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

Interview with John S. Coogan

May 1, 2008
Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Leisl Childers

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John Coogan: I didn't monitor in Russia, but they had a similar program there that we had for the Eskimos, in the Arctic, and one of the fellows that worked with us, one of the main investigators, went over to Russia and actually conversed with them and his name is Joe Eckert. And he lives in Brookings, Oregon right now. He and I were the ones that originally started the program up in Alaska for monitoring for the Eskimos.

Leisl Childers: *And if I remember you had said previously that this is to monitor the levels of radiation that they were exposed to, the Eskimos?*

Yes. Yes, that is true. And, by today's standard it would be fairly crude because we used a four-inch sodium iodide crystal, and had these people bent over in this fetal position, and with a 250-channel analyzer, saw what we could in the level of isotopes in the people.

So the sodium crystal, it was a—

Sodium iodine crystal, and it was about this big [indicating size] and about that long [indicating length].

A foot square?

And had these people sit in this position [demonstrating position] and do this.

Did it have to touch their skin or could it just touch their clothes or—? They'd just hold it?

No, it just touched their clothes, just touched their clothes. In some cases we did have them touch their skin because their clothes was contaminated with things. We also used that throughout Nevada and Utah here, when we were doing—after we'd have a vent from the Nevada Test Site and we'd go out and monitor people.

And this crystal was connected to what?

Yeah, well, what it is, it's a flat crystal like this and it's about that thick [demonstrating shape and thickness], and it's mounted—in the back end of it is a photomultiplier, which actually multiplies the signal.

OK. Who developed that technique?

I don't really know, right off-hand, but it was probably somewhere back in—I'm sure that most of these come out of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, but probably somewhere there. I have no idea.

OK. And you would measure the levels of radiation they were exposed to and take readings over what kind of a period of time?

Oh, we—actually the program took these, probably took, per individual about twenty minutes, and we'd do this for however many individuals we had. And in those days it wasn't an eight-hour day, it was probably however long we had to do it. And we looked for several things; one of them we looked for was, of course, iodine-131. We also looked for cesium-137. And those are the two main contributors. Every once in a while we could see something different like a zinc-65, especially where there'd been a lot of fish eaten, we could see that every once in a while. But that was the main purpose. And the main purpose was to see—exactly go through the lichen-caribou-Eskimo chain, and the lichen being that it's a plant that absorbs its nutrition from the air, and then of course the caribou eat it, and then the Eskimo eats the caribou. Very simple, right? It was an interesting project and interesting working with the Eskimos, a very kind and gentle people.

How long were you there for?

Well, we did this over a period of several years and we used to do it after freeze-up in the fall, and before breakup in the spring because, traveling in the Arctic in the summertime is not something you want to do, because of —number one, because of the mosquitoes and the no-see-‘ems and the other bugs that you run across, and the other thing is that it becomes very difficult to travel. It’s easier to travel when everything is frozen, and we could travel with—well of course we used mainly we used planes to **[00:05:00]** get by with, you know, the so-called bush pilots, and when we didn’t do that we had—we used to travel some by—at first by dogsled and then by the end of the program we were using snowmobiles [photographs 1-3]. And we did this for a period of probably ten to twelve years, somewhere in that range.

Beginning what year?

Oh, we began in—I don’t really know, except I can tell you this: The first time we went up there, Alaska was a territory, and we had to meet with the territorial government before he’d allow us to go up and do this. The next year it became a territory [state]. Now that’s—somebody can look that up and find out when it was but I disremember right now in my aged memory. [Alaska achieved statehood in 1958.]

What an interesting time, to be in a state that we think of as just part of the fifty states.

Oh yes, it was and it was interesting being in Alaska and watching the people. We didn’t spend much time in some of the cities, but we did have discourse with the [United States] Public Health Service [USPHS] in the State of Alaska. But, no, it was an interesting time and it was an interesting project.

Somewhere along that line—and I think it was later on—they had what was called a Project Chariot, which was to be a Plowshare peaceful use of nuclear energy to build a harbor.

And I think, I'm not sure when that was, but it was somewhere in that period. I could look that up if you want.

OK. We'll do that in a minute. I think it was in the sixties sometime. You were saying before, just something about the Eskimo peoples?

Yes.

Did they live in villages at this time?

Yes, they lived in villages and primarily it was changing somewhat because—oh, what they were doing was they lived in—lots of them had houses that were half-underground down to the—they'd go down to the permafrost and they'd have an underground and the rest of it would be built on top. And then they gradually went to all to being on top, mostly [photographs 5-6]. Probably the two things I would say about there that, if I might make a side issue—

Absolutely.

The schoolteachers up there, were of two types, I thought, in the village. There'd usually be a husband-and-wife team that were teaching, and they were teaching primarily first through the eighth grade or something, seventh grade, somewhere in that range. They were of two types. They were either extremely dedicated. Or, I thought they were the worst of the worst, you know. But it was difficult.

The other thing then I thought, in all our wisdom, that we sent the children from villages in the Arctic, down here to Arizona to go to high school.

We did?

We did. And of course, not many of them graduated because they didn't like the climate, which was extremely hot versus their climate. And they also, you know, missed being away from home. And, again, you know, traditional foods and everything else that we do, we just—and I thought,

in all our wisdom, that the Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA] did a very poor job in that respect. I understand that subsequently now that has been changed, that all the Eskimo children stay in Alaska to go to high school. But at the time we were up there this was the norm. And I didn't think that was very fair.

Sure.

Other than that, the people you know lived at that time, the time we were up there, is—the men usually would work outside of the village somewhere, in either Anchorage or somewhere else, for the summer, and come back in the wintertime. When we first went up there, the women **[00:10:00]** would not have social security numbers. It wasn't until subsequent years that we saw that. They—there was never an orphan in an Eskimo village because they were taken in by other people. We, also, in our wisdom, brought in child welfare. We brought in houses that set up on blocks, which allowed the wind to come under them which caused a great heating problem. I guess right now I'm kind of concerned about some of the villages that we had up there like one was Shishmaref and the other one was Kivalina right now that are being—that have to be moved because of the global warming. But that was what I thought was interesting about the working with the Eskimos. Outside of the fact that, right now of course it's a changing economy. We have the Eskimo Land Act and, you know, the Native Land Act [Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act] and a number of people and, where they give them forty acres I believe, of land—

I'm not familiar with that act.

Yeah, well, it's an act up there. And of course in Alaska, all the people enjoy working on the proceeds from oil on the pipeline. In fact a number of the Eskimos worked on the pipeline.

The land act would give forty acres to Native peoples, indigenous—?

Well, they're giving them forty acres, and frankly I don't know too much about it except I do know they were each getting forty acres. Interesting people.

That's great. Yeah. Are there individuals that you worked with consistently over time or was it different every time?

Oh, you mean as far as I was concerned, with me or with the Eskimos?

With you, working with individual Eskimos.

Oh. Well, I used to have several partners that used to go up with me. Well, one is Joe Eckert as I mentioned. He was the one that was probably the senior investigator. Then there were several people that—different people that worked on the [unclear]. One was Roy Evans. The other one was Dick Jaquish. And the third one would be Pong Lem. And they all worked with me at different times up there. And there's probably a couple of others I can think of. But this wasn't exactly a pleasure trip up there. I mean that was—

I understand, yeah.

It was pretty rough. We did do several things on that. For example we would always take up vegetables with us and we'd wrap them in our sleeping bags or in our heavy clothing, so they wouldn't freeze, and give them to the schoolteachers in the first village we came to because they had very seldom seen, you know, fresh vegetables, like lettuce and celery and things like that. Other than that, you know, I think that it was a great time but—interesting.

That's great. How did you get to Alaska, from—?

Well we went commercial airline from here to Seattle, and Seattle to Anchorage usually. And then, usually, from Anchorage to Fairbanks with a commercial airline. In fact we could go into, I guess Kotzebue. Sometimes we went into Kotzebue, Alaska, on a commercial, and then we'd pick up a bush pilot, and go from there. Interesting way to live.

Very. And it was—because it was winter it was incredibly cold, and it was dark.

Well, in the spring and in the fall it wasn't that bad. And there was times it wasn't like it is here but there was probably eight hours of clear light. And most of the time, most of our work, we'd set up in a school. And when we were inside we didn't see much of what went on. We did have some fun with the Eskimos and we had some different things we could do but, other than that, **[00:15:00]** we had a great time with them.

That's great. And did you see the same people in the village, every year?

We tried to, yes, yes, we tried to have a cadre of people that we saw. And we did—one of the other fellows that went up with me was Don Wruble, and we did teach over at the University of Alaska, one summer we went over and taught—mainly to meet all the Native aides, from the village, which were mainly women, and so we got to know them all, and we did that fairly early on. So we would call by radio and tell the Natives that we were coming in, because we could contact the Native nurses over the medical alert which they had—every afternoon about four o'clock the doctors would get on, and talk to all the medical nurses in the different villages, and they would relate what symptoms their patients had and what they thought, they had to do to replace that. This is a similar system we used to use in Wyoming here.

Did it? I've never heard of this. And the distance between these villages, you have a doctor in a single location talking to stations, spread out?

Right—yeah, he'd be talking probably in a radius—he'd be at one point and he'd probably have a radius of five hundred miles and he'd be talking to these people in.

And this was similar to what they did in Wyoming.

Yeah, they used to have one of those in Wyoming, yeah.

And this is a rural medical station-type operation?

Right.

Is there any other place that you saw this, or heard of this?

No, that's it—in my limited knowledge that's all.

Wow! That's really interesting.

These people are—it was a well-run system, yeah. And, you know, it really served its purpose because the nurses could then relate to the doctor what the symptoms were and the doctor could decide whether he needed to see the patient in the hospital, or something she could treat, at the time. And if the patient had to be transported then they would get a bush pilot to go in and get them, and bring them to the hospital. Interesting, yeah.

Very interesting. Much more efficient I think than I would've imagined.

Well, the Public Health Service which was the main server of medicine up there also sent a dentist into the villages. Unfortunately they only treated the children; they should've treated the adults but we only treated the children. And they'd come in at least once a year to all the villages.

And your employer at this time was whom?

My employer? Was the U.S. Public Health Service.

OK. Before I ask another question, you know who that is, I think.

Yeah. Oh, OK, you got these from Don James.

I did. I did.

That's Don James, yeah [photograph 7].

And I think I have a couple of you in there, too.

Yeah, that's me [photograph 8]. Well, as you can see, the rest of these people bundled up and I didn't bundle up that much because I'd been up there.

For years already.

OK. Let's start with this one [photograph 9]. I can probably identify a couple of them. This is Don James. That's Del [Delbert] Barth—he's a retired rear admiral.

Did he work for the Public Health Service as well?

Yes, he did. Yeah. Interesting—he graduated from, oh, the Army, back in New York.

West Point?

West Point. He graduated from West Point. He was a West Point graduate. He lives in town here now. And he was with us.

This fellow is a guy named George Niles. And this one is Davy Duncan.

Davy Duncan. He looks very young.

[00:20:00] His mother and father are both doctors in Alaska.

OK. Do you know where this is at?

I would think we're at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage.

This is James. See that pickup truck [photograph 10]? That's probably, I don't know what year it is, but I guess I was going to say it's somewhere in the sixties but I'm not sure. I think this is when we were going out to the Aleutians. I'm not sure. I think we're getting ready to go out to the Aleutians. I'm sure because these are fishing boats.

OK. And what would you have been doing out in the Aleutians?

Oh, well, we had an atomic test out in the Aleutians. What was it called? Amchitka. And what they had us do, they had us all stationed on islands out there, different islands. There was—Atka was one island. That's where the Japanese—well, the Aleutians people that were—the Aleuts that were imprisoned in World War II, were taken to Japan, and this is the island they came back

to. And that's where this population was. And I went there because I wanted to do some more kinda with the [unclear] to look at them to see if I could see any problems with them.

With the native population?

Right, with the natives that were there, yeah. Because all of them there were—let's see, there was two—there was a man-and-woman team of schoolteachers there, and there was one white girl. And that's all—the rest of them were Natives. And it was a very small village. In fact, to get there I had to go by Navy tug, by seagoing tug over there.

Did you go by yourself?

Oh yeah, sure.

So, the Public Health Service would send you up on a regular basis to monitor these Eskimos.

Yes. Yes.

Where would you take your data?

Where would I take my data?

And then how would the reports get compiled?

Well, the data come up on a—we had a printer, with a punch tape, much like the old calculators that used to have tape in them, and the data would be bumped out on that, and of course we'd have a written form, of who we talked to and their, you know. And after we got social security numbers with the women then it made it a lot easier because everything was recorded by social security number. Before that we had to number the women. But, we did that—we took that sheet and the paper tape and we took them back to here, brought them back down, and used the computer we had at our complex there at the university, and then prepared the data. And most of that should be somewhere in that data. You know—Martha DeMarre is her name, and she might have some of it. She would probably have those reports if anybody does.

OK. Would they say "Public Health Service Reports" or were they published by another—?

No, they'd be published under the Public Health Service. And, yeah, she would be the one to have all that data. And of course at the university there we had a whole-body counter in the basement of one of those buildings. And we of course, did a number of studies on people in surrounding areas, around the test site, we'd bring them in and do a whole-body scan on them. That was later, you know, that was our better invention than we had with the four-inch crystal but—yeah, we did that and there should be some data on that.

How was that scan done versus the crystal?

[00:25:00] Well, that scan was, you laid on a, much like an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging]. Have you ever had an MRI?

I've seen it on TV but I've never had one.

OK. OK. Well, what you did you laid the person on a table and then you scanned them with a crystal, and a crystal this size [indicating size] I'm guessing would probably be a twelve-to-a-fourteen-inch crystal.

OK. As opposed to the much smaller—

As opposed to a four-inch. And it scanned the whole body. And, of course, what we were looking for was deposition, we were looking for internal deposition and of course the stomach and this area would be the likeliest place to see it. But, with a whole-body scan you can look at things like—somebody has, you know, oh, a deposition in their hair, or something like that from fallout or they would have something that they'd been exposed to. Much more efficient machine.

What would they do for the communities offsite, before that? Same thing, the crystal with the—?

We did use the crystal on some of the releases of radioactivity from the test site. But the first whole-body counter we had was on a railroad car. It was mounted on a railroad car and we had it

at a siting. And I forget where we got that from but we had that. Then we had the one installed, at the university. And just a series of progressions where we got better and better material—to work with. I think as I explained earlier that, you know, one of the greatest things we had is when you went from vacuum tubes to transistors. That was probably the greatest development as far as instrumentation is concerned, because number one it lessened your weight; number two, it was more reliable; and number three, it gave you a greater range of isotopes to look for.

And when was that switch made?

That was probably, I'm going to say in 1959 was about the first time I saw any of that. And of course we've just progressed up, you know, many, many times, since then. But, that really was the breakthrough—for many things, you know, I mean you look at, that was the first time that you could buy little, cheap radios, was when you had a transistor in it; before you had great big thing and it had tubes in it. In the other room in there I have my wife's radio from when she was growing up as a girl, with vacuum tubes in it.

Does it still work?

Yes, I got it working.

Fantastic.

Well, you know, interesting thing.

You know, you were talking about eating with the Eskimos. I used to eat with them. Some of my partners didn't last very long, as you probably imagine. It was a pretty rough life, but I enjoyed it.

And they ate caribou and fish?

Well, we ate caribou and fish mostly. In fact, we were in the village of Noatak and Joe Eckert and I were down fishing for our supper and we went down the river to fish, and there was an

Eskimo gal down there fishing too [photograph 11]. And, it was in the spring. And we all came up out of there, and this gal spotted a mastodon tusk in the side of the wall, and brought this whole mastodon tusk—

How big is a mastodon tusk?

It's probably in the curve radius it would probably be at least five feet.

Oh my gosh! It was as big as she was.

Oh yeah! Yeah. And we tried our darndest to buy it from her but she wouldn't sell it to us. [Laughing] But, no, interesting they find quite a few mastodon up in that area.

And then they use the tusks to make the scrimshaw jewelry that—

Well, no, they use walrus tusk. Walrus tusk is most of the ivory. I have a tusk in there I'll show **[00:30:00]** you. Yeah, most of it's tusk that's all that ivory. The mastodon ivory that they get is usually discolored, and they'll use that with the dark pieces of bracelets. That's usually mastodon tusk.

What else do they use it for? That's an awfully big tusk.

Oh, they just, you know, to them it's of no value really, so they just use it. Now you have up there I think that you have—see, we used to be able to buy raw ivory like a tusk or something like that. But I understand now that you have to have—it has to be signed by the person that found it and/or is selling it, and you have to have a permit from the state to take them out.

Very strict.

Yeah, well, you know, it's like everything else. It changes. But, no, it's interesting.

When you were home, you would work at the lab at the university?

Yes.

And when you're in the field, you collect data, you see people. What was it like in the lab?

Oh, in the lab. Well, we were always busy. We had, you know, of course the offsite area from Nevada Test Site. We looked at a lot of cases where people, like they had radiation damage. And lots of times I would go out with a medical doctor and look at these cases and he did the medical side and I did the physical investigation.

Who was the medical doctor that went with you?

Well, there was a series of Public Health Service doctors. One that I think I mentioned to you is Paul Bandt, who's down here at the hospital there on Desert Inn. He's the chief surgeon down there. And he was doing his military time with that.

They could do their military service in the Public Health Service?

Yes.

Oh, that I didn't know.

That's where most of these people came from. We had them for two years for —they were doing their military service.

Why this instead of, say, the Army or the Navy? They just preferred to—?

Well, of course most of them it was in the field that they were interested in, number one; number two, it was a lot easier than being in the military and having somebody shoot at you. We very seldom got shot at.

Is this during the Vietnam War era? Was there a draft on? Is that—?

Well, there was a draft on, see, from the Korean War through the Vietnam War there was a draft on.

When did that stop? When did you stop seeing people come in and do their military service with the Public Health Service instead of—?

Well, I don't know as it really ever stopped. We still had them coming in. It certainly lessened. We had a sort of a different focus too but—actually working with young Public Health Service officers, they were all university-educated and most of them had—some of them had a master's degree. I mean you know—

Really. I didn't realize that.

Oh yeah. We had one of the fellows I mentioned there, Pong Lem that worked with me, Pong Lem had a PhD in electrical engineering.

So you wouldn't have to train them—you'd still have to train them.

We had to train them but they were very adaptable. And they were very—what's the word—very eager. And a lot of them stayed like—say, Pong Lem came in at that period and he stayed with us until he retired. He put in, probably twenty-five years. He lives in Texas right now. He's one of thirteen children. His family run a Chinese restaurant in New York City.

One of thirteen. That's impressive. That's a lot of competition.

Well, it is, you know, and you look at that as a success story, and you look at yourself and you see how much further you've got to go. You know, that's the thing that people I think today—I **[00:35:00]** preach, but, you know, people have the opportunity to go as far as they want to go, and they should take advantage.

And the Public Health Service helped?

Well, the Public Health Service and anything you want to do in life. You can do whatever you want to do.

I like to think so.

No, I mean, you know, you've got constraints that, you think about, just think for a moment, about your constraints that you have, in front of you. The main constraint you have is to make a

living, and money seems to be, when you're going to school and everything money is very tight and it's one of the considerations you have to have. But then after you get out and you have sufficient funds to do, to provide the basic necessities—if you don't go overboard and have all kinds of luxuries—but if you want the basic necessities for a car and a home and so forth, then you can do whatever you want to do. And you should.

I'm trying. I'm certainly trying.

Oh, you know. It's a …

Do you remember specifically any young people, speaking of young people and doing their best, who really impressed you, on the job, who you truly enjoyed working with?

Oh yes. Pong Lem impressed me. Dick Jaquish Chuck [Charles] Costa, which you can see him down at the museum—he's one of those people. He just retired as the test director for Los Alamos, and he cannot go to work for a year or so. He's spending his time being a tour guide down at the [museum]. He was a person that I thought did a great job in the offsite area for me, here in Las Vegas. His area was primarily Ely—area up in that area, part of the country. And he did an outstanding job. And of course he's very successful—obviously, to be a test director for Los Alamos he has to be very successful.

From a field guy to a test director.

Yeah, and see, he came to work for me—and I think I was his first boss out here in about '61. Yeah, sure, there were some young people. Dennis Farmer works for UNLV. He's starting up a RADCHEM lab for you right now. He just finished up twenty-eight years with the Environmental Protection Agency. Dennis does a nice job. I hired Dennis back twenty-seven, twenty-eight years ago. He does a nice job. Sure, there's lots of people.

Well, what do you think made Charles Costa so successful in the field?

Well, I don't really know. I think, one is that he was one of the ones that left here and went back to get his master's degree, and then came back. And I think that he came back in with the idea of making it his career and making it a success. And he did. I don't think you can point to people and say, you know, here he is and there is a, a success. There's—oh, there's a fellow I had, retired out of the Air Force base. When he first came to work for us he was just more or less going around for me, checking for radiation contamination in the laboratories, you know, taking swipes and making sure the surface is clean and everything.

Inside the lab itself.

Yeah. His name is Wayne Crane. Forrest is his given name but Wayne is the one he goes by. And you know he came out of the—he went on to become a safety officer and then he became, he worked for the—Atomic Energy Commission, AEC, or DOE [Department of Energy], whatever it's called, DOE it's called now. He worked for DOE and then he retired and he's got his consulting business now. Sure, he's successful. Roy Evans is probably successful in another way. He sailed across the ocean.

Did he! Which one?

[00:40:00] The Atlantic Ocean.

Solo, by himself?

No, he had a gal.

And these were people that worked at the lab and in offsite communities. Did any of them establish relationships with local people around here or—?

Oh yeah, sure.

Like in Ely, with ranchers or—

Don James is one that still goes up, to Ely. He had a fellow named Ken Giles, works for DRI [Desert Research Institute] right now. They have a great relationship with people out in that area, and probably from Tonopah all the way to Ely. Chuck Costa. When you work with people like in the Public Health Service, you appreciate them, because they're easy to work with and they're easy to train. When I worked at Reynolds [Electrical and Engineering Company, REECO] of course it was an entirely different situation. They were mainly construction types and people that you worked with were—the people you got to work in the Radiation Safety were of a different caliber, let me put it that way.

I see. I see. When did you make the switch?

In 1961.

OK. So the onsite radiation safety, that was the RADSAFE group, and that was run by REECO?

Yes. And I'm the only surviving member of the original Radiation Safety group around town here, which we started in 1956. But, that's no great honor but I mean you know.

Congratulations anyway.

Well, you know, I enjoyed working for Reynolds and I thought that Reynolds did a number of good things. The main thing that we did of course was, as you pointed out here, you know—we did a lot of work, starting early on, to, made the test site permanent, you know. And of course it's still going out there, I guess. I haven't been out there in a long time.

There's something going on out there, that's for sure. Why did you switch over?

Well, I switched over because in 1958 you had a moratorium on testing, and two people, a fellow named Oliver Placak who was head of the Public Health Service here, and who had helped me very greatly in 1956 when we started REECO, and another one, Mel Carter, who just recently died here, but, and they kept after me to come down, so I did. And I was, you know, at the time I

mean it'd been fine if they'd been doing testing all the time at the test site. We were doing these, what I call "what if" exercises and I decided I didn't enjoy that. So I came down, I went with—and at that time the Public Health Service was poised to build a group, and that's when we started building a number of people in there. It's when they got the university buildings going again and I think the university buildings got going in—'64 or '65, something like that, and never regretted, never looked back. Never look back. Always look forward.

Oh, it sounds like it's worked out just fine.

Other than that, I appreciated—well, both Mel Carter and Oliver Placak were great people to work for. I had a great time. Then they, oh, we used to get sent on all these damn things around town, you know, I used to get sent—we worked in Carlsbad, New Mexico for a shot down there, we worked in central Nevada here when we had one, I worked in Mississippi—you name it—

[00:45:00] Fallon, Nevada.

Everywhere they had a test, or an event, you would work.

Yeah. Yeah. And you know—I enjoyed it, you know, and the other thing with having these young officers was the fact that, they knew that we could work them 24/7 if we had to, you know, and so they were all—one of the people that come out of that program that's very successful is Les Dunn. He built the Galleria Mall in Henderson.

Did he!

Yes.

That's the one I go to most. I didn't know that. So he's a local construction—owns a local construction company here?

Yeah. Well see, we all did some development after we got out. I did some development work here after we got out. It's where we made our money; we didn't make any money working for the government.

I don't imagine. What did you develop?

Oh, I worked with Andrew Molasky over here at this—we built an office complex over here at—I forget what it's called but it's over here at the freeway and Buffalo Drive over there. You know, we built that office complex over there.

Fantastic.

And, well, you know, I still do dumb things.

You got to keep busy.

Well, yeah, I have a place up in Utah right now that's—I bought a little—well, it used to be an antique place, and I bought some land with it, and I was going to put some mini-storage units on it this year. Bought it last year. But, the economy and my circumstance, personal circumstances, have kind of shelved that project, for a while. But, sure. You know, in your case you have to look at it, thirty years and the gold watch is gone. You have to keep looking ahead. If you have a job you want to look and see—what's out there that you might want to jump to—

Keep active, keep busy.

Well, keep looking, you know, and keep interested, you know.

Is there something that you're most proud of doing? One specific thing or—? With your work at the lab?

Oh, at the lab. I feel that I'm a successful parent. But that's something anybody can do. No, there isn't anything, and I don't think that I would look at it that way. We had a consortium of people, that all contributed, whether largely or smalley but they all contributed. And I think that that's

important. It was more or less a group effort than it was any one individual star standing out there. Some of these people are, you know, Mel Carter went on to become a university professor down at Georgia Tech, where he just retired from and he just died. He has a, I think it's a center or something of nuclear energy, in his name down there. These people are big—Oliver Placak worked on the Alaskan Highway, when they were putting the Alaskan Highway in, in World War II. So, hard to say.

Was there anything else you'd like to tell me at this time?

No, except that I hope I haven't told you too many lies.

I'm sure not. Well, it's been a pleasure, Mr. Coogan. Thank you.

[00:49:03] [End of interview]

Photograph 1 – A bush plane.

Photograph 2 – Dog sled preparation.

Photograph 3 – Driving the dog sled.

Photograph 4 – Sled dogs.

Photograph 5 – An typical village.

Photograph 6 – Walking a village street.

Photograph 7 – Don James in 1965.

Photograph 8 – John S. Coogan.

Photograph 9 – (left to right) Don James, Del Barth, George Niles, and Davy Duncan.

Photograph 10 – Don James.

Photograph 11 – Joe Eckert ice fishing.