

THE MARIA ROGERS Oral History Program

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010



New Interviews

This issue describes **twenty-four new interviews** that have been added to our collection, available online and at the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History.

***OH 1498. Jacquie Brever** was hired at Rocky Flats in 1982. Starting in the cafeteria, she worked her way into a position as chemical operator, and became a whistleblower after the 1989 FBI raid. In this interview, Brever talks at length about her experiences on the job: training, the work she did, what she struggled against, plant processes, safety breaches, and years of harassment after she agreed to testify before a grand jury. Brever also filed a separate law suit, which was dismissed. She describes rebuilding her life while getting bachelor's and master's degrees in the field of environmental science. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1499. Janet Brown** was a metallurgical technician at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) and then a machinist and eventually project manager for the W88 warhead at Rocky Flats, beginning in 1982. She became disabled with epileptic seizures and subsequently helped form the organization Rocky Flats Retired and Disabled Workers. In this interview, Janet talks about her work, and about struggles to keep and negotiate benefits packages that were promised to Flats employees. She describes her own neurological problems, surgical attempts at controlling seizures, and her belief that radiation exposure caused the disorder. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1503. Jim Kelly** began working at Rocky Flats in 1956, when he was hired as a janitor, but soon became a radiation monitor—a job he held for 23 years. Kelly was a union president and played a key role in organizing the

FEATURED INTERVIEW



Photo of the Encirclement of Rocky Flats. In this issue: many newly archived interviews about the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant, recorded and donated to our program by LeRoy Moore.

plant's safety committee. In this interview from 1998, he details the union history at Rocky Flats and discusses issues of labor negotiations, worker training, workers' benefits, management relations, and relations with Rocky Flats protestors. Kelly also talks about the fires of '57 and '69 and expresses concern over plans for the site's cleanup. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1504.** This interview, recorded in 2000, is a follow-up to OH 1503. Jim Kelly talks about then-

current negotiations for benefits and compensation that would apply to retired or disabled **Rocky Flats** workers. He expresses concern over shoddy recordkeeping by plant management, which hampered workers' ability to prove their involvement in contamination incidents. Kelly also addresses the hazards and risks of the site's ongoing cleanup. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

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⇒ Listen to and/or view any of our 1,600 interviews at the **Carnegie Branch Library for Local History** of the Boulder Public Library, 1125 Pine St., Boulder, CO 80302.

⇒ Visit our Web site: www.boulderlibrary.org/oralhistory to listen to our interviews online and read their summaries and transcripts.

⇒ Or search the Boulder Public Library's online catalog to find oral histories by topic: <http://www.boulderlibrary.org> (Click on "Find Books and More," then choose "Boulder Carnegie: Local History" for the scope of your search.)

***OH 1506.** In 1990, **Iggy Litaor** was hired by contractor EG&G to characterize the “actinides” (radioactive elements) in the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant soil environment. In this interview, Iggy describes the circumstances under which he was hired, the nature of his research, the remarkable events of May 17, 1995—when significant runoff occurred, and data from his soil-monitoring system showed that actinides are not immobile—and the dramatic fallout surrounding his dismissal when Kaiser-Hill took over for EG&G in June of 1995. Litaor explains his belief that plutonium migration is a fact at Rocky Flats and is an environmental and public-health concern. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1507.** Professor **Harvey Nichols** got involved with Rocky Flats in 1975 when he began tracking pollen drifts around the site, testing for airborne transport of radioactive material. In this recording, he discusses health hazards suggested by his research, and he criticizes the response from state officials. He talks about being monitored by the government after the 1989 FBI raid on the plant. He concludes the interview by proposing that medical research on tumors is necessary to understand the health legacy of Rocky Flats contamination. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1508.** **Jan Pilcher** got involved with activism and organizing around the issue of the dangers of Rocky Flats in the early 1970s. She helped create the booklet *Local Hazard, Global Threat*, which framed citizens’ concerns about Flats’ operation as well as concerns about disarmament and contamination. In this interview, Jan talks about how she learned about Rocky Flats, the formative experiences that led to her pacifist philosophy, her work on Rocky Flats issues—working with citizens, scientists, and the media—as well as lessons learned about engaging with public, private, and governmental entities. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1510.** **Jason Salzman** began working on the Greenpeace campaign against the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant in August 1989, shortly after the FBI raid and before the plant was closed for safety violations. As an activist, he used creative PR tactics to try to ensure that Rocky Flats’ operations would not resume. In this interview, Jason talks about his background, the lead up to the Flats’ shutdown, specific strategies that focused public attention, the end of Rocky Flats production, and

the repercussions of that success. Jason also discusses his ongoing work: scrutinizing the media, pushing for better public information, and promoting media attention to activist issues. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1513.** **Chet Tchozewski** got involved with Rocky Flats activism just prior to the 1978 rally and demonstration. He went on to work on behalf of the Rocky Flats Truth Force and the American Friends Service Committee, among other organizations. In this interview, Tchozewski talks about the ’78 demonstration and how it turned into an act of extended civil disobedience. He discusses the evolution of his participation in the anti-nuclear movement, talks about activist groups, and reflects on the changes—pertaining to Rocky Flats as well as public consciousness—that have resulted from the global peace movement. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1514.** **Gary Thompson** was a long-time worker at Rocky Flats, a member of the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board, and an employee of Kaiser-Hill during cleanup at the decommissioned plant. In this interview, he talks about his experience with multiple aspects of plant production: research chemistry, plutonium recovery, multiple levels of management, and Nuclear Operations. Gary offers a candid perspective on the challenges facing the facility at the time and also touches on the issue of incineration at Rocky Flats as well as elsewhere in the nuclear industrial complex. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1515.** This interview with **Gary Thompson** is a follow-up to his 1997 oral history (OH 1514). Gary talks about his education and his work in the military-industrial complex, which included arsenals of nerve gas, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, and nuclear warheads. Much of the interview explores the philosophical and ethical precedence for arms production and deterrence through military might. Gary describes his own feelings

***The archiving of the interviews marked with an asterisk was made possible, in part, by a grant from Colorado Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment of the Humanities. The views, findings, and conclusions expressed in these interviews do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or Colorado Humanities.**



in opposition to those of environmentalists, protestors, and pacifists. He makes the case for a strong U.S. defense—including nuclear weapons—and suggests that fears about radiation exposure as a result of production activities have been exaggerated. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1516. Jack Weaver** began his 35-year career at Rocky Flats in 1961, doing outdoor physical labor and then quickly moving into chemical operations, where he advanced to foreman, shift manager, and then operations manager for building 771. He also worked in the Health and Safety Department. In this interview, Jack gives a narrative of his career, including descriptions of chemical processes, building construction and maintenance, infinity rooms, and site deconstruction and cleanup. He also talks about the Cold War, the buildup of nuclear weapons as a military deterrent, and his feelings about opposition to Rocky Flats. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1517.** This brief interview with **Jack Weaver** is a follow-up to one that took place in 1998 (OH1516). Conversation focuses on the possibility that Rocky Flats can be cleaned up, as promised, by the year 2006. Jack talks about his own doubts and his reasons for questioning the timetable as well as the planning. He calls attention to the lack of historic knowledge being applied to the site's decontamination and deconstruction. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

***OH 1528. Pam Solo** helped produce the booklet "*Local Hazard, Global Threat*" and was a key organizer for the Rocky Flats 1978 demonstration, before it turned into an act of extended civil disobedience. In this interview, Solo follows the step-by-step progression of education, activism, and strategy that first brought Rocky Flats to the public's attention and then to an international stage for peace discussions. She talks about specific people, politicians, and organizations; critical negotiations and tensions; and leveraged opportunities. By LeRoy Moore. Transcribed by Cyns Nelson.

OH 1560V A-B. Ray Joyce is a Boulder native who started and owned some of the first supermarkets in Boulder in the 1950s and served on the Boulder City Council from 1966 to 1969. In this interview, he discusses what went into creating and running the successful Joyce's markets, and talks about some of the important achievements of the city council during his tenure, including the creation

and funding of the Open Space Program in Boulder, the acquisition of more water rights for the city, and the end of prohibition in Boulder. He also discusses changes between the 1960s and the early twenty-first century in the makeup of the city council and the way meetings are run. By Tim Plass. Filmed by Leland Rucker. Summary by Susan Becker.

OH 1562V. In 1965, **Joel Davis**, age 29, was the youngest person elected to the Boulder City Council at that time. In this interview he discusses the city climate at the time and how the issues of growth and growth control have played out in Boulder in the intervening years. In particular, he describes the use of sales tax to purchase open space and to improve roads. He also discusses the city manager form of government under which Boulder operates and the collegiality and relative simplicity with which the council operated in the 1960s as compared to today. By Leland Rucker. Filmed by Timothy Plass. Summary by Susan Becker.

OH 1563. Dorreen Mitchell moved to the then-new Martin Acres subdivision in about 1954 and has lived there ever since. In this interview she talks about Boulder during the post-WWII years, life in Martin Acres when it was called Rabbit Valley because of the large number of children living in there, and tensions in the neighborhood in later years involving rental vs. owner-occupied houses. By Timothy Plass. Filmed by Leland Rucker. Transcribed by Diane Rabson.

OH 1567V. Vivian Carlson has lived in Boulder, in the Interurban subdivision, since 1947. In this interview, she describes Boulder of the late 1940s, including the location of roads and descriptions of stores. She tells about the building of the Interurban subdivision, which was built by a number of different developers in a wide variety of architectural styles. She describes changes in the subdivision, including its move away from families with young children toward more renter-occupied housing. She also describes Vetsville housing in the post-WWII years. Tim Plass. Summary by Susan Becker.

OH 1569V A-B. Kenneth and Joyce Davies have been an active part of the Boulder community since settling here in the 1950s. They have worked tirelessly through organizations such as the League of Women Voters, PLAN-Boulder, Historic Boulder, and the Boulder Council for International Visitors. In this interview, they

touch on all of those involvements, and speak also about two neighborhoods in which they lived for many years: Balsam Avenue overlooking north Boulder and Fraser Meadows. They comment extensively on housing and development in Boulder and also on the openness and welcoming attitudes of Boulder people and institutions. By Carrie Schomig. Filmed by Timothy Plass. Summary by Susan Becker.

OH 1571V A-B. Richard Geesaman talks about his love of Boulder, where he has lived since the 1950s. He describes his work as a physician in private practice and for IBM, the creation of the Boulder County Department of Health, and his service as a council person on the Boulder City Council. He discusses the political atmosphere for the city council during the 1970s, including its conservative/liberal mix, the gay rights ordinance passed by the city council during that time, and the collegiality of the council members. He also talks about the problem of overly large houses being built in Boulder at the time of this interview. By Timothy Plass. Filmed by Leland Rucker. Summary by Susan Becker.

OH 1572V A-B. Jim Bowers, former planning director (1966-1967), city council person (1967-1971), and RTD board member (1969-1981) speaks about his time in all these positions. This period was marked by riots stemming from opposition to the Vietnam War and changes in the social and political attitudes of many young people, which Bowers recalls. On the other hand, Bowers also recalls his time on city council as having been a relatively peaceful and congenial time amongst the council members themselves as well as with the general citizenry and other governmental entities. One exception of which he speaks at length was an episode in which threats were made to the lives of council members over consideration of the removal of the lighted cross and star on Flagstaff Mountain. By Leland Rucker. Filmed by Timothy Plass. Transcribed by Diane Baron.

OH 1575V A-B. Bob and Jean Williams first moved to Boulder in 1948 and soon after joined the First United Methodist Church. In this interview, they detail some of their many involvements in the church, which have run the gamut from teaching Sunday School to teaching an early sex education class to working to increase equality for women in the church. They also speak about other aspects of First United Methodist Church's commitment to social justice issues, the governance structure of the

Methodist Church, and comment on the ways that it has enriched their lives and fostered their personal growth. By Anne Marie Pois. Summary by Susan Becker.

OH 1577V A-B. Conrad McBride moved to Boulder in 1959 to work for the Colorado Municipal League and later for the University of Colorado Political Science Department. He has lived in the Martin Acres subdivision since the early 1960s. In this interview, he talks about that neighborhood: its character and reputation, how it has changed, the quality and cost of housing, social life, nearby amenities, and the building of bomb shelters by some residents during the 1960s. Mr. McBride also talks about politics at the University of Colorado, Boulder, including anti-Communist sentiment during the McCarthy period and the ongoing tension between conservatives and liberals. Interviewed and transcribed by Diane Rabson. Filmed by Timothy Plass.

OH 1578V. Ruby Heflin shares her experiences growing up in Boulder in the 1930s and her adult life living in Sunshine Canyon. Topics include building her first house, mountain wildlife, and the Sunshine community. Also included is video of a quilt she sewed that illustrates the plant and animal life in Sunshine Canyon. By Marty Dick. Filmed and transcribed by Megan Bowes.

**Next volunteer meetings:
March 6, April 3
and May 1**

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