

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

Interview with
Maynard Viot

November 1, 2004
Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Joan Leavitt

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[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 1.

Joan Leavitt: *OK, for the record, would you say your name?*

Maynard Viot: Maynard Viot.

OK. And could you tell a little bit maybe about your family background, your mother and your father and who they were?

Yes. My father was born in Nancy, France.

France? Oh!

Yes. And he came to this country as a young adult. He went first to England and was married there. He came to this country and his wife passed away here, and he remarried, and that was *my* mother. So I had a half-brother and then I also had a brother and a sister, siblings from *my* mother.

Now where did you grow up?

I grew up in Salt Lake City [Utah].

Were you born there, too?

Yes.

OK. Did your father come to Salt Lake when he came from France?

No. He first went to England. That's where he met his first wife there, and that's where he came in contact with the Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] there. He was going to church.

OK. So after he joined the Church in England, is that when he came to Salt Lake, then?

Yes, he came. And this would've been shortly after World War I when he came here. And so our family, we all grew up in Salt Lake. And he was a you'd call non-skilled laborer and jobs were hard to get during a lot of that time, but he got a job at a dairy on a temporary thing for a week and it lasted about thirty years.

Ohhh! Now was that during the Depression?

That was actually earlier than the Depression. Well, I'm not sure of the date. Well, first he tried to run a store, a small store, and that didn't work out too well. So I'm not sure of the date when he started working in the dairy but it would've been around the Depression time. Yes, jobs were very hard to get.

Now did you grow up in town? Were you a city kid or were you a farm kid?

I guess you'd call me more of a farm kid. We didn't have a farm ourself. In the back of our property was a large pasture that the stake patriarch had a small herd of dairy cows there, so I experienced like that kind of background.

You kind of got work with him, then?

Yes.

Was that to kind of help out the family, then?

No, the kind of work I got, I got part-time jobs around the nursery or a grocery store or something like that as a teenager kind of thing, and I'm not sure I contributed to the family except in the way that I took care of my own needs. I guess from the age of fourteen I got all my clothes and spending money and all that kind of thing, so there was no drain on my parents for that kind of thing, although they did support me while I was living there.

OK. Now you said you were not the older child. You were a second child?

Yes. Well, from my mother's side, OK, I have an older sister and then myself and then I have a younger brother.

OK. And tell me a little bit about your mother.

Well, she was born in Salt Lake. Her parents came from Switzerland and from Germany, so she grew up in an immigrant family as well.

And what was her name?

Her last name was Gygi.

Oh, Gygi. How do you spell that?

G-Y-G-I. And it was, you know, a lot of immigrant families were poor and struggling, and they were very poor and struggling. I know one time the bishop gave them a sack of flour and Mom would say, Gee, do we have to have flour soup again? What it was was flour mixed with water.

A kind of a gravy, then.

Yes. That was kind of a way they had to get along. It was pretty tough in those days when there was no defined poverty level. But anyway, they managed to survive OK. And my parents did [00:05:00] OK. My father was very imaginative. He wanted to try several things. I told you he tried a grocery store and that didn't work out. So he tried raising chickens, and I guess an epidemic came through and all the chickens died and it ruined that, so he had this chicken coop out there and nothing in it. So that's what I remember is this empty chicken coop. Pretty big one. So it was a good thing he had the job at the dairy because that was the mainstay.

Now what year were you born? What was your birthday?

Nineteen thirty-one.

Nineteen thirty-one. What day?

August the eighteenth.

August the eighteenth. OK. And then you went to school in Salt Lake?

Yes, I was raised there. I had a lot of different interests as I was growing up. During the war, you know, the Victory gardens were popular and I got very interested in gardening and, gee, I liked that. I was going to be a farmer when I grew up.

Ohhh! So you had a little Victory garden near your home, then?

Oh, yes. Yards there were a lot bigger than they are here and there was room to plant a nice garden, so I had my own garden there, and I was going to be a farmer. That was just great.

Well, did you grow mainly vegetables?

Yes.

Did you have fruit trees?

Yes, we had fruit trees, as well.

Well, did you ever try chickens or anything like that, or was it just—?

Oh, yes, I did.

Did you have more luck than your father?

Yeah. My dad had an old garage which he tore down and there was a pile of lumber there. And I asked him if I could use that lumber. So I constructed myself another chicken house. And we lived not far from a brickyard and they had an area where they put all the bricks which are discarded that weren't quite right. And so I took a wagon down there and hauled a bunch of bricks up and made a floor. That was the floor in the chicken coop. And this pile of lumber there, I constructed a chicken coop and then I made a big run for it so the chickens had an area they could go outside.

How old were you when you did this?

I was about thirteen. And we bought twenty-five baby chicks. And I remember Mom showed me how to—they were enclosed in the house and—

A brooder?

Yes, she showed me how to make a brooder. There was some kind of a top board [to] which you attached a lot of stockings [00:07:41] so the chicks had somewhere to snuggle with. And they just snuggled up against those and they just grew fine. And then when they were old enough, we put them out in the chicken coop there. And it turned out that they were almost evenly divided between hens and roosters. So as they matured, the roosters became family dinner, and I sold some of them to a local butcher shop. I'd go over and trade with him. I'd get some groceries and take him over a chicken, a nice roasting chicken to sell. And you know I had twelve laying hens and I got eleven eggs a day, just like regular. And so of course that's more than we can eat, so I'd take the extra eggs and take them over to the butcher shop and trade them for some groceries. And so I earned some money that way. And you know I had to go over to the feed store and buy some laying mash and wheat and things like that.

Now did any of them reproduce and produce baby chicks?

No, I didn't go in for that. We had family dinner from all the roosters. The hens, they were great. I just kept them going. And so that was my chicken project.

Now you're starting to get into World War II? Is that when you had shortages?

Let's see, when World War II started I was ten years old, so this would've been toward the end of World War II. Yes, there were some shortages there. Let's see, what else about growing up? Around that time, along with the chickens, I had a teacher's quorum advisor who had his own grocery store, and I one day asked him if he could use some help over there. So he hired me to [00:10:00] work a couple days a week, so that's my first regular job. I'd had other jobs like

working in a nursery weeding and stuff like that. But from there I then found another grocery store where I could work more hours, and so all the way through high school I worked in stores.

Now was your family quite involved in their LDS community, then?

Oh, across the street from my house was the stake president, and next to him was the church.

Oh my goodness! You were right there in the neighborhood, then, weren't you?

And as I say, in the back of our yard was this big pasture where the stake patriarch had his herd of cattle, or dairy cows.

So you were on all sides, then.

Yes, we were surrounded by it. And Dad had to work most Sundays, so we were an active family but almost as individuals more than going over there as a family group. Of course, living that close by, it was just across the street, it wasn't necessary to be together to get to church.

Was your mom pretty good about making sure you guys went every Sunday, then?

Oh, she didn't have to make sure. We just grew up that way. Yeah. And she was primary president and you know she was pretty—

Oh, she was—OK, maybe you can explain what primary president is.

Oh, well, that's the children up to age twelve.

OK. The organization for the children.

Yes, the organization for the children, and during those days they met on weekdays. I think on Wednesday after school the children would go to primary.

And you went regularly and you graduated from primary, then.

Oh, yeah. Primary, and after twelve years of age, why, the boys enter the preparatory priesthood, called the Aaronic Priesthood.

And you were ordained?

Yes, I was ordained a deacon and went up through the various steps in the Aaronic Priesthood as a teacher and a priest.

And then you also went on to the higher lay priesthood.

Yes. Yes. That was, let's see, I'd have been in college by that time.

What college did you go to?

I went to University of Utah. It was just right in Salt Lake, so my parents could support me there.

OK. Now did you have to earn your own way there, then?

Yes. You know, our family was not equipped to send people to college, but I could live with my parents and I'd have a place to stay and a place to eat. And as I say, during my growing-up years, that wasn't even on the horizon. I thought I was going to be a farmer, and after that I thought I was going to be a carpenter.

So what changed your mind from becoming a farmer to going—let's see, now did you become an engineer at University of Utah? Is that what happened?

Yes. Well, I decided on that career even while I was in high school, but growing up, as I say, it was a farmer and then after that a carpenter, and we were so certain about that that one Christmas my dad gave me tools to be a carpenter.

Oh, really? How old were you when you wanted to be a carpenter?

Oh, probably fifteen, something like that.

OK, well, did you build anything to practice your carpentry?

Oh, yeah, I built some stuff.

What'd you build?

Oh, I built a big work bench and a stool and a bookcase and there were a number of things.

You kept yourself busy, didn't you?

Oh, yes.

Now were you involved in sports at all or was it mostly—?

No, I was too skinny to be in sports. I liked sports but it wasn't the kind of thing I could really compete in that well, although I liked to, you know. Any neighborhood games, that was OK, but as far as competing in high school or something, I was too skinny and too light for that kind of thing. And plus I always had these part-time jobs, so that took up a lot of time. But in high school, by the time I got in the twelfth grade, in fact, that's when I decided really I liked mathematics more than anything. And that's what persuaded me toward engineering.

Did you have any teachers that were especially encouraging?

Well, we had a physics teacher who was—at the time I thought he was kind of weird but as I look back, he was a great teacher. He sponsored many clubs. He had a ceramics club, a chemistry club, a radio club, all kind of things. So I used to go to his radio club, and we'd meet there at lunchtime. That's where we'd go over and eat our lunch.

He was a dedicated teacher, wasn't he?

Oh, he was, yeah. We'd go over there and practice the Morse code and learn how to build radios and things like that.

Oh, that's amazing. And he wasn't getting paid for any of this extra, then. It was just because he liked kids.

That's right. That's right. He was a real dedicated teacher.

[00:15:00] *What was his name?*

Mr. [Marion] Poulson. Yeah, I'll never forget him.

What's his first name?

I don't know. "Mister."

So he got you interested in engineering, then.

Well, in electricity, yeah, and as I say, really math is the thing that I became most interested in. And so I graduated from high school and went to the university and that's where I decided, I'll major in engineering. And a lot of my friends did, too. And along about halfway through the first year, I remember one of my friends was going to change his major, and I was over at his house talking about it and I remember his parents were there, wondering if I was going to change my major, too. And I remember saying, Oh, I couldn't possibly change my major. I've invested fifty dollars in this already. To me, that was an enormous amount of money. I couldn't waste that. So anyway, I pursued that and graduated as an engineer from the university there.

And then what did you do after you graduated?

Well, that was during the Korean War, my college years, and so right after I graduated, you know, I had had deferments to keep out of the service to enable me to go to school. Well, as soon as I was out, why, the Army was only too glad to remember me.

You were in the Army now, then.

Yeah. So I served in the Army, and since I had an engineering degree, I became an instructor in the Army, in communications. And we went to a number of the sites in Germany and France and England.

Oh, you went over to Europe, then.

Yes, yes, I spent quite a while over there introducing new equipment out there and instructing how it all worked.

Well, at least you weren't in Korea, then.

Yeah, that was kind of nice.

Well, did you get a feel for the Cold War during your station in Europe?

Oh, yes. The Army over there was there for the purpose of having a front against the Soviet Union [USSR] because the Soviet Union was a tremendously big threat there. They were just intimidating everything within their reach.

Now this was before the Berlin Wall, right?

Yeah, it was before that.

But it was after they had gone into East Germany.

Oh, yes, they'd just taken over everything they could get their hands on. Yeah, they were very aggressive.

And after my service in the Army, my home base actually was in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, even though I served a lot in Europe. So I went back to New Jersey after I came back from Europe, was married, and was there with my wife.

Now was that Sidney that you married?

Yes.

How did you meet her?

Oh, I'd met her while I was in college. My last year was when I met her.

Was she also from Salt Lake, then?

Yes.

Oh, OK. And so while you were in the military, she was in Salt Lake, is that right?

Yes, we wrote to each other for a long time. Yes.

Oh, correspondence.

Yeah. And as I say, when I got back we married and were there until my discharge from the service. While I was in the East, you know, at Fort Monmouth New Jersey, and I wrote to a

bunch of companies there to see what kind of offers would come in. At that time, there were many offers, and so the one I selected was General Electric [GE] up in Syracuse, New York.

As I turned around looking at these eastern towns, I was very unimpressed with them. They all appeared to me as dirty, dingy, rainy towns. When we went to Syracuse, beautiful sunny day, I thought, this is where I want to live. It was the last sunny day they ever had.

Oh really? And how long were you there?

I was in Syracuse for almost twenty-two years.

Oh, a long time, then. A long time with no sun, then.

Yeah. Yes, I was there working in the defense business. They were in the business of developing radar, and so I worked with them for, you know, that many years.

Now you served as a bishop during that time, is that right?

Yes, yes. When I first got to Syracuse, there was not really an established ward there, which is the total organization of the Church. They had what we call a branch, and we met in the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Organization]. But during our time there, we were able to build a [00:20:00] building and the branch became a ward and I became a bishop there. And I served in the bishopric, branch presidency, for about ten years, and after I was released from that, I served on the high council for ten years. So during that whole experience there, you know, we were, as well as being very involved in work and raising family, I was very involved in the Church at the same time.

Now can you tell maybe some of the other things that are associated with the LDS lifestyle, you know, the Word of Wisdom and some of the other things.

Well, out on the fringe of the Church, the lifestyle for members is a seven-day-a-week lifestyle. You know, most people think of the church as someplace you go Sunday morning or something like that for an hour, but this was just a seven-day-a-week affair.

And how many hours a week does a bishop serve? I mean in addition to your full-time job.

Well, I remember calling a counselor, which is an assistant to the bishop, and he wanted to know what time requirements there would be, and I said, Well, I figure on reserving for my family one afternoon a week and a half-day Saturday. And so you could take it for that. As I say, we were building a building and doing just an enormous amount of things.

Yeah, and then it involves a lot of evening-type counseling and meetings.

And it's spread over a long ways, too. When we first moved there, the branch covered three counties. And when I got to be a high counselor, I would travel to neighboring wards and stakes, and this was the whole western part of New York State, clear up to the northern border and out to the western border.

Yeah, so your life was very much involved. You had work but then you also had a lot of time devoted to acting in leadership capacities for your congregation.

Yeah, it's kind of humorous. My kids grew up with a lot of this, and I remember putting my son to bed one night and he, you know, like a lot of kids, he didn't want to go to sleep there, he wanted to get my attention for a while, so he said, But Dad, what about the Gospel? And I'll never forget that. It was just—you know, he didn't—I doubt if he knew what he was talking about.

Yes. Now tell about the Word of Wisdom, you know, some of the—

OK, this is kind of a thing which other people outside the Church identify with the Church very readily because it often comes up, you know. If you're in a social setting with some people and

they want you to share some alcohol or something like that with them and, you know, you explain that's not the right thing to do. And this comes from the teaching in the Church that alcoholic beverages and tobacco are not good for people.

So you abstain from alcohol, from tobacco, from tea, from coffee, and that makes you unique in a lot of social settings, then, and work settings, too.

Yes. And I found out that in all my experience with that, I can only remember one person who thought that was a dumb thing to do. He just couldn't understand why I would. And as soon as he mentioned something about that, other people jumped right on him. They said, what are you talking about? You'd rather smoke that big cigar?

Yeah, than to be healthy? Well, one other thing is that LDS people not only have dietary-type regulations and spend a lot of time, hours, donating to their Church, but they also have a tithing. We should tell what that is.

Oh, well, the Lord's law of financing the Church is that members should contribute one-tenth of their increase, which in a normal wage earner means really 10 percent of his gross income.

Of his gross income.

Yeah. For folks that are involved in businesses and things like that, you know, you have to separate the business from what their personal income is, but they have to figure out what that is.

Yeah. And you pay 10 percent every year of your life, is that right?

Yeah, we did that and, you know, there is a lot of other interesting things. We had a [00:25:00] welfare farm where we raised cattle.

And describe what a welfare farm is.

Oh, a welfare farm is the Church has really a great notion about assisting people that are in need, and that is that there should be some way in which they can contribute toward their own welfare.

And so welfare farms are places where people, if they need help, they can come out and contribute toward the production of things.

So these are owned by the Church.

Yes, be owned by the Church.

And where people can come and work there if they don't have work in exchange for their necessities.

Right. In exchange for getting whatever kind of help they need, yeah.

So it's a work for—instead of it being a dole, it is a way to preserve your dignity.

Yes. We had a farm over in Palmyra, New York, just behind the Hill Cumorah, and we had five hundred head of cattle that we'd bring in in the early spring and we'd fatten them up all summer and sell them in the fall.

Well, it sounds like you got to put your farming interest to work right there.

Oh, right, we were out there putting up fences and chopping down trees and yeah, having cattle moved from one area to another.

You enjoyed that, didn't you? You really enjoyed that time of your life.

Oh, that was a lot of fun. Yeah.

And so what brought you out to Las Vegas and when was that?

Well, in the seventies GE I think made a high level decision that they wanted to start getting out of the defense business. And I noticed that each year, about 10 percent of the people were invited to look somewhere else.

Layoffs. Cutbacks.

And I thought, you know, pretty soon these 10 percents are going to start getting toward me, so I started looking around a little bit. And in 1978 I wrote to a friend who had left the company and

was now working out here at the [Nevada] test site, and he said, Oh, it's great out here. And he was a program manager out here. And so I flew out to talk to them and decided, ok, I'd make this move. And so in 1978 we transferred to the test site. And it was quite a change and experience because Syracuse is so lush and green and damp, and out here it's just the opposite. But it's been a real great experience.

Now did you commute? Did you drive that distance, then? Was it from 1978 until when was it that you retired?

Well, I retired in September of '99, so there's about another twenty-one years, yeah. And yes, I commuted that time out to the test site.

Now you didn't [ride] buses, then. You just drove in a car, then?

Well—

[00:28:10] End Track 2, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 3, Disc 1.

Now one of the other changes that your coming to the test site did was that you were unable to talk about your work, is that right?

Yes, that was kind of sensitive.

And how did that affect your relationship with your wife?

Oh, she just took it for granted. Occasionally I would be required to go somewhere out of town and you know she just accepted this. And I remember one specific time when I was sent out, I was specifically told not to tell anybody where I was going. And that's the one time she asked me where I was going and I felt so stupid telling her, Well, guess what?

I can't tell you.

Yeah. Anyway, but she understood and that was not a problem with her at all.

Yeah. Well, let me ask you, can you tell where you worked or do we just not say that?

I'd better not.

OK. Now tell me about your experience being an LDS person working out, you know, and how that experience was, or maybe made your experience unique as compared to somebody else's.

Well, I never really made an issue of my Church membership where I worked, but somehow the word got around. Even when I was back in Syracuse, it wasn't long before everybody knew I was a Mormon bishop.

You think it had something to do with no coffee and no drinking?

Well, a lot of it had to do with publicity, like when the ward whose stake was organized and whatnot and the changing bishopric or something, why, they'd put your picture in the paper, so my friends found out from that, but they'd known before it. I can't tell you how they really found out.

Did you notice, were there a lot of other Mormons, or were you a small minority or—?

We were a small minority but there were three or four others that worked at GE with me, and it turned out they were all very well-respected. I remember one time somebody asking me, *who else is Mormon around here?* And I started naming them off and they were amazed because they were all *really* well-respected people.

Yeah. Well, do you think they had any unique characteristics? It sounds like they were noticed and respected.

Unique characteristics, you know, in the company there, they were respected so much for their intelligence and their dedication. You know they're all workaholics.

Were they all from Utah or were they from different parts?

They had gone to school in Utah. One of them was from North Carolina but most of them were from Utah.

OK. OK. Now did you get to associate with any of the other contractors and notice the LDS people in their different groups?

No, I guess I don't know that. Now we did have contacts with contractors but I don't know as that ever came up.

OK. Well, the other question I kind of wanted to get into a little bit was when you began to see protesters. Or maybe I should ask, did you see a change in attitude towards people who worked at the test site, over your twenty years?

During part of that time, there were protesters at the entrance to the test site, but I didn't see them. We were able to avoid that and so I just didn't see that.

Yeah, your work allowed you not to—

I was aware that was happening and it made no sense to me. You know I understood what the threats were and it was just so apparent that I appreciated the significance of what they were trying to do because—

The protesters or the test site?

The protesters, because it was becoming more apparent some of the dangers of radiation, and so they needed to be more careful. But as far as terminating everything, which would be handing [00:05:00] domination of the world over to countries which are clearly aggressive and clearly wanted to dominate everybody within site, it just made no sense. I mean it was just vitally important for our country to be able to protect itself and its allies.

Now could you maybe share your Mormon orientation towards working in the defense industry and why it was morally acceptable to you?

Well, that was acceptable to me in the same sense that it was acceptable for servicemen in every age to defend their country. I remember during World War II, you know, we had the questions

come up about how you can go to war and kill people, and the president of the Church said, when you're doing this in the line of duty to your country, you're not responsible for things that's happened or if you don't have control of this. You have a responsibility to help defend your country. And this was a different kind of engagement we had. It was more of a technical engagement, I guess, rather than sword against sword. But the devastation could've been much worse, you know, giant bombs against giant bombs. And so there's absolutely no difficulty at all in making up *my* mind what was right and what was wrong and I always felt very satisfied that I was doing something not only taking care of my family but in helping the defense of the country.

Now did the Church make any statements about Communism?

Oh, years past, the Church has been very clear about Communism, talking about Soviet Communism. It was one of the great evils and there was just absolutely no question about Communism being just, I don't know whether to say the work of the Devil or not, but it's something that any dedicated American would want to defend their country against.

So regarding Communism as an enemy wasn't just simply McCarthyism, you know, as far as you were concerned.

Oh, no, no, that was far before that. No, it was clearly an enemy. I met people in school who had—one of my friends while I was in the university was from the Ukraine and he told me about how terrible it was to live under Soviet domination. He just hated them in the worst way. It was just terrible.

Did he tell about the collectivization in the Ukraine farms, farmers, then?

He didn't talk about it but it was just the worst thing in the world. He didn't elaborate about it but it was very clear that that was just terrible on he and his family.

Now could you describe maybe how Ezra Taft Benson kind of fits in to all of this thing, maybe who he is and how he fits into things?

Well, Ezra Taft Benson is noticed mostly throughout the country because he was the secretary of agriculture under President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. At the same time, a lot of people don't know it but he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Church. Now, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is, except for the presidency of the Church, this is the highest level of leadership in the Church.

So he was not only high level in the Church but he was also very, very visual in the government.

Yes, he was. Yes, his career had been very much involved in farm organizations, and President Eisenhower asked him to be secretary of agriculture when he came in.

Did you ever hear any of his talks about protecting the United States against Communism?

Yes. Yes.

He was very strong, wasn't he?

Oh, very, very much so.

Yeah, there was no doubt where a good, honorable LDS person was supposed to stand with regard to that issue.

Exactly. Yeah.

Yeah. So that's another thing that as a Mormon you didn't have a moral conflict with your work with nuclear—

Oh, no, no, not in the slightest.

Now how did you feel about the atomic weapon with its immense danger and radiation and this power in the hands of mortal men?

[00:10:00] Well, at the time there had not been a lot of proliferation of these weapons and I knew that there was one serious aggressor. The Soviet Union had taken great steps to go around collecting the atomic secrets and were building bombs and rockets and things so that they could annihilate the world. And it seemed like the only way we could do it is more than match them to keep things under control. And there isn't any doubt that there's hardly any way to contain that except that. Now some people may argue that it was the wrong thing to ever get into this. I can't really respond to that. I don't know. It certainly saved a lot of lives in World War II by ending the war. Otherwise we'd have lost an enormous amount in trying to invade Japan. And if we ever had that war with the Soviet Union, which would almost be inevitable, without such a protection as that, we'd have lost a lot more lives.

Did you see times when we were very close to World War III?

Well, the time everybody remembers most is when the missiles were in Cuba. That was enormous, when the president [John F. Kennedy] said that he was going to put a blockade there and the Soviet Union bringing rockets over on ships had to turn those around. Otherwise there would be the start of everything. And people were really getting the sense that this could be the beginning of the great combat because there were going to be missiles flying everywhere.

Yeah, but somebody had the common sense not to push that button.

Right. Right. They finally got the message over to the Soviet Union what would happen and so they backed down and that was it. A wonderful thing, how that was handled.

Well, that had a happy ending. When Japan was warned to back down or surrender or else they would face mass destruction, you know, they just called their bluff and so there didn't seem to be much choice. You know when a country backs down, then peace has a chance.

Did you have any feelings about the Soviet scientists coming to the test site in 1988?

No. No, I didn't. Probably it was a good thing, I think. I think we wanted to establish some relationships with these countries which were different than aggressive. We wanted them to know that, you know, if things would open up and you see what we've got, we see what you've got, we can start trusting each other.

Did you see any changes after that visit?

It's been a while back. Well, of course with the downfall of the Soviet government, there have been lots of changes, you know, now that we're able to communicate with them on many levels, and the big challenges of the world have now shifted from the Soviet Union to other elements.

Did you feel like the test site helped to win the Cold War?

Oh, not much doubt about it. I mean if we'd hadn't have stood up very firmly and just ruined the Soviet economy with our technology, not much doubt about it, because they had the ability to— they had the H-bomb.

Very powerful.

Oh, very, very powerful, a hundred megatons of TNT.

[00:15:00] *Yeah. The defense industry brought a lot of modern technology. Did you see some, you know, maybe can you relate some of the things that came about because we were putting money into defense? You know, peaceful things.*

Yes. Yes. I remember some of the first work I did in General Electric back in the 1950s, and we had equipment there which was being computerized, and we had room full of computer equipment. And what was in the roomful can now be held in the palm of your hand. And that's an example of the dramatic difference of miniaturization we've done. Semiconductors and miniaturization have just *completely* changed technology. And the expense is just, you know, a

thousand to one. It's just gone *way* down and the ordinary citizen now can enjoy the kind of benefits from that that the governments could hardly afford back in those days.

Now we think Bill Gates did this, you know, but really it was the Defense Department [DoD].

Right. Oh, no. Yes. Well, miniaturization is the thing that brought that about, yeah, semiconductor technology and miniaturization. And at one time I said, The two greatest things that happened, one is understanding the atom, and the other miniaturization. And I still have hopes that understanding the atom will materialize in something. So far in our country, we have not pursued that as much as possible. You know there are certain dangers inherent in it. We have to learn how to handle nuclear waste. When that finally happens, the natural supply of fuels in the world will some day be exhausted or be controlled by elements that are not friendly to us, and we'll need some other sources.

So it sounds like you feel like a lot of the research that went out there is going to become useful as some of our resources deplete.

I think eventually, you know, I'm not saying in the foreseeable future, but I think it undoubtedly will come about, yeah. There'll have to be sources of energy and you know if we can find the means to convert sea water into fuel, which by atomic means we can do that, there'd be an inexhaustible supply of fuel if we could use sea water.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, you said that there were other things that went on out there other than nuclear testing? Would you like to relate some of those?

No, probably not.

What about the rockets? You know, the things with rocket development.

Well, rocket development, peaceful-wise, you know, NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] has picked up on that and now we've demonstrated the ability to explore far distant areas.

Now they would not have been able to get out of the atmosphere of the Earth without atomic power, is that right?

Well, without rocket power. I'm not sure they need atomic power for that, but rocket power is certainly essential for that, yes, any kind of interplanetary transportation is going to.... Now there have been studies of using nuclear engines to do space travel. So far they have not materialized very far, but that's another possibility. That's way off in the future if that happens.

Now do they use nuclear power for submarines? Isn't that one—?

Yes, yes, sure, we have nuclear-powered submarines that they're able to stay under the icecap and then be submersed for months and months and months, and have the ability to generate fresh air so they don't have to surface, recharge batteries, or anything. They can stay there. And so this gives us an added position of defense where it's difficult for our enemies to track us, you know, [00:20:00] if we continually hid, that that's a great source of defense.

Now did you see difficulty in agencies working together? Or did you pretty much have your own agency that you dealt with?

Yes, we were pretty much self-contained. I didn't see a lot of difficulty there.

Oh, OK. Would you like to talk about what the Book of Mormon is and the Book of Mormon's view on the United States of America?

Well, we understand from the teachings in the *Book of Mormon* that the exploration of this continent was inspired by the Lord, that actually [Christopher] Columbus himself, I don't know whether he realized it but he was actually—there was some motivation in his life which inspired and drove him to do the things he did in exploring this land. And we believe that there were continued interventions by the Lord in the coming out of the Dark Ages and inspiring various people to bring the world out of that terrible curse which was upon it. And we believe that the

people who started to come across to inhabit this country, searching for religious freedom, they were inspired by the Lord, and specifically the people who founded our Constitution in this land were those inspired by the Lord. This is the teaching in the *Book of Mormon*. And so this land has great promise to it. If the people will try to follow the Lord and live righteously, they have no cause for any great fear. And of course if they choose not to do that, then there's no promise.

Now this is interesting considering that the United States government has historically been very unkind to Mormons.

Years back, that's true. That's true. The issues were, you know, frontiers. There were local collections mobs, things like that. Society was a good deal different out in the frontiers in those days.

And the founder of the Church was murdered.

Yes, that's true. You know you can even go back where people worried about witches, things like that, so that society hadn't quite matured very much in those days.

But it's not a conflict in your mind that even though there were bad things that happened in this country, that—

No, the Church, it came out, established themselves in Utah, and from there gained strength and has now spread out through the world, and there's no conflict at all. I don't know of anyone who harbors any resentment against the government at all, and I think the government has certainly changed their position in allowing freedom of religion, including the positions of the Mormons.

But if a government will support an individual's freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, then that's an indication that they have the blessings of God, is that right?

Sure, that's part of our Constitution and that was inspired by the Lord to write it in there.

OK. Well, I appreciate your putting that view in the record because that kind of helps explain why Mormons wouldn't have a moral conflict working in the nuclear industry or working for the United States government.

OK, is there anything else you would like to add? Are there any memorable events, testing events, that you were witness to that you would like to say anything about? I know you said that you would be limited in what you would be able to share about your work.

I'd just say that I just felt I had a wonderful career. I really enjoyed what I was doing. Not only was it not a moral conflict, it was a very exciting time. Shortly after I transferred out here I [00:25:00] became a program manager and I became a technical director. I just had a wonderful experience and I really think that I look back it was, you know, I could've made many different moves when I transferred from New York out here, but I think I made a good choice.

Now as I've interviewed engineers, I find that they really do often get excited about their work. They lose track of time.

Yeah, that's true. True enough.

And they also like working as a team. You know that sense of teamwork is very, very strong. I think it's marvelous.

Well, maybe we could just, you know, looking back, what do you consider to be the most difficult time of your life?

Well, changing jobs is a pretty difficult time. I only had to do that one time.

Yeah, Syracuse. So coming—

Yes, that was pretty difficult, bringing my family out here, and you know for a long time I would look around and I'd think, gee, have I made a mistake? You know back in Syracuse, around some of the Syracuse areas there, it was just like a campus, you know, beautiful buildings, grass,

everything. I'd get out here in these scruffy old buildings that looked like barracks half the time, looking at the desert.

Not even farm country.

What have I done to my family? Fortunately we established ourselves among some great people and gathered a lot of friends around our family, and the same at work, and it worked out pretty good.

And you became part of the Mormon community here, too, didn't you?

Oh, sure. That was a good experience.

That kind of gave some continuity for both you and your wife.

Yes, it does.

That's great. What do you consider to be the best time of your life?

The best time in my life was the latter part of my career. I was very fortunate. I got to be well liked there, and when I retired, I didn't retire at sixty-five. I kept working. And it was only after my health wasn't too good, I retired at sixty-eight, and even then the company asked me to work part-time, so I kept I mean part-time. So I really liked what I was doing. It was a very exciting time.

Well, you worked longer than some of the people I've talked to. You were really kept on, then, weren't you?

Yes. Yes, I could've been working now still if my health had held up as much as I wanted it to.

Oh my goodness, that's interesting, since there's been so much layoff and absence of testing.

Oh, I know it. Yeah, I never had the slightest worry about that. It was just truly a great experience. The people I worked with were wonderful and it just really worked out great.

Well, what's been your overall guide or formula for living?

Well, if I put priorities in life, I'd say my first priority has to be my family. My second priority has been the Church. And between the two of them—the third priority, you know, first my family, then the Church, then my work. And with those three things, they have just engulfed everything about me.

They kept you balanced and it seems like your priorities felt right.

Yeah, they have been enough to meet all challenges I've had. There have been certain times that I've had certain challenges, you know. One time when I first became a manager, one person said, You got to be careful up here. You got to watch your back. People play hard ball. And I didn't think much of it. About six months later it turned out *he* was the one playing hard ball. And so there were some challenging times, but things worked out.

Well, did you keep careful records about your work, you know, to kind of—

I kept a log each day. I'd write down a log of what I'd accomplished in the day. I learned to do that because I had a couple of times in which I had serious illness and I was away from work for about three months at a time, and so when I came back I realized how difficult it was to gather all these threads together. So every day I'd write down in a log where I was and what I'd accomplished in that day, and so I could go back and if anything happened again, I could go back [00:30:00] in that log and find out exactly where things stood and what I wanted to do from then.

Oh, that's such a good habit to do. Would you mind just kind of talking about your loss of sight and how you have faced that? I've heard you talk about that. I really think that's inspiring.

Oh. Oh, well, OK. Well, about twenty years ago I noticed some strange things like they appeared to be—the lines up on the telephone—lines up there, telephone poles, and there'd be a break in the line. And so the next time I went to the eye doctor, I mentioned that to him and he started looking and examining me. He says, Well, you've got this thing, macular degeneration, he says, but it's really not very much. Let's just watch it. So I

went to him two months later and he says, Oh, this is too far gone. We can't do anything about this. And I nearly died. I thought, what in the world is going on here? But anyway, fortunately it was just in one eye. And as I say, that was twenty years ago. And so with both eyes open, the world looked the same. You know I had perfect vision with the other eye. And so about a couple of years ago, suddenly I noticed something strange again. And I checked with the eye doctor and he says, Well, each year, if you get it in one eye, there's a 15 percent chance that the next year it will happen in the other eye. Well, if you calculate the odds of facing that means an 85 percent chance that you won't get it, but how many times can you do that in a row? And it turns out I've succeeded in beating a 20-to-1 odds that it would last that long without getting the other eye.

So you've had twenty years of perfect vision in your eye.

I did. I really consider that a great blessing because if that had happened back twenty years ago, I'd have been not prepared for retirement, I would've had a big mortgage on the house. I accomplished so much in that twenty years, it's just marvelous. It's just like a great blessing that was handed to me that I was able to take care of all that. My career just blossomed and everything. But it went wonderful in that twenty-year period.

I think that story is so inspiring. I just want it to be part of the record. Because your vision is—

Oh, I had no idea what a blessing it was till suddenly things are different.

Yeah. Sometimes we don't realize our blessings until—

Super blessing. Absolutely.

Until we lose them, right?

Yeah. Yeah. I used to be the computer man here around our house. Now Sidney's the computer man.

Yeah. Well, you know, sometimes others have to learn to do a few things here and there.

That's right. Yeah, that's true.

Oh, great. Well, is there anything else you would like to add? I've been able to ask my questions and you have been great. I think I got to ask my questions. Oh, why don't you just tell how many children you have and what their names are?

Oh, we have three children, Barbara, David, and Carol. We had three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Oh, OK.

And a dog.

Three, three, and three.

So yeah, I tell people they have to treat me with respect now because I'm a great-grandpa.

Oh, that's great. That's great. OK, well, I think we can go ahead and shut it off.

[00:33:30] End Track 3, Disc 1.

[End of interview]