

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

**Interview with**  
**Michael Bordner**

**June 8, 2005**  
**Mercury, Nevada**

Interview Conducted By  
Suzanne Becker

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Produced by:

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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.

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## Interview with Michael Bordner

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## Interview with Michael Bordner

June 8, 2005 at the Nevada Test Site in Mercury, NV

Conducted by Suzanne Becker

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

**Suzanne Becker:** *Why don't you go ahead and begin.*

**Mike Bordner:** I'm Mike Bordner. I was born in Los Angeles, California—well, Pasadena, California, just outside of L.A.—November 28, 1956. [I] lived in L.A. and the surrounding area for about, I don't know, thirteen years and then moved to a little town called Chino Valley, Arizona, just outside of Prescott. [I] lived there for ten years; worked retail grocery, worked for the sheriff's office, worked for the fire department, and ended up in 1980 gravitating out here.

*So you went to school and grew up primarily in the Los Angeles area?*

Grade school in Los Angeles and just started high school.

*What brought you to Arizona?*

My folks moved. I was a little young to stay there on my own.

*So they moved while you were still in high school.*

My dad got a medical retirement from the Post Office and had always planned on looking for a little farm, a little ranch, and so we ended up buying a handful of acres with chickens and ducks.

*Prescott is nice.*

It is. It was a lot nicer back then than it is now. But it was a nice way to grow up. Looking back on it, I hated it back there because there was nothing to do, but looking back on it now, it was good.

*And then from Prescott you gravitated toward here?*

Back in about '78, I got involved with the fire department and the sheriff's office both in Prescott, going to school for fire science and also for law enforcement. Back about the same time in maybe '79, the sheriff's office here with Nye County had a recall and the sheriff was removed from office. I had a friend of mine who had lived in the area that I went to school with for the police and fire science over in Arizona and ended up coming out here for a job. He bugged me for three months to come and put in an application. And I finally figured, you know, what the heck, it's a good way to spend a weekend in [Las] Vegas and piddle around. I ended up, coming out, and had an interview with a lieutenant over at the Pahrump Substation. His name was Fred D'Albani [sp] and he was from Tucson PD [Police Department] so at least we had a little bit of something, camaraderie there, both from Arizona. Once I found out what the county was all about with brothels and things like that and I was thinking about getting married, I figured this ain't the place for me and I did my best to talk myself out of a job. Which I did. The lieutenant said, I don't think you're what we're looking for. We'll go ahead and give your application to the sheriff, though, but don't plan anything. I went back to Arizona. About three days later, I got a call from the sheriff offering me a job.

*Go figure.*

I talked it over with the girlfriend at the time and my friends and family and figured nothing ventured, nothing gained. It was a good move on my part to come up here, it really was. I've enjoyed it, it's been twenty-five good years.

*What did you think of it when you first got up here?*

Culture shock. I went from Los Angeles, the hustle and bustle of the city, to the nothingness of the upper hills of Arizona to really nothingness out here in the desert. I figured the big hole's

going to swallow me up one of these days. But no, it's been good. It was a good move. Good friends, good people. Had a lot of good times.

*Now, when you came out here and hired in, you were working at the [Nevada] test site?*

Yes. I started out here.

*What were your impressions of that? Had you known much about the Nevada Test Site prior to that?*

I knew absolutely nothing about it. Working with the sheriff's office in Arizona, and granted, up in the hills of Prescott it wasn't all that exciting, but you had your times. The Fourth of July weekends and things like that and I got to work other areas, Camp Verde, places around there when they would have their yearly celebrations. So it was the hustle and bustle of—I guess you'd want to call that a big city, or those cities, to come out here and it's nothing. The streets roll up at night. Even back then when the test site, at least to me, was booming, by ten o'clock, unless there was a particular project going on, everything shut down. The bowling alley was shutting down, the Steakhouse was closing up. So man, you'd look for something to do. You'd pray that somebody would have an accident so you would have something to do. Of course, you didn't want anybody to get hurt, but will somebody please go do something so I have something to piddle with.

But no, I knew absolutely nothing about the test site. The job offering from the sheriff at the time was for Tonopah, and of course my question is what the hell's a Tonopah? I'd never heard of that. He explained a little bit to me. I talked it over with friends and family and the decision was made to at least give it a try. I called back and accepted the job position and told him, I said, Without any hard feelings, I'd like to try for a while, but I'm going to lose X-amount of money a month leaving the jobs that I'm at now and coming out there. His remark was, Well, if you want this much more money,

[00:05:00] go to work at Mercury. Now, what the hell's a Mercury? But the *per diem* made up for the amount of money that I was losing. It wasn't so much an increase in pay, we just got a subsistence for being out here because we had to stay. So that's what brought me out here and I guess what kept me.

*For twenty-five years, you said.*

A little over twenty-five.

*Now, is your family still in Arizona?*

Dad passed away in '89 and my mom just moved up to Green Valley [Henderson, NV] about six weeks ago. I still have some friends back there I keep in contact with, but no other family. My dad's side of the family is on the West Coast. I've got an aunt and uncle in Vegas also, and Oregon. Cousins in Montana. Mom's side of the family is all over the Midwest, Wisconsin, Indiana.

*Well, it's good you've got some folks out here close to you. So you hired on the force at the test site. What's a typical day all about at that point, at that time?*

A typical day basically was obviously working traffic. We have a couple of traffic hours, people coming to work, people going to work. Back in the early eighties was a little bit different because with the different projects and the nuclear testing going on, obviously there were more people, there were different shifts than what are done now. You did have a little bit of twenty-four-hour activity, security obviously, but there were a few groups that were out here later in the evenings and stuff. But for the most part, our time was from six in the morning to eight in the morning for traffic, from 2:30 or three in the afternoon to about four or 4:30, and that was it. So our shifts were made to cover basically those traffic hours, plus a little bit later into the evening. Area 12 had a rec hall going, pool tables, vending machines, TV, they had card tables, a little

bar. So our deal was to check not only the cafeteria—obviously we'd eat at the cafeteria—but check the Steakhouse, check the stuff up in Area 12, two theaters, make sure nobody was doing—and what do you do in a theater? You walk in and there's five people, man, they've really got a mass of folks in here. And that covered the bowling alley, we'd make an appearance into. Unless something special was going on, like a shot night, our shifts were done by nine or ten o'clock. Then an officer would take calls until the next day. Either he would come back on, double back, or somebody else would come back on.

*What happened on a shot night?*

Oh, man, lots of excitement. Security would usually start a couple of days before, closing down the forward areas. Depending upon how far north they had to close down, they would start maybe up on the mesa. They would start up on the mesa and usually shut that down maybe forty-eight hours, seventy-two hours before the scheduled testing time. And then maybe anywhere from, oh, God, twelve to twenty-four hours prior to that, they would shut down maybe at Area 6. As time would get closer, then we shut down the top of 200 Hill just outside of Mercury. You would have to have a muster badge to be in those areas so Security could come and find you if anything went wrong. Most everybody other than the workers that had to be there would gravitate to Mercury and you'd have a full cafeteria, full Steakhouse, full bowling alley. They'd bring in a band sometimes.

*Oh, really.*

Yes, he'd have 500 miners and three women. Great time. But it would be a full house for everybody. They'd usually have a pretty good time. The cafeteria would stay open usually those twenty-four hours or that particular length of time. Bowling alley would be open till one or two o'clock. Steakhouse would probably stay open till midnight and keep everybody happy.



*Right. Because basically people are here almost twenty-four hours for those.*

Oh, yeah.

*And did you have any different security protocol that you did in preparation for that?*

Not as far as we did. Security, I'm sure, did. They had a lot of things which they had to do. Our basic job was obviously civilian law enforcement and if they needed assistance, back them up.

So our game plan for the most part didn't change, other than we went from 1,350 square miles to patrol down to Mercury for the period of time, and then once things got going it would open back up again.

*Right. Were you out here at all, ever, when they did the tests? I guess they were underground but I don't know if you were able to feel them?*

Oh, some of them. [I] certainly wasn't out here for all tests, but many of them, especially the [00:10:00] larger ones, they very easily could wake you up. It wasn't so much that you were spending the night, of course, watching the shot. They had a little deal over at the fire station called Mercury Control and it was a representative from the sheriff's office, Transportation, Security, DOE [Department of Energy], probably the laboratory that was doing the experiment. You would all meet anywhere from about 3:30 in the morning to five in the morning and sit over there until the experiment had taken place and things were cleared, or until they decided to postpone it to another day. So a lot of times, one of us would be sitting over there and then the big thing was to watch the coffee pot. You would hear the countdown and when they get down to zero, everybody would start counting one, two, three, and see how long it would take for the coffee to start flopping back and forth in the pot. Number one, you would see that, if it was that big, and big enough for you to feel it. And sometimes it was. There's been a couple of times that

it would wake you up in bed, and even though you were sound asleep, it would just be enough to shake you. You ever been through an earthquake?

*Just very, very small ones.*

I lived through a lot of them in L.A.

*I bet.*

That's just what it felt like somebody would just come along, take your bed, and shake it for a few seconds, then go on.

*How far away are you from most of the places where they were shot off? I guess it depends where on the site they were doing it.*

Well, barring any kind of a special activity, and there were times that we were closer, but for the most part, if we were locked out here in Mercury, there were no tests done any closer than the Area 6 facilities—if you know where that is, out past Wet and Wild—we're probably the closest, give or take, twenty-five to thirty miles. And farther up would be up on the mesa, so you may be looking in a straight line anywhere from fifty to sixty miles; by road, probably sixty to seventy miles.

*So it was pretty significant that you were still feeling the after effects here.*

I guess they had some pretty big things they dropped down there.

*What did you think about all of that when you first started working here?*

It was interesting. Well, something new, of course, and everybody, my friends, my family, when I'd go back to visit in Arizona, everybody wants to know about it. Of course, I don't build them, I don't see them. There's not a whole lot you could say other than boom, shake, rattle, and roll. It was different, a new experience, and of course, then, like anything else, pretty soon it just gets to be old hat. It's the same thing.

*Right. Were you familiar at all with the whole nuclear testing issues?*

No.

*So I guess, then, a lot of—talking to Jim [James] Merlino, your name came up a couple of times in talking about some of the protests that went on up here. Is that something that you dealt with first hand, being out on the highway and all?*

Oh, yes, we all got initiated real quick. It's my understanding back in the late fifties there was a group called the Atomlopers that would come out and protest. So it's my guessing that sometime between the late fifties, early sixties, that end of the protest era, I don't even know if things went on during the Vietnam War out here, I've never heard of it. So back in about and I'm guessing '81 or '82 maybe was the first protest experience any of us had, when, I think it was, at that time called the Lenten Desert Experience formed and started coming out. So, that was a little bit—that was something new.

*I'm just wondering if you can tell me about that. I have interviewed several Nevada Desert Experience [NDE] people who I think led a lot of the protests or participated in a lot, and I was just wondering if you could tell me what that was like. Did they call you and let you know that they were going to be doing anything? Were there a lot of people? A few people?*

Somebody developed a dialogue with the groups early on, and I don't know who it was. I don't think it was Merlino. It certainly wasn't me. I don't think it was Merlino. It may have been Security. It may have been somebody in DOE. But usually we would get notification one way or another of a group coming out. And it all started out with the Easter deal, with the Lenten Desert Experience. As time went by, they found other reasons to come out. One of the first big ones we had or the first few big ones, we had guys like the Berrigan brothers [Daniel and Philip] who would come out, and they tried to, and I'm going to say cross into our property. And I don't

mean they were sneaking, they were crawling. They walked up the road or walked just off the road and tried to cross our line, and at one point they brought in German [00:15:00] nationals. Nobody went anywhere. They were detained, they were taken into custody. They were turned over to INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service], those who were not from here. Basically cited and released and went on their way. But, celebrities, like I said. There again, the Berrigan brothers, who were very vocal during the Vietnam era. And I'm trying to think of—Ellsberg, Daniel Ellsberg was out here, and he made several appearances, but he's been pretty quiet for the last number of years with us. The last twenty, I don't think he's had a whole lot to do with our position.

I think on both sides, especially starting out, it was controlled chaos, you know. They didn't know what they could do, should do, would do. We, of course, didn't know what we could do, should do, would do, other than everybody's big stand, especially DOE [Department of Energy], was treat them nice and they'll go away. Most everybody in law enforcement don't usually think too well about treating somebody that nice. If they're going to come along and you tell them not to break a law and they do, your deal is the hook and book. Everybody wanted to treat them with kid gloves. And, you know, they caused a lot of maybe heartburn back then.

*Within the security—*

Well, security and law enforcement community. We would get assistance from Highway Patrol and they would not maybe want to work under the same guidelines that we had out here. We would get officers from other substations: Pahrump, Tonopah, Beatty, Amargosa. They may be a little more aggressive than we were to be out here. So it brought up some controversies.

*How big were these protests that were in the eighties, do you know?*

Starting out back then, just an offhand guess, I would say anywhere from a handful of people up to maybe seventy, eighty, ninety, initially. That would usually be on the Easter weekends. When that particular holiday came around, they would gather more folks. As the eighties come along, or back in towards the middle part of the eighties when the things got bigger, we had up to, I believe, 5,000 people at one time. That was during the Nagasaki-Hiroshima stuff back in the—like the third through the tenth of August. We'd have a week or ten days of it and that was not fun. It was fun initially; by the end of it, you were mad at everybody, including yourself. It got old. But yes, those were very well remembered by a lot of us.

*How did you handle those numbers of people for that many days?*

You know, to tell you the truth, I really have no good answer for that. We tried to work by their schedule. Of course, if we see them gearing up, we wake everybody up and we head out. They didn't bother us too much twenty-four hours a day. It wasn't a continuous probe. They may have a half-a-dozen, twenty, thirty, forty people down at the cattle guard at night beating drums and singing, but it wasn't the mass. So once the arrests were taken care of and people were cited and released or whatever, as they would start deescalating, we would try and start deescalating. Then pretty soon we're down to maybe one or two of our officers and a dozen security guards out there who would let those who were sleeping know that something was coming along and we'd all rush back out again.

*What types of things went on? Can you describe some of the—were there any—I mean they seemed to be fairly peaceful protests.*

For the most part. There were very few instances that I can think of in which any one of their people got out of line. We did have officers bitten a few times. There were a few punches thrown by both sides. But there's been no rocks, no sticks, no major weapons. Been name calling. I think

both sides were probably pretty lucky because as we would get nervous because of what they were doing, I'm sure they would get nervous because of what we're doing. We're damned lucky that when we had the 5,000 people, there probably wasn't a mini-riot out there a couple of times. We had a couple of narcotics officers come along and try to work the crowd, and they made an arrest for narcotics one day. John Bogle [sp] was one of the officers.

*John Bogle?*

Bogle was one of our dope detectives. Johnny made an arrest and I think Steve Huggins [sp] was another one of the two; they made an arrest. Well, as they started dragging the guy out of the crowd, of course now he's kicking and screaming and yelling and that agitates the people around him who, of course, agitate those of us on the other side who agitate more [00:20:00] people on their side, and pretty soon you've got four or five or six hundred mad protesters and three dozen upset security guards and a dozen upset cops all ready to whup it out. I think both sides were real lucky that it never got to the point to where something actually happened. Those instances were few and far between.

*Right. And they mostly hung out at the Peace Camp up the road?*

They did a little deal. As you go back out towards Vegas, just before you get to [Interstate] 95 and the northbound turnoff, there's a wide spot on the right. That's where they did a lot of their local, I guess you want to call it, local services. When they had a small Easter gathering, that's where they would do their stuff. The bigger gatherings would take place the other side, if you want to call it the Peace Camp.

*Well, I don't know what it's called.*

That's what they called it, and that's fine. It all describes the area. But yeah, that's where they would house most of their bigger groups. Even now, I think, when sunrise services come along for Easter, when the Shoshones are out here, that's more or less where they do it.

*Right. And they're still coming out, correct?*

Yes, we don't see any major groups anymore. They're probably lucky. We're probably lucky. They don't usually number more than maybe a handful to a couple, three dozen. You may see a hundred, but probably not.

*Right. What about this year? We're coming up on the sixtieth anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Are you expecting anything to happen for that, or have you heard?*

The only documentation we have, and I'm on their mailing list, is a little deal that says most of their stuff is going to be downtown and they're going to spend one night, or come out here for one evening of protest. So I think we're probably going to get off pretty lucky. They don't want to stay up late, so hopefully by ten o'clock everybody's going back home to do their stuff. As far as numbers, I can't tell you. You call them up now and ask them and they're going to say, well, we've got 10,000 flyers out and we're hoping for 5,000 to come. They're probably going to be lucky if they get 150. But you just don't know until it gets down to that time. They're usually pretty good with giving us a general idea.

*So you have a pretty good working relationship with them right now.*

If they have a problem, if they want to come out, let's say. Let's go back a number of years.

They had a gentleman by the name of Larry, and I can't remember what Larry's last name was, but he was back with the original Desert Lenten group. He lived down in southern Arizona, and on one of his trips up here he rolled his car and was killed. NDE, or LDE at the time, called out here to see if DOE would give them permission to come and protest on—well, this is back when

we allowed them to the white line down by the airport—if DOE would allow them to come out to protest because Larry had killed himself. Not suicide, because Larry was killed in a car accident and this is where he protested, this is the thing that he wanted to do. DOE gave them permission. There again we're talking back in the early eighties. The thing was if you do something bad, you're not coming back out again. Like that's going to stop them. But even to this day, they'll do the same thing. It's very rare we will get a group to come out and protest without first being contacted. You may see a busload, minibus-load, come out. These are Japanese tourists who protest in Japan. They want to take a picture of the "No Trespassing" sign. So everybody gets their picture taken, they're back in the bus, and they leave. But for any kind of a program that they have going, we usually get contacted first.

*Right. So what is your opinion of the protesters? What do you make of it? Do you understand what they're doing or do you see a point to this?*

Well, what I tell them every time they want to argue is, I'm not out here to argue the morality of nuclear weapons. I think most any sane person—maybe that's questionable on my part about the sanity—understands that nuclear weapons, death of any type that way, has got to be a horrible, horrible thing. Obviously for the person involved and the families, if anybody lives through it, but for the nations and everybody else in the world. But there again, on the other hand, we have to protect ourselves from what another group may do. Do I think disarmament is ever going to happen? No, I don't. I don't think we're in the *Star Trek* deal where we've all learned and everybody now lives together as one big happy family. It's just not going to happen. De-escalation obviously has taken place in a number of cases over a number of different topics. Different weapons types. I guess probably the best we can hope for is a happy balance: I know you have it, you know I have it. You don't mess with me; I'm not [00:25:00] going to mess with



you. And maybe we'll find a way to get along that way. I don't have an opinion on it. I support what the government does; I wouldn't be out here if I didn't. As far as the testing goes—and there again I guess testing nuclear weapons is like testing anything else—you have to make sure it works. Ford Motor Company tests vehicles. Chrysler. Libby's tests the food that they put out on the shelves. So there's got to be some kind of a program to make sure that the product that you're producing is workable, is livable, will do what it's designed to do. It's just unfortunate that when you do do a testing a program, especially in nuclear weapons, it does the damage that it does. I would imagine that underground is probably a whole lot better than doing something like France does and blow it up on an island somewhere. You're polluting the air, you're polluting the ground and the water. Where are you going to draw the line? But obviously something, I'm sure, needs to be done to keep these things going.

*Obviously you were out here at the pinnacle of testing and protesting and you've probably seen a lot of change over the past decade and a half or so. I'm just wondering how your job has changed with the moratorium on testing and at one point the test site employed a lot of people and now I think that number is down significantly. How has your job changed, or has it changed?*

The responsibilities of the job, for the most part, haven't changed. I would venture to say that maybe the amount of work we do certainly has. Back when I started, we had maybe 10,000 people working out here. Very few out in [Area] 25, NRDS [Nuclear Rocket and Development Station], NRDA [Nevada Research and Development Area]. The MX [Missile Experimental] project was in the process of being put together or tested. So there were a few military, a number of civilians out there, but most of our stuff was weapons related. And of course they would build up, depending upon what program was going on; you'd build up a few and when that program's

over with, you'd lose a few. But I think we stayed pretty stationary, around 10,000 people, up until give or take it was about '92 when the moratorium came in and testing for the most part went away. At least testing as we knew it. Now I'm guessing we're probably at about 3,000 people out here, maybe. It's made our job easier because we don't have the amount of people to deal with. I have the same amount of officers that I had, or that we worked with back in those times. We don't take near as many theft reports. We don't do near as many accidents. We don't write near as many citations. I guess the good thing about that is we're being less invasive to the people who are out here. Well, the bad part about it is we're spending more time driving, wearing out the cars, sucking up the gas. More time sitting and talking. It's, I guess, good and bad on both parts. But the job responsibilities haven't changed that much. We're still here for the same thing. We still roll on the highway when needed. Still do civilian law enforcement out here, whether it's military or civilians that we deal with.

*Right. Were there a lot of traffic accidents out here back in the heyday? What was the majority of the types of situations that you encountered?*

Well, most of everything that we were involved in pretty much centered around traffic. Traffic accidents, traffic citations, traffic hours, we'd go out and work our deals. I really couldn't answer your question on how many we had or if there were a lot more. I'm going to guess right now, with as slow as things are, we probably run, and don't hold me down to a good number but I'm going to guess probably about four dozen accidents a year. Might be a little bit more. But we probably run a hundred different calls that are notable. What I mean by notable calls, we'll make a report on it, and about half of those are accidents. So it's probably a fifty-fifty split. Back twenty years ago, we still took a lot of theft reports, we still took battery reports, we still did fights, and probably 50 percent of everything we did was accidents. So I'd say maybe double

what we do now. We may have a hundred accidents and a hundred other calls. So it's affected us that way.

*Right. What about still going back to some of those larger protests that you did, just thinking about the fact that there were far more workers out here at that time, did you ever have [00:30:00] any incidents or confrontations between the people out protesting and the people coming to work on the test site?*

Yes, but nothing really all that bad. I think most of the finger gestures took place off the test site. They'd see them walking on the highway and throw a beer can or yell something nasty at them. Most everybody out here was pretty patient, whether they were driving their own vehicle or riding on a bus. One instance that I can think of was a security gentleman that worked for Wackenhut [WSI]—in fact, he's still employed with them, so I'll leave his name out of it—who had his private vehicle spit on. It wasn't one of the big protests. It wasn't one when we had many thousand people out here. I just think probably a couple hundred of them. We as officers tried to disperse ourselves, not all be crowded over here while these folks are lining up the highway. We would try and space ourselves out a little bit. Well, somehow this guy got in between wherever this group of officers was and that one and [makes spitting sound] on this gentleman's car as he went by. Well, by the time we got up there, the guy had already exited the car, grabbed a handful of hair and a handful of butt on this kid, and he was carving his initials in the hood of his car with it: you will wipe up, you will not spit on my car. He's just smearing his face up and down. But that's one of very few. There was a lot of taunting as far as name calling goes, when they would stop the buses. Of course, the people would roll down their windows and yell at them, and people would crawl under the buses and everybody's, *Run them over!* And things like that. *So they would physically block the buses from carrying the workers into the—?*

Oh, sure, to and from. In fact, if I remember right, we had a young lady who crawled under a bus, just under the overpass, and nobody caught it until the bus got clear in front and started up again, and I believe she got her leg cut up and mushed a little bit. There have been a few who have crawled under buses and taken like the big bicycle locks and the big U-bolt locks and have locked themselves to the undercarriage.

*You're kidding!*

No, I'm not. That's probably happened on a half-a-dozen occasions.

*And what do you do with those kinds of things? How do you handle that?*

Well, it's kind of hard to shut down the road. You can direct traffic around. If we have other vehicles capable of coming up, like vans or maybe other buses coming through, to transfer the people over, then we just—you work it as you can. WSI has a lock cutter, and it's really kind of a neat little deal. It'll cut locks, cut wire.

*WSI is Wackenhut?*

Yes, Wackenhut Services, Wackenhut Security. It [the lock cutter] is fired—I don't know how to explain it. It's probably about the size of this microphone stand. It's got a big opening on the end of it and you put a bullet casing inside. It's a specially-loaded deal. Once you hook it around the wire or the cable, you have a color code for that type of deal, [slaps hands together] you pop it, and it's like shooting a bullet but it fires a blade, a cutter through the lock.

*And so it cuts them off and then—*

It sounds like a gun going off. It's not quite that loud but it works under the same deal. It's a ballistic-type gizmo. It'll usually pop that U-bolt or that wire or whatever they're doing, provided it's done right. So that works out. And of course we have the hydraulics which will cut a whole lot of stuff, the krypton locks and things. Sometimes it takes a while. We've had to jack the

buses up, get a tow truck out there and pull the front end up so people can get under there and work. But sooner or later, we'll get them free. A lot of times these folks, because they don't want to be under a hot bus for long, if we can't get them out, they hide a key up there. When they crawl up and do it, they'll put a key some place where they can reach it. After they've caused whatever torment they want, then they'll figure out a way to get out of there.

*So they put it around their neck to the whatever, something on the bus?*

Something they can lock themselves to the undercarriage of the bus, yeah.

*That's crazy.*

Oh, yeah. Do what you believe in or support what you believe in, but I don't think I would die to keep somebody from going to work.

*Right. Have you ever had any serious injuries?*

Oh, the young lady I said who got her foot run over or her leg run over is probably very serious to her. Nothing life-threatening that I can remember. We've had the usual fall-down-and-cut-themselves. Back when the cattle guard was a cattle guard, we've had people twist their ankles, things like that, crawling across. That's why the wood planks were made by the old REECo [Reynolds Electrical and Engineering Company] group. But that wouldn't stop those folks. They still walk across the cattle guard. If there's four or five people on the plank, somebody wants to come across, they'll come right across the metal stuff, and occasionally you get a twisted ankle or something. But that's about the worst that I can think of that has happened right around us. Now, what they've done when they're up roaming around in the dirt at the Peace Camp, I don't know. I just know the ambulance has gone up there a couple of times for different things.

**[00:35:00]** *Right. And what about when they enter the property through the fence or not over the cattle guard but try to sneak in somewhere else? Is that in your jurisdiction or is that—?*

Oh, sure.

*Have you had a lot of that happen?*

Yes, that was one of their big things. I talked about 95 a little earlier. If you turn north, like you're going away from Vegas, down about, maybe a quarter of a mile north of us towards the overpass, there's a very large cement—I'm going to call it a culvert but it's more like a tunnel that wanders under both sides of the highway. It's big enough to where you and I could walk through it without having to crawl. It's probably a seven-foot ceiling and maybe a seven-foot width; it's pretty wide across. So the folks will walk from the other side of the highway, a lot of times, up under that thing and they'll cut the fence right where that comes through and then come walking across. Oh, yeah, that's happened forever. And if they're not cutting the fence, they're jumping the fence or putting something over it. Nothing to get excited about, where are they going to go? That's what I've always told them. There's rattlesnakes and scorpions out there. You will find your way back. You'll get hungry, you'll get thirsty, you'll get tired. I'm not chasing you.

*Right. So you've never chased anybody down in there.*

No. There was a kid with WSI, Billy Olsen [sp], and Billy was just a walking muscle. Just about that tall [indicating size] and just goofy. He's an ex-Marine, former Marine—I'm sorry, he's got to be a former Marine. And you know, most of us carry some pretty good gear. By the time you put on a baton and a gun and ammo, you've added twenty pounds. And here's old Billy out there with his boots and in his uniform and he's got his gun and his Mace and canteens, whatever he's supposed to. He decided to chase them out there and I guess—we had one kid we called Bam-Bam, who was one of the protesters, who liked to run. That was his big thing, he would try and run and get you chasing him. And here's old Billy at about five-foot-two, step for step, in

uniform, in big boots, with a gun on, singing cadence, running behind this guy. Finally drug him back and he was just jabbering all the way back. He said, You call that running? You don't know how to run, boy. Next time you want to run, let me know. I'll take you out and run you. But there again, those occasions were few and far between. Most of the time, you just let them go because they're coming back.

*So it sounds like it was fairly organized, even with the large numbers that you had, that there was some organization between both the security and the law enforcement and the protesters, is that correct?*

I think so.

*Because even 3,000 people is a pretty large number to have.*

Well, I'm sure that they knew that if they wanted us, they had us. We were drastically outnumbered. But there again, in order to do that, somebody's going to get hurt, and we're going to do our best to make damn sure it's not us.

*Right. And had that always been policy that you mentioned earlier that you were supposed to treat them with kid gloves?*

Well, we still do. I think the general policy behind law enforcement in general is trying to treat people fairly. The worse they get, the worse you're going to get. So, if they want to come and protest, we don't harass them. We no longer do stuff for them, like Jim Merlino. You'd mentioned Merlino, back years ago when we would allow them to the white line. When you go back out the gate, you know where the Desert Rock turnoff is?

*Yes.*

There used to be a white line painted across the highway and that's where we would allow the protesters to come up to in the early eighties. That was their area. They couldn't come any further past. They would bring in their own Porta-Potties, their own support team. Well, Merlino,

once the protest was over, would have us help them pick up their Porta-Potties—not a good thing, you know, especially when they’ve got 200 people out there who’ve all been using it. You *really* don’t want to touch them.

*Right. You don’t want to get too close.*

Yes. [He’d] have us pick them up and help them load them on a flatbed. We’re not going to do that anymore. That’s what I mean by not treating them with kid gloves. Obviously treat them with respect until the guy gets out of hand, then you do what you need to do, but we’re not going to go back out there and baby-sit them. If you do this, we’ll do this for you. No. You get out of line, you’re going to get arrested. Cite-and-release or arrest, those are the only options they have, and it’s up to us what we’re going to do.

*And how do you decide whether they’re going to be cited and released or actually arrested?*

Most of the time, when it comes to the bigger protests—well, I shouldn’t even say bigger protests. When it comes to a protest, if you have a multitude of people, we’re limited on officers. Unless you have somebody that gets really out of line—generally they’ll walk across the cattle guard, jump a fence—as long as we don’t see them doing any damage, as long as they don’t commit something else like stand on their side of the line, drop their pants, and wave body parts at you, long as they don’t throw rocks, long as they’re not doing something outlandish, it’s [00:40:00] probably going to be a cite-and-release.

*And how does that work? Do you just—you give them—?*

Just like a traffic ticket.

*A ticket, and then release them, and then—?*

Write them a ticket. It’s up to the DA [district attorney] where he wants to go with it after that.

*What kind of a ticket is it? Written?*



Just like a regular traffic ticket. It doesn't have a court date on it because, there again, that's up to the DA, but it shows what the charge is, it shows what the fine is. Your name and address, if they want to provide it. Then they get their little badge of courage, I have my pink copy, they can go show it off to their buddies, how brave they were and got a ticket for the deal. But somebody who gets out of line, who does—let's say we have a protest going on. Take for instance they were having one today and they want to come across and do their line crossing at nine o'clock in the morning. Once everything settles down, we'll do our cite-and-release and this sort of a problem and then send them all the other way. If we have one who wants to be a pain in the butt and turn around and come across again, there's no second cite-and-release. He's taken.

Obviously, if we find narcotics, if he tries to injure one of the officers, if there's a major problem or some other incident, he's probably going to get a citation or an arrest.

*So basically anything beyond the normal procedures of gathering, crossing the line, that kind of thing.*

Yes. We treat it more as an arrestable offense for a couple of reasons. Number one, it shows the other people we're not out here just to play. We're not going to play their game. And number two, now somebody has to go to Beatty to pick them up, so it's going to take a little bit of effort and somebody's gas and somebody's time to go do it, and possibly make them post bail. Now, the judge up at Beatty, Bill Sullivan, is a very understanding man, very nice guy, and he very easily may allow them to walk and say you come back for court on such-and-such a date and there's no bail posted. But a lot of times, if the charges get pretty bad, they'll make them post, and now somebody's got to dig up \$600, \$1,000, \$1,500 to bail somebody out, and it becomes a thorn in their side. So it's a little bargaining chip on ours. They know we can do it and we will do it.

*Kind of a pain. Interesting. You mentioned the Berrigan brothers had been out here, Daniel Ellsberg. I know Jim Merlino mentioned Michael Affleck. Have you developed any kind of relationship with specific people over the years?*

They were all, for the most part, very friendly. I don't remember ever talking to the Berrigan brothers. Ellsberg I talked to on a couple of occasions and he seemed to be a very nice, very intelligent man. Don't agree with his politics but that doesn't make any difference. He seemed to be a very, very intelligent guy. Martin Sheen. *Nice* man. He invites me to his house for a drink every time we arrest him, and one of these days about two in the morning I'm going to beat on his door and say, remember me? Very nice guy. Robert Blake, we arrested him before LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] got him. *Very* nice guy. Max Gail which was Wojciehowicz in *Barney Miller*, if you remember that. *Very* nice guy. Would sit and talk to you while you're booking him and answer your questions and joke and just be great. Getting away from the celebrity aspects, Mike Affleck was very nice. Mike is an Olympic runner, at least was an Olympic runner. I don't know if he—

*I didn't know that.*

Back before he came out here he tried for the Olympics. I think he's still back in New York, as far as I know. I haven't heard his name mentioned in years. But Terry Symens [Bucher] who was a Franciscan friar, married Anne Bucher, and they were out here, I don't know, a year, year and a half ago; good to see them both. Very friendly people, very nice people. It was kind of funny that, you know, here's Terry out here getting arrested. Anne was the daughter of a San Francisco DA and she's getting arrested, which didn't go good with the family. Once they got married, he got away from the Franciscan order. He becomes a prosecuting attorney in Family Court for San Francisco. So it's kind of a bizarre thing. And now they come back out, not so much getting

arrested but they come back out on occasion for support of whatever program is going on. Jessie Cox. I don't know if you've heard her name. Jessie was one of the big stars in APT, the American Peace Test. She was the starter and coordinator. [00:45:00] She's now—she's on the Internet, something—

*I'll have to look it up.*

Look up Jessie Cox, you'll see her. But I don't know, she a designated pooh-bah for, I don't know, something. I hear from her on occasion. So yeah, I think, for the most part, we all, Merlino especially, developed a great rapport with most of the folks.

*Yes. I know one person that's been out here that I've spoken with is Rosemary Lynch. Have you—?*

Oh, Sister Lynch? Very nice lady.

*So yeah, it's interesting. It definitely seems like that's a cool thing.*

Well, I think, to a point, there was a, well, I don't know, I guess kind of a guarded trust on both sides of this.

*That's a good way to put it.*

I try to be up front with them, within reason, when I deal with them, and I think they do the same for me. They're not going to give me any secrets like we're going to cut fifteen miles of fence. But they may say we've got a half-a-dozen who want to cross; I just can't tell you how they want to do it. Well then, I'll tell you, you have fifteen people who may get cited and released. There again, they may not, and whether I book them is up to me. So, I've been warned, they've been warned. Nobody's lied to each other, but nobody's really given up any information either.

*You took over when Merlino left?*

Yes, when Jimmy left. This is 2005. I believe it was about March of '94, if I remember right. February or March. And Jim had twenty years plus out here.

*You didn't always have the two pens that are out there, is that correct?*

Those were built, I believe, back in the REECo days. I remember them going up, and I'm just going to take a guess, probably ten to twelve years ago is when they were first erected. Maybe longer back than that because in the big—oh, God, maybe it is, quite a bit longer back than that. Because I think we, during the big 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 people, we had those things going. So that may be back in the mid-to-late-eighties. But no, you're right, they was not always there, at least not while I've been here. We may've had them close to twenty years now.

*And those were built for any specific reason, or you just needed better holding facilities?*

Well, yes, a containment facility. We had nothing up to that point to do any major holding, unless you want to put some bodies on a bus with a security guard or a cop or hold them in vans or whatever. And certainly when you can get some people at least penned and watched by a couple or three or four guards or law enforcement officers, it takes the brunt of it off the people who are out there trying to keep peace or make arrests or whatever.

*So where were people stored or kept before that, or what were your procedures, do you know?*

Well, like I said, basically you would hold them on a bus, hold them in a van, depending upon how many people you had, and then you'd start shuttling them off to jail as you could. Pack as many in a patrol car as you can and send them up the road.

*Right. Interesting. So what has it been like, working here and being a part of the Nevada Test Site and the test site culture? What has that experience been like for you?*

Oh, I don't know. I've been around here so long, it feels like I've been here forever. Like I said, new starting out, it was culture shock. These things actually take place and this is the city I work

in, all four square blocks of it. I don't know. I think—well, you said the test site family. I think that's just to a point what you become after you've been here a while. You get to know certainly a whole lot of people; not everybody out here, though I think at times everybody knows you. But pretty soon you're writing a ticket to your buddy, what do you do? Or your buddy's wife or your buddy's girlfriend or your girlfriend's ex-husband. What rolls around comes around. I don't know what to tell you, but it's been great. They've done well by me.

*Seems like a good group of people, lot of camaraderie?*

[00:50:00] Oh, yeah. Not only within my group here but obviously we work probably closer with WSI than anybody else. Of course after that comes the fire department, along with the paramedics and stuff. We all do good together. But I think everybody gets along, has developed friendships outside of law enforcement or the emergency service field. And you feel pretty comfortable walking into most any building. If I were to go in and visit you once we get to know each other, I would have no ill feelings walking in or you coming into my office to visit. The first couple of times might be, you know, can I see you? There's no trouble. Nobody's going to get arrested. And then after a while, you're just—

*People see the sheriff coming.*

Yes, and then after a while, you're just part of the furniture, they accept you as everybody else.

*Right, because you basically have access to go all over.*

For the most part.

*And I would imagine that you've met lots of different people that work in lots of different aspects here.*

Sure.

*What type of clearance do you need? I'm assuming you have a clearance.*

Yes, we all carry a Q-clearance out here. We're one of the few people on the test site, groups, whatever you want to call it, who are allowed to carry a gun, a camera, a tape recorder without having a clearance. We're allowed into specialized places without a clearance if the situation requires it, such as if they were doing a test. I do have one officer right now who's not cleared. If he was the officer that was on, taking an accident report or whatever and had a call there, if he needs to go in, he goes in. It may be under escort, but he goes in. So we all carry a Q-clearance, which is the same that WSI has, though I think they have some special background investigations depending upon what aspect of security they're working in. We don't deal with a whole lot of that. They just come along, check you for a Q. If you're good enough, they grant the clearance. There's no other SPIs on top of it.

*Right. So you've lived out here. You live on site.*

[I] live on site while I'm working. We all have a tour of duty right now which is four days on and three days off. And a lot of it's for convenience. Obviously we provide a twenty-four-hour presence on the test site. Not necessarily twenty-four hours of patrol, but we have a twenty-four-hour presence. So you maintain at least one officer who's taking calls. If you live in Pahrump or if you live in Amargosa or you live in Tonopah, like Jim does, it's kind of a pain in the butt to get off at four in the afternoon, go home and see Mom in Tonopah, and be back here at six in the morning. Now, if they want to do it, I don't care. If they're not the guy on call and we have coverage out here, go home. But you're on at six, I expect you to be here at six. Not 7:30 because you slept in. Most everybody understands that. And even Allen [sp] who probably lives the closest—he lives up at Amargosa, thirty minutes away—he elects more so than not to stay out here. It's just easier.

*Right. That makes sense. Now, were you or have you been married or anything like that throughout this? Because I'm just curious as to how that impacts.*

Yes, all of us have been at least once, with the exception of—well, not throughout this. Most all of us have been married at least once anyway, with the exception of Allen who still hasn't been caught yet. But yeah, I started out here in '80 and was married in '90 and divorced in '91 and I'm still here. I think Jim's on his second marriage. Sandy's had a couple. Tom's on his second. Bill's on his second. So most of them have been around the block once or twice. Law enforcement is tough on marriages anyway. I don't know that being out here becomes part of the problem. It's kind of a hard thing to answer. In my case, I'm sure it probably did add to it, but then on the other hand, if I would be home more often, one of us probably would've strangled the other. The other people I can't speak for, so I don't know.

*No, I was just curious because I know people would stay up here at the test site for days, weeks at a time, and particularly folks that were living in Las Vegas. A lot of them described that as being a little difficult.*

I would imagine it is, especially if you're a very family-oriented person. You know, you as a young lady, if you're married and have kids at home, it's almost impossible for you to stay out here for any length of time. You might be able to sneak out a night or two if you have a special project going, but after that your kids and your home are going to demand you have your butt here. Daddies might be a little bit different. But yeah, I'm sure it probably would try on a lot of marriages. Merlino lived in Tonopah—well, still lives in Tonopah—and though in the years that I've known Jim he's been single, he had been married before. Whether or not at that time—I [00:55:00] think back when Jim came on, I think they worked three-and-a-half days on, three-

and-a-half days off and it was a twenty-four-hour shift. When they considered you three-and-a-half days, you were on duty twenty-four hours.

*Twenty-four hours. Those three days. Wow.*

And then you would take your sheets off the bed and put a new one on and the next officer who took your place—you almost did a hot-bunk deal—would come on. Now, whether or not that was a part of Jim's divorce or had a bad thing on the social life, or any other officer's out here, I don't know. I can't help but think it probably would. I can't say it would be a good thing, to be gone away from home that much, but certainly it's a real bad thing if it had to do with the problems going on. But that's up to each individual, I suppose.

*Sure. I actually like to go back just a little bit because way back when we first started talking and you were talking about the time that you were in Arizona, in Prescott, you mentioned that you got into the fire safety, right?*

Yes.

*I'm just wondering what inspired you to do that. Is that something that you had always had an interest in?*

At the time, I was working retail grocery, and though the wage wasn't bad, the way you needed to make money in Prescott would be to go into the city or local government deal, and for the most part, probably made a better wage. City fire department did real good. Prescott city police did OK. I ended up associated with Central Yavapai Fire District, which wasn't a county fire department. We covered certain specific parcels of ground, if you want to call it that. Our station was located on Santa Fe Railroad land, so we covered Santa Fe Railroad trestles and stuff for X-amount of miles around. We covered certain little areas like Prescott Valley. I don't know if you know the Prescott Valley area.



*Not real well.*

Outside of Prescott, going towards Phoenix. Humboldt, Mayer. We had stations at Groom Creek. We just had certain little areas of the county which we would cover. That was on a paid volunteer basis, so I would get paid for the calls that I went out on, we'd get paid for drills and exercises. Other than that, if I wanted to go down and wax engines, I did it on my own time. Sheriff's office, I started out as a reserve with Yavapai County. And it was all great. A lot of times, I was doing all three of them plus going to school at the same time. I started in law enforcement and fire science. I just found that the fire department, as great of people as they are and as much as they do, spend too much time waxing engines, polishing floors, scrubbing windows. They don't do anything till a call comes along, and they have to keep busy. There's nothing like crawling through a burning building. I'm telling you, it is great. And I'm not talking about a controlled burn, I'm talking about going into a burning building looking for somebody who might be in there. Absolutely exhilarating. Maybe I should've been a pyromaniac, or maybe I was in another life. There's nothing like it. But I have found that I would much rather be able to jump in a car and take a drive around the block, or go to the other side of the test site, or go down to Tastee Freeze, and get an ice cream cone *versus* having to sit there and depend upon somebody else to bring me my lunch and my dinner, or wait till the alarm bell rings to go do something.

*Right. So you didn't stay in that very long.*

No. I was with Central for maybe a year and a half.

*And how old were you at that time?*

Well, you had to be twenty-one to be in the sheriff's office, to carry a gun, so I'm going to guess I started with—was I with Central first? I believe I was. So I'm going to guess twenty to twenty-two.

*Somewhere in that range.*

Through those years. I was twenty-three when I came up here. I had been out of both for a little while. No, actually I was still with the sheriff's office when I came up here, with Yavapai County. I resigned from working up here.

*You resigned from there because you came out here.*

Yes, I took a leave of absence from the grocery business and from the sheriff's office. I'd already resigned from the fire department and took a leave of absence from both to come up here and see what it was like, and that was the same thing I told you with the sheriff. I would spend this amount of time and if I can't make it, I'm going back. Well, after a month or so, yeah, this is great and I can do it, so everybody else got a letter of resignation from me.

*Nice. Get down into Vegas much?*

I'm there most of my days off.

*And now you've got family there.*

Yes, I've lived in Vegas. Let me rephrase that. I've had a residence of some type in Vegas.

[01:00:00] Living brings up legal questions, and I don't mean to cause anybody any heartache over that. I've had a place in Vegas almost continuously, one way or another, a place to stay, whether it be over at a friend's house or renting a room from somebody, or a hotel room, since about '82 or '83. So most of my time is—all my days off—

*You head down that way. And twenty years, you've probably seen a lot of changes go on.*

Oh, seen a lot of changes out here; seen a lot of changes in town and a lot of it having to do with out here. It's amazing. I was seeing a young lady in town many years ago who runs a dog-grooming business, and she said when the hotels go on strike, it doesn't bother her business at all, but let the test site go on strike and she will lose lots of money. Lots of money.

*Sure. Now, the test site—I mean certain groups have gone on strike.*

Oh, yeah.

*And you've been out here for those.*

We had one back, and I'm going to guess this would have to be the late eighties. It started off with LTR. LTR went on strike. That was an old bus service that was out here.

*LTR?*

Yes, Las Vegas-Tonopah-Reno Lines [bus]. They set up a picket out at the cattle guard and of course, since they were a union group, most of the union trades out here backed them up. So you went from one day of everything is normal to the next day where nobody's coming to work. And that kind of was sprung on us by surprise. We knew the bus drivers were going on strike, but we didn't know that the other trades from out here would go out; you'd call it a sympathy strike or whatever, support strike. And [they] did that for three or four days until REECo finally said the cooling-off period is over with; if you want to continue your job, you come back to work. And they did. And about that time, the protests hit, so we had strikers, we had pissed-off bus drivers, and we had protesters out there jumping around each other.

*What was that like?*

Oh, you know, it wasn't bad. It was just like every other protest we have out here, but now you just got them intermingling. Even though the folks on here are on strike, they get their money from the test site and they're not too fond of the protesters. And of course the protesters are

going to jab them a little bit. A few verbal insults went back and forth. There was never any fisticuffs, never any major problem, but there was a little bit of animosity. When the REECo people decided to go out on strike, for those who came in, they had a special sign or a special deal for those. Somebody rented a big rat suit, and so you've got a giant, not Mickey Mouse, this is a giant rat out wandering the highway, flipping people off, and of course going after the protesters. It was interesting. But nobody got hurt. Nobody got arrested because of anything. It was just different.

*Well, it sounds like it. So we've got just about another ten minutes or so left on this particular CD, and I'm just, I guess, first of all, wondering if in the ways of national, if you've ever had to deal with any kind of national issues that have come out to the test site, any kind of threats or security threats or anything like that.*

No security threats that I know of. Of course, when 9/11 happened, security at all levels geared up, and we had officers on days off, and then because of the towers in New York, DOE asked us to bring our officers back out, and we manned the cattle guard along with WSI. WSI brought out armored vehicles. And every vehicle that came through for at least a couple of days was pretty well scrutinized. They were stopped by Security, talked to by us, and approved to go on. A DOE representative was usually out there to help us with the decisions. But that's about the only major national thing that I can say that I personally have been involved in. When the Russian contingent was out here for the JVE [Joint Verification Experiment] deals back in the late eighties, I mean we'd all get to talking, share vodka stories at the cafeteria a little bit. If you want to call that international mingling, I guess you could, but I don't think anything that I had to say made a difference on them, and nothing that they had to say made a difference on me.

*And you got to meet those folks.*

You'd talk to them. You'd run into them. I mean you wouldn't sit down and invite them over to your room for a drink after dinner, but we all got a chance to see each other. One of the [01:05:00] things that DOE set up with the office and with WSI was we would—they opened Mercury up to these folks. They could go anywhere they wanted, other than secured buildings like the Blue Building. They weren't given any vehicles at night, but they could walk anywhere they wanted to go. If they wanted to go to the cafeteria, wanted to go to the movies, wanted to go to the bowling alley, put on your boots and head out. So we had people, Security had people staged at strategic locations in some of the dorms and the bowling alley, cafeteria, that would try and keep in contact with each other and say, The guy in the gray suit is heading your way. And they somebody else would say, Well, the guy in the gray suit turned left over here, so whoever's down on that side of road would try and catch up with him. And that got to be a big game. They knew that we were doing it, and certainly I don't think they were out trying to look for anything. But we tried to keep it as quiet as possible. They gave us these special little radios with little itty bitty ear pieces that stuck out about that far.

*So nobody would notice.*

So nobody would notice. But of course you had to wear a coat because your microphone was down inside your sleeve and—

*So you were talking into your cuff?*

Yes, the old Maxwell Smart or Dick Tracy thing.

*Right. Into the watch.*

And then every time the radio would go off, it would put off this big chirp. I think it was their digital encryptions as the system would gear up. And it would pound on this ear and your eardrum on the other ear would jump out about six inches. No matter how low you turned the

radio, when that thing beeped, everybody for six feet around knew it, mainly because you were jumping and secondly, they could probably hear it. The guy at the cafeteria is the only one sitting there with a two-hour-old chicken dinner. The guy at the bowling alley is only one down there drinking his fifteenth Pepsi. Everybody else is having a good time and mingling and drinking and you stick out like a sore thumb, but we were under cover.

But those are about the only international things that I can think of. The British have been out here and we met them. The Russians were transported everywhere. The British, when they came out, were allowed vehicles. And of course a few of those would have accidents, a few of them would speed, so it's citations and report time.

*And did you keep tighter, obviously—sounds like you kept tighter tabs on the Russians than the British.*

The Russians were escorted everywhere they went, and that included off the test site. They would go from here in Mercury up to their experiment or their area up in [Area] 19. Of course, they were bused up. They were, I don't want to say in a fenced-in compound; I don't mean like the protest compound you see out there. All the GZs [ground zeros], everything was covered with or surrounded with barbed wire. And that is just for everybody's safety, not for these folks. It's just when something was set up, it was surrounded with a wire fence. These folks were turned loose to do whatever, but they were watched as they went back and forth to their experiments. I don't think they had much of a chance to wander around too much up there, you know. Restroom, experiment, bus, and that's probably about it. Though we didn't have a whole lot to do with any of that. Security took care of them. It's once they got here in Mercury and got a chance to wander that we participated a little more.

*Right. Interesting. Were there any moments that maybe we didn't talk about that stand out in your head, or anything about the job or your experiences in dealing with protests?*

Oh, there's probably a thousand different things I could tell you. Nothing major comes to mind right now. As soon as you shut off and probably disappear, then I'm going to say, I should've told her about—you know, nothing really notable. Like I said, I've got a thousand stories about a thousand different things but no, is it worth repeating any of them? Who wants to hear about the accidents and the blood and guts?

*Well, that's all part of it. Absolutely.*

You know, there's things that come into your mind that have happened. The first fatal accident I worked out here—in fact, I had two in one day. One young lady—wasn't a young lady, an elderly lady died at the Army well. She was found down there flopping outside of her car. Another gentleman rolled his car out—I don't know if you know your way around the test site, there's no Mercury highway once you get maybe thirty miles north of Mercury. You can veer to the left and follow the road out to Gate 700. At that time, it was 700; now it's 700 Charlie. Or you could take the old Mercury highway. He rolled out there on the old Mercury highway, which is probably a ten-mile stretch of nothing. And this was my first dealings with dead bodies.

**[01:09:56]** End Track 2, Disc 1.

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

*So if you could just pick up where you left off with—*

Oh, God, I don't know where I was. I know we had a rollover out, I think it was old Area 7, if I remember, Area 7 or Area 10. I'm trying to get out to that and I remember that I had car trouble, so I'm doing about forty-five miles an hour with lights and siren going, trying to get to—which was going to be my first coroner case with this county. Never had any formal training on it

whatsoever. I'd been around a number of dead bodies, accidents, things that like, with the sheriff's office and the fire department in Arizona, but never had any formal training on how this county wanted it done. So I'm trying to work this gentleman who's now dead out north of here. We have a young lady—an elderly lady, I should say, who died—who was being brought in from the old Army well out on 95 to Mercury medical and then the medics pronounced her dead. So now I've got two of them and I have absolutely *no* idea how this is to be done. Well, you make phone calls, and obviously I worked through it. They didn't fire me, so I must've done a pretty good job. But, we worked through it. It was a learning experience because now you start learning on how to maybe back-trace somebody to find a next-of-kin. And the gentleman who died out here was easy; he was an employee, so you always have information on that. The lady who died out on the highway, all you had was scribbled crap in her wallet, and she's got her daughter or whatever it was placed at fifteen different things: Laura, Hilton in Reno; Laura, Las Vegas Convention Center; Laura—well, you've got to try fifteen different things, and of course when none of them turn up, where do you go from there? So that became pretty interesting. My first, I guess you want to call it, baptism into the coroner's deal. And soon after that, we had a triple fatality out on the highway, and it's the same thing. Nobody's there to help you, it's the first time I've done now a triple all in one instance, so how do I fill out the paperwork on that?

*Now, is it just you out there, or you and another patrol?*

Well, we work kind of a dual deal. Out here on the test site, like I said before, we cover all civilian law enforcement. So we take care of it, unless the FBI comes along and grabs it from us, or another government agency, we will take care of everything, the accident report, the coroner's report, all that. Out on the highway, now, you're working with Highway Patrol because it's their highway, so it's their accident. We can't do anything with those vehicles until they approve it.



They can't do anything with the bodies until we approve it, because we're the coroner for the county. So it's a great way to work together and it's an easy way to work together, but it's a pain in the butt because you can't move the body until they take the photographs of the vehicle, and they can't do some of this to the vehicle until you move the body. Sometimes it just gets to be a long, drawn-out process. And while you're trying to get—I'm trying to make Highway Patrol happy, they're trying to make me happy, here comes the mortuary that you called for, they want to take the bodies, you don't have the paperwork done, and you hear about it the next day when the coroner's office from Las Vegas who does most of our post-mortems calls and yells at you or calls your supervisor and yells at him, which is worse. If they yell at you, you can hide it from your supervisor. When he gets the phone call, there ain't much you can do about it.

*Right. You can't hide it.*

And you can continue on with obviously sad things like that to the helicopter crash out here that killed the security people and the EG&G [Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier] pilots. What a sad, sad thing. One of the pilots I knew fairly well; the other one I had met in passing. And a couple of the security guards I knew real well. One I don't think I did. But, what a horrible thing to have to go through and work the death of your co-workers. And granted, we don't work for WSI, they don't work for us, but for the most part, we work hand-in-hand in a number of different things. They're our back-up; we're their back-up. And God, to have to go out and clean up the bodies of the people that you had dinner with the night before. You know, horrible. Russ Weaver [sp], the first security guard that died out here from running, Russ was, how do I put this mildly, a reprobate. Russ walked by me in the cafeteria an hour-and-a-half before he died and made some nasty comment to me and went on his way. Of course we all laughed and an hour-and-a-half later I'm working a coroner's case on him. It gets to be a troubling thing, I guess, to a

point. But death doesn't bother me. We're all going to die. And I think, although death insults each of us, we all know sooner or later it's going to be there. But to have to do it to a friend or a family member is just—.

*And have you dealt with a lot of deaths out here?*

Oh, through the years, one way or another, I'm going to guess a couple of dozen, either directly [00:05:00] or indirectly. The helicopter deal I was involved in, probably one or two steps removed. Deputy Wagner [sp] and Deputy Martin [sp] did most of the work. Bill, Deputy Wagner, he escorted the bodies to Reno for their autopsies. Martin did most of the coroner's reports, and I was the paper shuffler and personnel shuffler who would bring the sheriff and the under-sheriff back and forth so they could see the scenes and things like that. I made a couple of trips to the mortuary with pieces, parts as they would scrape human remains out of what was left of the helicopter. Package it up, bring it down to the mortuary and let them dispose of it as they see fit. Yes, not a fun thing.

There've been a number of deaths out on the highway. There was a young man by the name of Tommy Gorman [sp] who was killed just the other side of the overpass one morning, coming back from Pahrump and Crystal. Tommy worked for Holmes and Narver, who was a contractor out here, just up here at the Materials Testing Lab and also doubled as a bartender, and he worked out at Cactus Springs, I believe, about three nights before. I was down there yapping with him, having a couple of drinks. Now here's the kid who's decapitated.

So yes, there are tough times in the job. I say how great the job is, and I do mean the job has been great, but there are some aspects which just aren't that much fun.

*I would imagine, as with any job.*

And not all of them had to do with the areas. There were those on the highway, which you're somewhat removed from because now you can depend upon another agency to do a lot of notifications and stuff for you.

*Still, that's got to be tough, particularly here when it's people that you know and socialize with.*

Oh, it's definitely tough. And there are those who died of natural causes that are out here. We had a gentleman, Pan Am—Pan Am[erican] Airways was a DoD [Department of Defense] contractor out here. They provided photographers. They had a photographer up in Area 12 one day said good night to his buddies, and was found the next day, still sitting in the van and deader than a mackerel. I didn't know the gentleman. The bad part about it is those who did were the ones who found him. He wasn't found by Security. Now you've got apparently the guy who died, the gentleman who passed away, was very well liked, and the friends who found him happened to be very emotional, so now you've got three grown men crawling on the floor crying while you're trying to take their dead buddy out. They want to fight you for him, you can't do that to my pal. Well, yeah, I can.

*You got to do something.*

Yes, we need to take him.

*And that happened on site here?*

That was up in Area 12. That's got to be back in, my guess would be probably '83 or '84. Pan Am I don't think was around much after that, though a lot of the workers went on to other things, working the same deal, just working for other contractors that came in.

*So these are some of the experiences that stand out?*

Oh, some of the bad experiences, you want to call them, and then there's been great times, too.

Inversely, as many bad times as I've had, there's probably been three times as many good times.

*Tell me about some of those experiences that stand out to you.*

Oh, God, it could be anything. Even the protests. And I think I said earlier in the deal that after the seven-dayers or the eight-dayers or the nine-dayers, you're no longer a happy person. You're mad at them, you're mad at your co-workers, you're mad at yourself, you don't get to eat good, sleep good, do anything good. But the initial aspects of those, when they start out, you get to see people you haven't seen for a while. Even though I may talk to one of the officers in Beatty once or twice a week over different things, I might not have seen him for six months. So it gives you a chance to see all those folks, and then camaraderie—have a good time and sit down afterwards and have a drink. You just generally lie to each other, do whatever, insult each other, and go on. So things like that come to mind.

Back years ago, WSI had a softball team. Softball hasn't been out here for quite a number of years. Just getting a chance to play with those guys and barbeques afterwards, and all jump in the pool. It's not a lot, but it's something. Just a couple hours of great time.

Been involved in a lot of things out here. I've had a chance to tour every tunnel out here that has been open, with the exception of Yucca Mountain. I haven't been in that one. Just getting a guided tour by big-shot DoD officials is something that probably, even though a thousand people may have worked it, is just not something that I can say I think a lot of people have had a chance to get; a guided tour by a GS-16 or whatever these guys are.

*Right. So you've been in the tunnels.*

**[00:10:00]** I've been in all the tunnels that were actively working at a particular time. Some of the tunnels have been opened since, and I haven't been in the [Area] 16 tunnels or G-Tunnel, things like that. I'm talking about ones they had a project going. Yucca Mountain I haven't been, nor have I been in the new one up at [Area] 12 and I don't even know what the designation of

that is, going towards G-Tunnel. They've got a new one which I think is DoD-specific and I haven't had a chance even to drive up there.

*So I'm just curious what that's like. What are the tunnels like?*

Big and dark. Ever been around any place where you drive through a tunnel in the car?

*Yes.*

Like some of the ones in Los Angeles. From what I remember of the tunnels in L.A., these are probably comparable. Maybe not quite as big because sometimes you have three and four lanes of traffic, five lanes of traffic, through the tunnels. These aren't quite that big, but they're impressive. You're probably looking at sixteen, eighteen, twenty-foot diameters.

*That's pretty amazing.*

And maybe that might be more of a radius because I'm talking about from the ground to the top, so that'd be more of a radius than a diameter. And the work that goes into it, it's amazing that they would come along and run big leg bolts into the deal, put chain-link fencing up inside and spray it with gunite to allow the water to run down the inside and keep the rock from falling on you. You know, who thinks of that?

*They do.*

And it's all done on a little train that you get to ride in and out of. There again, the bad thing about it, we've had people killed in the tunnels, so now you're in working with the bodies that we talked about before. Had a young man who was killed up in, I believe it was G-Tunnel years back. I think he was a laborer and one of the iron workers allowed him to do a job that he wasn't supposed to do, helping him do some cutting. When the pipe split, he was crushed between that and the wall, dead by the time we got up there. Didn't know the young man, but of course we're one of the ones who make the notification, so that was the sad thing about it. The funny part

about it was, I guess bringing a lighter side to it, is he was back towards the end of a line-of-sight pipe, and the pipe goes from big to smaller to smaller to smaller, and pretty soon you're down to almost crawling through. Well, you've got Security, sheriff's office, fire department, paramedics, supervisors, all in a chain trying to walk through this pipe that's going, and pretty soon you're from standing up to ducking down to ducking down, and pretty soon you're looking at your feet. And somebody in front stops, which the guy behind him runs into, then you got the third one. It looks like one of the old like Three Stooges acts. Pretty soon you've got five people, seven people all piling up into each other because you can't see where you're going. If somebody doesn't say I'm stopping, it's stop and boom, boom, boom.

*Right. So it's pretty dark down there.*

Well, it's not well lit. They do provide some lighting, but when you're walking in a pipe to where you have to stoop over and look down—

*And it gets smaller and smaller.*

It's hard to look up, so, there again, in a sad situation, you have a little bit of fun because now you're banging the person in front of you in the fanny with a big hard hat, and you're running him again into the person in front of him. There's silly things like that that come to mind. But we had good times and there's been good friends out here. And hopefully in my remaining few years, there still will be.

*You plan on retiring soon or—?*

Well, I've got twenty-five. I can walk anytime I want.

*Really.*

I would like to do another five. Well, now whether that would happen or not, I don't know. I'm drawn between a couple of different things. I need three more years under Social Security to get

anything out of Soc. But I would like to quit working at a young enough age to where if I want to do something, I can do something; if I don't, I don't. Had a couple of opportunities out here for jobs that I've passed up through the years, and probably a good thing I did because this has been a good move, like I said, with the sheriff's office. They've done well for me.

*What kind of jobs did you—?*

REECo recruited me for a REECo security position at TTR [Tonopah Test Range] back in probably mid-eighties at best, '83, '84, '85, and at that time they offered me substantially more than I was making. They made several job offers for that. If I haven't turned them down in three or four days, they're going to call me back and increase it by another few thousand. And it's nice to know that somebody out there trusts you and will—I don't have to look for the job; they've come to me. But finally I told them, I says, Your stuff's been real generous and I appreciate it, but don't offer any more because I'm going to stay where I'm at. [00:15:00]

About that time was during the—we had a Special Forces group out here who we knew they were here but we didn't know who they were. A couple of their boys went out and got a little inebriated one night and decided to come in and clean out the building across the street from us, which at that time was known as the old chapel. Actually, it was one guy; we thought there were two. How it happened is, one of the security guards on his check walked around the building and this bozo jumped off the top of the building and landed on him and bit him three or four times. Probably damn lucky he didn't get shot. The guy he landed on was a gentleman by the name of Bill Conker [sp] who was an ex-Metro[politan Police, Las Vegas] officer, ex-Metro commander. Well, Conker finally got things squared away and of course he went up there, he got this guy rounded up. Well, he gives us this big story about how people had infiltrated the

building and he and his buddy were doing room clearing. But they threw park benches—they had park benches outside—threw those through the window inside. Once inside, trashed just computer after computer after computer.

*Why? Just being—?*

Never could answer it, or never would answer it, I don't know. Once the guy sobered up, we got together with his master sergeant the next day. Of course, it was—the building, I think, was Los Alamos [National Laboratory] at the time, so we had a Los Alamos rep, we had a DOE security rep, we had his master sergeant, we had him. Who knows how many things he was told that he could or couldn't answer.

*Well, that's crazy.*

And you'd ask him a question and of course he'd look over at his master sergeant and go—? So never did get a whole lot of information other than he wasn't mad at the building, he just had too much to drink, and so that's all we got out of him.

*Right. So you've had job offers and you still decided to stay here.*

Well, while I was in the middle of investigating that, REECo came back to me and said, we're going to make you one more job offer. And I said—in fact, Lucy File [sp] was the young lady who walked up, and I had a handful of reports and papers, working on this deal across the street. I told her, I said, Lucy, this is what I want to do. This stuff. So, you know, your stuff's very generous. Thank you for the offer but, you know, don't bother again.

*So what made you forgo those offers? What made you want to stay here?*

Just enjoy doing what I do. It's been fun. Had a chance to go to the fire department years back over here as a fireman-EMT [emergency medical technician]. Had a chance to go to EG&G security, which is what took over up north back in the early eighties and had a damn good job



offer from them: the one as a crew chief for the fire department, and if I didn't like that, go with security. I believe the fire department not only got paid for being there, they got paid for going out on fires. So you'd get your X-amount of hundreds of dollars per week, and if you go to a fire, we'll give you an extra fifty. I'd be out there throwing matches all day. Turned that down and I don't feel bad about doing any of it. I've talked to C-TOS [sp] about the possibility of a position, but I really think this is going to be it until I want to retire.

*Well, it seems like it's been pretty good.*

Oh, yeah. Like I said, good times, good people. I have very few regrets. You can always think of something bad, but the good times *way* outweigh the bad.

*I think that's a great thing when you can say that about a job.*

Well, just like Merlino, and I love Jim Merlino, there are many times, and you can play this back for him, there's many times I wanted to strangle him.

*Yes? Over what?*

But, you know, it all goes away. You get tired of being mad and you think about well, maybe he did have a good point *but* if he ever does that again—.

*Did you have work disagreements?*

Oh, yeah, that's what it always had to do with. Jim was the boss and I would do something that he didn't like and you'd hear about it. And there's many times—I'm surprised I didn't have footprints painted in front of his desk. Now you stand there. And there were many times I was called into his office for things that I did, and of course like everybody sooner or later somebody makes a mistake and I've been yelled at for things that I didn't do or didn't have a part of and he's mad. Somebody has given him the information, which he believes, and he's not going to

listen to me, so of course if I didn't do it I'm getting that much madder, and he becomes an SOB. And then later on you can talk it out and you go away laughing and that's what it's all over.

I know back over at the old office that we had in Building 100, I had a gentleman out here by the name of Wes Fleetwood [sp] who had been my sergeant when we first started out, and then he went off to other jobs, and finally hired back as a deputy, and I was his sergeant. Wes and I were getting a mutual bawling-out by Merlino for I don't remember what it was, but we were both in the office. In fact, he sent the dispatcher home early because he wanted to chew on us. So as soon as she went out the door, he locked it and started screaming. [00:20:00] I didn't agree with everything that he said or—.

*Well, what did you guys do?*

If I remember right, we had new radios put in the car, and the radios were a multi-frequency radio which most of ours have been except the new radios—you could talk on this channel but still hear this channel or these five channels or whatever if you scanned everything. If I remember right, and I could be wrong, Jim didn't understand the idea of scan. If he heard you, that's what you were talking on. So Wes and I, I think, were over on what we call channel 3, which is a county mutual aid, a private car-to-car channel, carrying on some conversation which I'm sure we probably had no business carrying on. Jim heard it, thought it was on the primary channel, and did not like that the conversation was over clearance. So if I remember, that's what it was over. I'm trying to explain to Jim about scanning and Jim has no idea what I'm talking about and he's not going to believe me, does not understand. And I've got Wes standing on one corner by the front door and I'm standing in front of Jim who's standing at the water cooler about four foot in front of me. He's mad and I'm getting mad, and he's probably getting madder, which is making me madder, and now the yelling has gone from Wes to me. Jim took, for

whatever reason, a step towards me and I figured, here it comes. I may get my butt whipped, but I'm going to knock this old man out the first time around. It never did come down to that. He never made an aggressive move. It was just, I guess, probably trying to make a point, like I would lean forward to you, took a step, and I figured, here comes the fist fight. But it never, ever got to that.

*Never got to that point.*

No. And in all the yelling matches we had, it never got to that.

*That's a good thing.*

Oh, yeah, very good thing, very good thing, because everybody would've lost.

*Would've needed Security for you guys.*

You know, there would've been no winners that away around Jim. Jim as a boss probably would've lost his credibility because he had pushed to that point, and I certainly wouldn't have continued employment for—whether I won or lost the fight—for beating on my boss. And probably charges. So no, I'm certainly glad it didn't come down to that. But now you think about it and say boy, I could've just *ooooh!* And now it's something that we laugh about it. In fact, I talked to Jim a couple of weeks ago about Tom, who's retiring, and there's a party coming up. We talked about the old times, and I asked him, I said, *How did you maintain control during my reign of terror out here and the times you wanted to strangle me?* He just laughed and said, *Hey, you know, we do what we need to do and go on. And that's where it is.*

*Right. Seems like you had a pretty good working relationship overall.*

Oh, yeah, you get mad but there's only five of us out here, so there's no reason to carry a grudge. If you do, it's just going to eat you up. You can't do it. And we all get under each other's nerves sooner or later. Everybody does something that makes the other one mad. But you got to get past

it. I don't think anybody out here tries to insult you. I'm talking about my group now, the guys. Certainly there's nothing sacred. If they find out something that'll bug you, they're going to needle you, but it's not done with malice. The first time somebody's feelings get hurt, the best thing to do is step up and say, I'm sorry I brought that topic up or I'm sorry I did that. Please do me a favor and don't give me the silent treatment for two days like you have been. Let me know. *And you guys are a fairly tight group right now.*

Oh, yeah, especially while we're working. Everybody goes their own way on their days off and has their own lives, but while we're working together, we're usually—somebody's barbequing something, we're eating over at somebody else's room. It has been a good crew in the years that I've been here and I've got a good crew now.

*That's great. Any other standout moments—?*

Oh, God, like I said, there's probably a million of them. If you pick my brain, I'll come up with all kinds of silly stuff, but no, not really. There's a thousand different stories I can tell you, but you'll almost have to hit on a topic: say have you ever had this happen and I'll say, oh, yeah. But no, there's something a little different—offhand, no. It's just a lot of good memories.

*That's good. I guess a lot of my curiosity surrounds the whole decade of protesting and how you guys handled that and what that was like out here.*

Well, you can go back to, like I say, I think for the most part, the stage was set by the request or the insistence of DOE to treat them well. I think they still get treated better by—and I don't mean to put anything against anybody else, but I think they get treated nicer by our crew than they do by anybody else. Good or bad, I don't know. But, that's the way [00:25:00] the cookie crumbled twenty years ago, and so it's pretty much the way it's done now, with a few exceptions. Now, we don't put up with as much and we don't take as much guff. We don't try to please them near as

much as was done. Hell, they were giving them doughnuts years back. Well, the doughnuts they get are the doughnuts they bring now; that doesn't mean that if somebody doesn't need a glass of water or something like that, it's given to them. We certainly don't feed them lunch and things along those lines. If they're arrested, they have water. They have toilet facilities. And that's about the only comfort they get from us.

*Right. So it's changed a little bit.*

Oh, yeah. Which I think is to everybody's benefit. They understand that they're not anything special and certainly it's less cost on everybody with the doughnut idea. But, that's something that's just not done. When you hook them, when you incarcerate, then you feed. You don't just walk up and say here's everything that Krispy Kreme has; order what you want and send us the bill. So while they're in our custody, we'll take care of them, but the rest of the time, they're on their own.

*Right. Makes sense. You're doing your job. They're doing theirs.*

That's it. Hell, we may not all agree, but hopefully everybody will at least agree to disagree and let it go at that.

*Right. Makes it go a lot smoother, it seems like. Well, I certainly appreciate you taking the time, and if you've got any stuff you want to—*

Oh, glad to do it. I hope it wasn't too awful for you.

*No, it was great! Not boring at all.*

Well, call and pick my brain, what's left of it, anytime.

*OK, I will.*

Now, you do the oral—you have nothing to do with the receiving of property, things like that, for the [Atomic Testing] museum?

*Not too much with the museum, though people do give us things. We've got pictures, documents. We're not affiliated with the museum, but for the project ourselves, we do receive things, documents, photos, papers, old badges. We've got all sorts of visual things for the project, as well. Are there things that you have that you're interested in—*

Well, no, it was just we had a couple of young ladies out here several months ago looking for artifacts that we may have. In my personal life, I'm a pack rat, I carry everything that I got from kindergarten on up. But, around here, we try and keep it at least halfway livable and throw stuff out as we don't need it. They were given an old brain bucket.

*[An] old hat?*

Yes, a riot shield and a riot hat. Then a few odds and ends. While I was cleaning out some stuff at the house the other day, I ran across, I don't know, about a half-a-dozen, eight citation books which were current back in about the mid-eighties. They're the NTS [Nevada Test Site] books. They're not county; they're specifically for out here. And the forms had changed through the years, and of course they were no longer in use, so that's why I had them.

*I would actually be interested for my stuff—.*

Let me know where to send one and I'll bring you one in next week. I did bring one in and I got a hold of Bob Friedrichs, because I know the girls had asked about stuff like that, and Sandy shipped one to him.

*I'll leave you my address and I would love that. That would be fantastic.*

Oh, please do. Like I say, I think it has 1985 printing on it, but they were good through the late seventies and into that part of the eighties.

*That's great!*

A lot of other stuff I don't have. We've been through a dozen different patches over the years I've been here. Most of that stuff I don't have anymore. We've given them away or swapped them off for something else.

*I mean photos, normally I like to get a photo of the people I talk to also, but I cannot bring a camera out.*

Go down to WSI, tell them you want to—

*I want one of those?*

They may not give it to you. I don't know.

**[00:29:09]** End Track 2, Disc 2.

[End of interview]