's just the opposite of somebody who hangs on and hangs on, and then somebody, the board or whatever idiot thing, God, how do we get rid of him? In the corporate world. And so that went on. When he went to a part-time position—and I had to work full-time—we interviewed several ladies and selected one who had worked for SAIC, a similar company to EG&G but on a much smaller scale, and it's a very successful employee-owned company that was headquartered in La Jolla. Her name is Eileen. She came to work part-time. And then I moved back to Las Vegas because the president of the company that Herb had left had wanted me to go to work there. So I moved back to Las Vegas, and during that time Herb was still on the CER board, so he would come up frequently. I would go to La Jolla and stay with Herb and Dotty, visit them, and that is when I really got to know and have great affection for Dotty. So we became friends. And as our professional relationship with Herb changed, we became just very good friends.

Oh really?

Yes.

Well, that's nice. That was nice that you were able to still maintain that relationship that they—

Yes. And they were very strong forces in my life. As they got older, as they began to get older and Herb—well, they would come up here once a year. Herb would come up for board

[00:05:00] meetings, and then Herb and Dotty would come up when we would invite the wives, like to the annual meeting. And then as their health problems began to be more serious, it

dawned on me, They're not going to be able, I don't think, to come up here very often. So I talked to a friend—I was and still am very close friends with the tax accountant for the Griers—I called Dominic and Kathy Daleida and said, Let's make a video of Las Vegas and send it to them so they'll see how the town is changing. So I rented a convertible and I borrowed a video camera and we drove all around town and out to Rancho Circle and showed them their old house, up and down the Strip, with narration and music and credits. I was the executive producer and director and Dominic was the—anyway, it was very, very fun to do and we put *Viva Las Vegas*, the theme music on it. Dotty's a pianist and she loves classical music, but whatever—there's no other theme music to have about a city, about Las Vegas. So anyway, that was very fun to do. And Dotty still shows it.

So they really enjoyed it.

They thought it was pretty funny.

So how else were they influential in your life?

One of the things I always think about Herb, with his quiet personality and demeanor, there was almost no question you could ask him about *anything* that he didn't know. And if I asked a question about astronomy or something, literally he was extremely well rounded. And most people didn't know that about him. They didn't know that he built engines, that he built clocks, that he loved watches. And he would build a clock that was that big. And each of his kids have one of the clocks, and there are two of the clocks that he built in the home. Maybe you'll see the home some day if Mary [Palevsky] goes down there [to the Grier home in La Jolla].

And it just dawned on me, one of the things that we are very excited about is one of the clocks, they called it a railroad clock, that is on the wall in the family room, it was from a railroad station in Massachusetts. It kept extremely accurate time. It was used out at the test site

as the time standard for detonating nuclear explosives. And Dotty is giving that to our museum. She told Troy, when Troy Wade and I first started—I always say Troy *Wade* because my daughter is Troy Bostian. And when Troy and I first started talking about interacting with Dotty and the museum we arranged to go down and meet with Dotty, she said, I want to give this to the museum, but not until I pass away. Because it's such a part of Herb and it has such wonderful chimes.

That's great. So when you were first working for Herb, how long did it take before you felt comfortable in your working relationship?

Gosh, time-wise, maybe a year. I don't think in any job I'm ever one hundred percent comfortable. That's just not my nature. Like [I think], Oh no, how am I going to get that done? You know. But probably a year.

And that's when you kind of knew him well enough to know his little—because I know that whenever I've worked for a boss, there are just certain things you don't do and you know that. It's because it's taken a while to develop that relationship, and some employers have been, what's the word for it, more extravagant than others with their needs and—

Yes. Right, more needs. Well, that's interesting that you bring that up because one of the things that is different about him compared with other executives that I have known and know *of* is he didn't want you fluttering around him doing stuff for him. You know where some bosses their assistants are practically their servants. I mean they do all this personal stuff and go buy gifts for their wives and go take cleaning to the—Herb was very hands-off in that way. And again, I got very spoiled by that.

So he [Herb Grier] was able to maintain a professional life and a personal life and not make you a part—it sounds like you didn't have to organize his whole life for him.

Exactly. Yes. Now I was involved in working closely with the outside accountants on all the financial business, all the bills. I had authority to sign *very* huge checks because he was an open, trusting guy.

So he trusted you with the checkbook.

Oh yes. Well, bills came in and then I'd pay them and then he would get a summary and that was just sort of a given. And I have worked at other places where you might have signature authority for a thousand dollars. But it was his nature, he was just a very trusting guy. And I had [a] very close working relationship with this Dominic Daleida who did the video with me, the outside accountant, and Latham and Watkins, the law firm. His name was Mr. Stevenson who was executor of Herb's estate then and worked closely on legal matters. And so it was a good team. And when you work at that level, even though I was not an accountant, I wasn't a lawyer, but when you work at the standard of excellence that he had in *all* areas, it makes you better at what you do. And in fact, Dominic is now retired. He and Kathy live up in the San Juan Islands in Washington State. And Dominic has one account, and that's Dotty Grier. He wanted to retire totally from accounting, but he is so glad that he has kept that account, particularly since Herb passed away. Yes.

So you all developed these very strong ties and relationships.

Yes. Absolutely we did. And we still. I'm fortunate in that I still have this tie, these very strong ties, because they're very valuable in my life with Dotty. I miss seeing her as much as I used to, because Dotty's health hasn't been all that good. I would go down every, oh, every few weeks, every couple of months, because I wasn't working at all then, drive down, and then stay with Dotty, and we would go to movies, if there was a good play we'd go to a play. We're both sort of foodies so we'd be, what is the best restaurant that's opened up? Let's go there.

And have fun. And since she has been not all that well and she's learning to, quote, she calls it learning to walk again, because of this condition called neuropathy. Fortunately Herb's niece and her husband lived in Scripps Ranch—their house was one that was burned totally to the ground in the Scripps Ranch fire a couple of years ago—maybe it was last year.

Yes, it was very recent.

So the logical thing, because there's plenty of room, they moved into Dotty's house, which is very, very nice for Dotty because Lois and Rudy are taking very, very good care of her, and taking her to the doctor, and so that's been very, very valuable.

Where are their kids?

Herb, from his first marriage, has two children: Herbie, who lives in Colorado, and Joan, who lives in—she lived in Rancho Santa Fe and now she and George live in the Santa Inez Valley, where they are building a home and a ranch, because they raise Morgan horses.

[00:05:00] *Now did Dotty and Herb have kids, or—?*

Dotty and Herb have one son, David. Brilliant young tall man like his dad, Ph.D., who works—I think he is a—his degree is in chemistry. And he and Karla and their two little boys live in northern California, and I can't remember the name of the town. It's above San Francisco somewhere.

So but all the family is pretty much in California, it sounds like.

Well, Colorado and—thank goodness Lois and Rudy in San Diego, and then Joan, even though she lives in Santa Inez, they get down to see Dotty quite frequently.

That's good.

Yes, it's really good.

Now when you started working for Herb, you were still on the corporate payroll, right?

Yes.

So how did raises and vacation days and things like that work?

Well, we sort of combined the best of all the companies: REECo, EG&G, and Continental. And basically when EG&G bought REECo we just had those procedures adopted for our own. And so it was pretty structured and in place, and that was pretty easy actually. Vacation days and sick days, we just followed the procedures manual first at REECo and then EG&G.

So you would just accrue it.

Yes. Right.

And then how did raises work?

Every year you got a review. And I remember my starting salary was \$125.00 a week. And somewhere I have a sheet of paper that shows how much I made every year and so forth. And then you just got your review by your bosses and you got a raise. And it was almost sort of standard. Yes, you got a raise. And nowadays that isn't happening. And then there would be cost-of-living raises. And so you just worked your way up.

Now when you were working for Herb, did he write you a review and give that to you or—?

Yes.

How was that?

I think it might've been documented by a memo. I don't recall that we had standard, formal forms with a hundred questions on them. We probably did at some point a modified version, but being sort of an offshoot of EG&G/REECo, we had some more flexibility than those huge companies did. In fact, I have a couple of the old memos that I particularly liked. One from John Berlinger when he made me assistant secretary because I was doing such a good job. My little office, down there at the very bottom of the list. And then your raise would be put in place. Much

to my surprise, EG&G was sold several years ago, and two years ago I received a check in the mail from Perk and Elmer , which was the company that bought a big section of EG&G, that was a retirement check that was something like five thousand dollars. When they had done the final, final closing-out and so forth, I guess there were some people they forgot. And it came at a particularly good time for me. It was sort of like fallen from heaven. I thought, that's very exact, because I never would've even known the difference because when I left to go to work for Herb directly there was an accumulation and a calculation of the retirement benefits and the profit-sharing and so forth, and so that came out of the blue.

That's great. Well, I think I'm going to change—OK, so you started as—

When I came back to CER from Las Vegas [La Jolla], and it was funny because so many people would say, *Peggy, you live in La Jolla. And you're coming back to Las Vegas?* Anyway, but I was a working person, and so anyway I came back to CER Corporation, which had changed a lot, and the direction of the company was different without Herb there. I'm not critical of that. It was just very different. So I came back and took my corporate secretary [position], worked with the board, which I enjoyed very much, and then was made a vice president with corporate administration under me. So I was glad, having worked a long, long, long, long time, that I was able to go to the next level. That was good. I was glad I was able to do that.

And how long did you stay in that position?

I think for five years, and then the company was bought and greatly—they pared it down to I think there eventually were only five people there. A company out of Chicago bought the company. So some of us officers and so forth were—fortunately, my kids were out of college. I had gotten them through college. So my financial demands—it was a big change, but I thought,

I'm not going to work for a while. And I think that's the first time since I was sixteen that I had not worked. So I thought, well, I'll travel a little bit. And it was very hard to get used to. And fortunately, because my daughter worked for American Airlines, I could do some traveling, travel with her, which is *really* fun. In fact, we almost did this again. Like she had a trip out of San Jose. Mom, fly up Saturday. Sunday we'll fly to New York. I've got a long layover. And then we'll come back. So I never had the flexibility before to do that, and thanks to being able to fly cheaply, I really was able to take advantage of that for a while. I still do, but it's more difficult. The passes aren't as generous. The flights aren't as—well, since 9/11 it's just very different. Troy was in New York on 9/11. She had been flying San Francisco-New York-San Francisco-Boston and—

Did you just panic because those two American planes—?

Oh yes. Oh yes. And she was in New York for the whole following week because you know everybody was—it was—yes, when I got the phone call that she was fine, I was very, very relieved. Her little sister and I were *very* relieved.

Yes. So you said you came back to work. How was the company different? How was the direction different than when Herb was there?

The focus was entirely on oil and gas exploration. It was interesting in that the company had outreached to China. We were doing very, very interesting work with China. But because—to back up a little bit, the culture was very different because there were no more ties to EG&G or major companies. The principals bought almost all of the stock of the company, and so it was basically independently owned. Very small percentages were still owned by outside shareholders, but the majority was by the three principal men. So that was very, very different.

[00:05:00] Yet I was able to be involved with some things that were very gratifying to me, and

that was establishing the profit-sharing plan and the—we were an ESOP company, employee stock ownership plan. I was in charge of working with the accountants and the lawyers and getting that established in the company. The 401(k) plan. A cafeteria plan. And I'm not a lawyer but that was very gratifying because it was very, very important to our employees. I mean those replacing—I talked about earlier—having *goals* out there, like we were going to save the world and establish the Plowshare program. Well this, on a different level, was having *goals* out there and making the company, which was about fifty employees at that time, become like *big* companies and having the same benefits for our employees that large companies did. So I got a lot of satisfaction out of that.

That's great! And a lot of experience.

Lot of experience. Exactly. And learned a tremendous amount. And so in the last few years I haven't retained it all but it's a wide breadth of knowledge that is stuck in there, to some degree. And I really enjoyed that.

Now is there anything about Herb that you would like to say that hasn't come out? Any memories or an event or anything?

Well, it's interesting that you say that because when I spoke at his memorial service—which I was *very* nervous about doing when Dotty asked me if I would do that—I told you that there's almost *nothing* that he didn't have knowledge of, in a very quiet, understated way. And so I was always *learning* something. And the last thing I learned was about leukemia. He had been very ill, and I hadn't been down there for a while. The last picture that was taken of Herb and Dotty is when we were at dinner in La Jolla. And where I'd learn a lot about space travel from him, I'd learn a lot about clocks, about the weather, I mean he was just a fascinating guy and full of knowledge. Dominic and I had been talking back and forth. Dominic's the accountant up in

Washington now. Dominic said that he had talked with Jim Cowley, the executor and close attorney, that Herb was very, very sick, and I'd call—

[Recording paused for phone call.]

It struck me that the last conversation that I ever had, I learned something else. I had called down and was very surprised when Herb answered the phone, because he was very sick and they knew, Dotty had told me, he had come home from Scripps and he only had a few days left. So when Herb answered the phone I was quite surprised. And his voice was weak but I said, Hi, Herb. I hear something's going on down there. And he said, Yes, and then he explained to me how leukemia works. And I didn't inquire, I didn't. But he said, Well, the tests have gone from a white cell count should be this to this, and he's talking very slowly, and it went from this number way up high to this number, and then a scientific explanation of what was happening to him, which I thought was *so* like him. And so the last conversation I had about him was about what was killing him.

And then his voice broke a little bit and he said, I'm not feeling real [well]—I've got to go, Peggy, OK?

And I said, Love you, Herb.

And he said, OK, bye.

And that's the last time I ever talked with him. And I thought it was so typical of him to not—he wasn't self-pitying, he wasn't—it was like: this is how this engine works. And he was just remarkable in that way.

And he was going to understand it.

Yes. Exactly. He knew exactly what was happening. And I thought I was so glad that I was able to maintain the relationship with Herb and Dotty, particularly the last years that I *didn't* work for him, and we became good friends. Yes, he was a significant force in having somebody of that

breadth in your life. And Dotty, who is understated and quiet and so forth, is very much the same way except she's—she was a perfect partner for him in that one of the reasons he fell in love with her was she was so darned smart and pretty and brilliant. And they met at Los Alamos. And so she was involved from a very early, at a very important, significant time as well. And Dotty was one of the first two women *ever* to observe a shot at the test site, and they observed the very first one, she and her friend from Los Alamos.

So she's interesting.

She's *very* interesting and Mary [Palevsky] is going to like her very much.

Well, I just have two more questions. One is in all of your experience with the test site and with your work, did you ever encounter any protesters?

Yes, we encountered a lot of protesters up in Colorado. You know as I recall, and this was like from 1965 and then 1968 was Project Rulison and I think the next year was Project Rio Blanco and I can double-check those dates. But Colorado was *very* environmentally conscious, and good for them. But so many of them *really* did not want a nuclear *explosion* taking place in their backyard, and so those protesters were *very* visible. Just before the countdown, we found two of them coming through the woods, trying to get to ground zero at Project Rulison. So yes. Now I have not encountered any at the test site because I didn't work at the test site when the protests were going on.

But just in Colorado.

Right.

Now did you travel out to Colorado when—?

Not a lot. In this corporate structure, in the structure we were in, you didn't just—my job didn't allow—I don't mean *officially* didn't allow, but you just didn't [00:05:00] *do* that. However, I

was at *both* shots, and I had an official role, which was taking the weather briefings, because I took shorthand. Every morning and evening, we would have weather briefings of all the different entities involved: the highway patrol, the weather bureau, the government officials. Every agency and office would be gathered around a table and we would have official weather briefings and elaborate—in the event the shot would what they call vent. And so it ended up being a big book like that [Peggy, how big would you say the size of the book would be?] and so that was again being at the hub of all this exciting activity.

Now what was your opinion of the protesters? Did you have one or—?

I didn't think they were bad guys. I thought they were trying to delay our wonderful project but—and this is getting in the hippie days too—thought, well, there are always people who don't agree with what you're doing but I bet they're just a bunch of hippies. Looking back now, I think that's pretty naïve, but it was—and we've got some pictures that we can show you too, Shannon.

That would be interesting.

Yes. Somewhere there's some pictures of the protesters.

And now just one more thing and then we're done. As far as your opinion and your take on nuclear energy and everything that was done, has it changed at all or are you still the same mindset as when you started working?

I still think the Plowshare program and the *good* that nuclear energy can do is very, very, very valuable. But it's still and always will be very politically and environmentally controversial. But if ever we can safely conduct—and I don't know if that'll ever happen because I think there will always be accidents like Chernobyl. I think there's—and Troy Wade would be able to explain

this better than I can—I certainly don't think we ought to do atmospheric testing again. But using that tremendous power safely would be a dream.

Yes. And you were able to see that.

Yes. See the potential.

Right. And you were at the hub of all these idea men that were coming up with all the different—

Yes. And I miss that. That's part of what I enjoy here [at the NTS Historical Foundation/Atomic Testing Museum] is these idea men like Troy and the guys like Pete Zavattaro and the guys who *worked* in it. That's a very *stimulating* environment to be in. Even though I work part-time and we're not exploding bombs, it's reliving the history and preserving it. That's a wonderful project we have going here.

Yes. Well, great. Well, thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I can't think of right now, Shannon, but if I think of something, I'll tell you. I'll call you, OK?

OK, that would be great.