

JOHN WALKER'S

INTERVIEW WITH BOB FULKERSON

EUREKA COUNTY, NEVADA

YUCCA MOUNTAIN LESSONS LEARNED PROJECT

held in

RENO, NEVADA

December 15, 2011

1 (7:53 p.m. - Begin Tape 1.)

2 (00:00)

3 MS. CLANCY: The tape is rolling. The tape is  
4 rolling. This is Gwen Clancy from behind the camera. It's  
5 December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. We're doing this interview in Reno,  
6 Nevada, and doing the interview is John Walker.

7 MR. WALKER: Yes, we're here today to interview Mr.  
8 Bob Fulkerson. He is the Executive Director for the  
9 Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, and our interview  
10 is about the Eureka County Lessons Learned video project  
11 about Yucca Mountain.

12 Bob, could you tell us a little bit about your  
13 background?

14 MR. FULKERSON: Sure. My grandmother's  
15 grandparents came to Wadsworth to work on the railroad in the  
16 1860's, and so our family's been here ever since then. And,  
17 you know, I went to school here, went back east to college,  
18 came back here, got involved in working on a number of  
19 different issues. But, you know, first time I could vote I  
20 voted for Ronald Reagan, came back here and started working  
21 on MX and land and water issues and my views slowly changed.

22 MR. WALKER: Bob, given your activism in the state  
23 at the grass roots level on MX, military air and land  
24 withdrawals and Yucca Mountain, what influence did the  
25 prehistory of these issues have on the Yucca Mountain

1 proposal?

2 MR. FULKERSON: Well, I think a couple things. One  
3 is because people here rose up and were victorious against  
4 the MX missile, were--had some significant victories on  
5 military land and airspace withdrawals, also were having some  
6 successes on the Nevada test site, all those things gave  
7 people the idea that with enough courage and with enough  
8 determination, and by getting organized, we could also take  
9 on this massive foe of the nuclear power industry in the  
10 Department of Energy. So, you know, they kind of blazed a  
11 trail that we were able to follow.

12 I think what the second one did is it really sowed  
13 seeds of distrust in the federal government here and, you  
14 know, I mean, you just go--you know, the--you know, in Ely,  
15 or the other downwind places, where families have lost loved  
16 ones because of the federal government's last experiment with  
17 nuclear things, you know, and just like with the Nevada--just  
18 like with Yucca Mountain, they said, "Oh, trust us, it's  
19 safe, we know how to do it. We wouldn't do it if it weren't  
20 safe." And, you know, and people paid with their lives for  
21 believing in that folly. And so there was a sense of, you  
22 know, "You're not--you're not going to screw us one more  
23 time. We're going to rise up and we're going to beat you  
24 this time."

25 MR. WALKER: How did those issues help Citizen

1 Alert move forward as an activist organization?

2 MR. FULKERSON: Well, you know, one really neat  
3 thing they did is, you know, there's this idea that the  
4 issues that affect the land and the water are the--just the,  
5 you know, under the purview of the so-called "bird and bunny  
6 people," as my mentor Bill Vincent said, you know, and those  
7 issues deeply impact the people who lived on the land, the  
8 native American people, the farmers, the ranchers, the  
9 miners, the rural dwellers. And so it really created this  
10 sense of, "We're all in this together. We all love this  
11 state together. You know, we love this land. We need the  
12 water safe, so let's work together." And it was not  
13 divisive, it was not polarized that--like some of the issues  
14 you see today.

15 MR. WALKER: Bob, you know, at Citizen Alert you  
16 got involved in nuclear waste transportation issue. You  
17 know, you used that mock waste cask. What were the concerns  
18 about transportation? Why did you--what did you learn about  
19 that process, about taking that waste cask around Nevada?

20 MR. FULKERSON: Well, you know, the Department of  
21 Energy was--and the nuclear industry were fond of showing  
22 this arid desolate place called Yucca Mountain, saying, "Oh,  
23 look," you know, "isn't this a great place for nuclear  
24 waste?" And, you know, it's a pretty dry, desolate place.  
25 So we had to show people that Yucca Mountain wasn't this

1 place in the god-awful deserts of Nevada. You know, Yucca  
2 Mountain was a mobile Chernobyl that was going to be rolling  
3 past their farms, their homes, their schools, their  
4 businesses, through their towns, every day for twenty-four--  
5 every hour, twenty-four hours a day, for about thirty years.  
6 That was Yucca Mountain.

7 (05:00)

8 And how best to demonstrate that then by building a  
9 mock nuclear waste cask and bringing it along the main  
10 transportation routes. We knew that we had to pick  
11 California off. We knew that their congressional delegation  
12 and the anti-nuclear movement there was key to our fight, and  
13 so we started there. And we had articles in the--in the Los  
14 Angeles Times, we went to San Onofre and met with people  
15 there. We went to Rancho Seco, did an event with the mayor  
16 there. Up and down the California coast. Had really great  
17 events, hauling this nuclear waste canister that was about,  
18 you know, twenty-four feet long and about eight feet high,  
19 and we got a lot of--a lot of looks. And then we took it to  
20 Salt Lake, to Denver, down to Albuquerque and throughout the  
21 west.

22 And then eventually, another one was built and it  
23 went all the way back east. And, you know, we did all this  
24 stuff on a shoestring. I mean, we traded the trailer that  
25 the nuclear waste canister was on, we traded an old computer

1 for, and these welders up in Dayton made it. The cask itself  
2 was made for a song, just donated material by a real talented  
3 fiberglass boat maker out in Lemon Valley. And, of course,  
4 you know, we just--we stayed with people along the routes.  
5 We had Marvin Resnikoff, who is a world-renowned expert  
6 nuclear waste transportation, come with us. We had Bill  
7 Rossy (phonetic), a Western Shoshone elder, come along with  
8 us. At one point we had other experts in the field come  
9 along with us, and we really demonstrate to people along the  
10 route that, you know, this is going to impact them and they  
11 better come to Nevada's defense.

12 MR. WALKER: Bob, could you tell me about your  
13 experience and background involving Citizen Alert here in  
14 Nevada?

15 MR. FULKERSON: Sure, I was hired as the Executive  
16 Director at Citizen Alert in March of 1984. You know, I--it  
17 wasn't--I was going to be a teacher, and that's what I  
18 thought my path was leading to, and when I was interning in  
19 Senator Laxalt's office, a couple years prior to that, this  
20 issue of the MX missile came up. And a ranch that my  
21 grandfather had owned with Dorothy Gallagher in Pine Valley  
22 in Eureka County was going to be impacted by that, and I'd  
23 spent the best, most wonderful years of my childhood there,  
24 and I loved that area, and I thought, "How could they do  
25 this?"

1           And so when I came back to Nevada, I volunteered  
2 for this organization, Citizen Alert, and did some  
3 fundraisers and stuff like that, and they offered me the job.  
4 And I said, "Well, great, how much does it pay?" And they  
5 said, "It pays \$1,000 a month, and you get an extra organizer  
6 in Las Vegas named Bill Vincent, and we're paying him \$300 a  
7 month." And I thought, that's great, you know, I'm there, I  
8 have my career. And, you know, I learned a hell of a lot,  
9 and I really learned a lot from this guy, Bill Vincent, who  
10 was an old labor organizer, a newsman. He knew Nevada better  
11 than anybody else in--you know, that I'd--and I really wanted  
12 to know Nevada as good as he did. He worked for the Reno  
13 Journal. He was an amazing writer. He did all of our  
14 editing and a lot of our public speaking. He had instant  
15 credibility being an elder, and being rooted in Las Vegas,  
16 and it was just a real privilege to work with him.

17           MR. WALKER: Let's go back and talk about that  
18 waste canister that Citizen Alert hauled all over the  
19 country.

20           MR. FULKERSON: Uh-huh. Yeah, well, we knew that,  
21 you know, as long as it was viewed as just a Nevada issue, we  
22 would be isolated, and, of course, that's why they wanted to  
23 put it there is because we were isolated, we were politically  
24 powerless; so we had to build allies. And how better to do  
25 that than by scaring the shit out of people and telling them

1 that this radioactive--these mobile Chernobyls were going to  
2 be by their doors in a way that had never happened in the  
3 history of this country before. And so we built these  
4 life-size mock nuclear waste canisters. And here's an  
5 article that appeared in the Los Angeles Times as a result,  
6 and we had articles and TV stations in Denver, Albuquerque,  
7 Salt Lake City, San Francisco, San Diego, all over the west,  
8 and then, eventually, all over the country, doing stories on  
9 Yucca Mountain and lifting up the transportation issue as the  
10 Achilles' Heel in this whole national debacle.

11           You know, we also had some T-shirts made, and this  
12 one basically is taken off a map that the Oakridge National  
13 Laboratories did, and those red lines are the areas of  
14 transportation. You can see as they get closer to Nevada,  
15 the lines get fatter, and that's the more transport--the more  
16 nuclear waste canisters rolling past people's homes. So  
17 truly a national issue.

18           (10:00)

19           MR. WALKER: Indeed. Bob, you developed a theme of  
20 "Nevada's not a wasteland," to counteract the image of Nevada  
21 as a dumping ground for nuclear materials. Could you talk  
22 about the effectiveness, and the limits, of that awareness  
23 campaign that you guys started?

24           MR. FULKERSON: Sure. You know, the--it was--the  
25 slogan was produced by my predecessor, Abby Johnson, and

1 the--I think she even designed the bumper sticker, which we  
2 had made, and probably tens of thousands of these things were  
3 made and put on bumper stickers and STOP signs and things all  
4 over the country. And, you know, the limitation of it was  
5 kind of like, you know, the George Lakoff thing, "Don't think  
6 of the elephant." You know, Nevada, "Don't think of  
7 the"--you know, "it's not a wasteland," and people kind of  
8 picture wasteland. But, you know, that's the way people view  
9 the desert anyway, and so why fight that. What we wanted to  
10 show is that there were real people living out here, that  
11 there were real issues with our water supply, and that we  
12 were willing to fight for the state that we loved with  
13 everything we had, and if they didn't like it, you know, too  
14 bad.

15 MR. WALKER: We'll go with that one. Bob, Citizen  
16 Alert, in its activism dealing with the Yucca Mountain  
17 project, the organization, and you yourself, you had to  
18 interact with a lot of different organizations. Could you  
19 talk about how that went with, let's say, with the Department  
20 of Energy, to begin with.

21 MR. FULKERSON: Sure. You know, I think people  
22 going against the government, and particularly big entities  
23 like the Department of Energy, with a lot of physicists and  
24 people with degrees, there's a natural amount of fear that  
25 they might get, and one of the best pieces of advice I got

1 was from Maya Miller, who helped start Citizen Alert, and,  
2 you know, she always said, "Don't let your fear motivate  
3 you." You know, "What would you say, what would you do, if  
4 you didn't have that fear?"

5           And so it was really good in taking on these giants  
6 like the Department of Energy and the nuclear industry. It  
7 just had limited resources, and so, you know, we didn't fear.  
8 And when they had hearings, you know, we took the hearings  
9 over. We literally stood on the tables where they were at  
10 and took the hearings over and said, "Because this is going  
11 in one ear and out the other, we're not talking to you.  
12 We're talking to our people who really make a difference.  
13 You have demonstrated by your duplicity, your mendacity, that  
14 you don't care for the truth, and you don't care about what  
15 we're saying. This is all a song and game to you, so this is  
16 our show now and we're taking it over." And it really  
17 empowered people. It really gave people a sense that we can  
18 have control over the way our government treats us, and we  
19 can make a difference in this stuff. And I think it really  
20 put the Department of Energy on, you know, on notice.

21           Now we didn't go quite as far as the folks in Deaf  
22 Smith and Swisher County went, because I also went down there  
23 and worked with those folks against the dump and was at a  
24 hearing when Ben Roosey (phonetic), the head of the Office of  
25 Nuclear Waste Management came down there, and they actually

1 had him hanging out in effigy. The Texans did that. In  
2 Nevada, we were a little bit more polite, we just took the  
3 hearings over.

4 MR. WALKER: What about your relationship with the  
5 state government? The State of Nevada has a long history in  
6 opposition to, you know, the Yucca Mountain Project, and I'm  
7 sure you had lots of interaction with the governors, with the  
8 agencies set up to address the issue. Could you talk a  
9 little bit about that?

10 MR. FULKERSON: Well, you know, it wasn't always  
11 that way, John. You know, in 1975, both houses of the  
12 legislature actually invited the nuclear waste dump to come  
13 to Nevada, and legislators like Dick Bryant and Harry Reed  
14 voted in favor of that, so--and that's why Citizen Alert was  
15 formed. And then, of course, we had this very cozy  
16 relationship, because of the money that the Nevada test site  
17 brought in, we looked the other way when they contaminated  
18 our land and our water and killed a lot of people here with  
19 the above-ground fallout. So we, you know, we felt it was  
20 important to talk about this stuff to our state agencies, to  
21 our governors, to our senators, and they didn't always want  
22 to hear about it.

23 But over the years it became much more of an allied  
24 relationship, and much more of a strategic relationship where  
25 we were really working hard to give them the political cover

1 and the support that they needed to fight this thing on the  
2 floor, you know, like Harry Reed. You know, once in a while  
3 we got stuck with somebody like Senator Chick Hecht, whose  
4 famous quote was, "We owe it to our gold star mothers to  
5 accept nuclear waste," which then Bill Vincent decided to  
6 say, "The new slogan should be, 'Nevada, wide as the space  
7 between Chick Hecht's ears'." So we had a different  
8 relationship with different people and, you know, and, I  
9 mean, and--it was regardless of party. I mean, you know, Les  
10 Aspin was the force behind the MX, and Bennett Johnson was  
11 the force behind the nuclear waste dump. They were both  
12 Democrats. There were Democrats in the legislature from Las  
13 Vegas who very pro-nuclear, Senator Joe Neal, people like Tom  
14 Hickey, who were both promoting a dump at certain points in  
15 their careers, and we had to go toe to toe with them.

16 (15:00)

17 MR. WALKER: Well, that's very interesting, that  
18 early history. What about local governments? What kind of  
19 interaction did Citizen Alert have with, you know, Clark  
20 County, you know, the Site's County (phonetic), Nye County,  
21 some of the rural counties when it came to, you know, dealing  
22 with the Yucca Mountain issue?

23 MR. FULKERSON: Well, we didn't really have much of  
24 a formal relationship with the government entities  
25 themselves, but with the people in those counties and in

1 those areas, you know, we worked hard to organize with them.  
2 I think later on there was more of a formal relationship, but  
3 when I was there, things were just kind of getting--you know,  
4 people were still--you know, I mean, even Las Vegas. They  
5 didn't want to jeopardize the Nevada test site stuff, so they  
6 were not all that great on Yucca Mountain at all. Of course,  
7 Nye County still isn't that great on Yucca Mountain. And,  
8 you know, Lincoln County had a history of wanting to invite  
9 every single polluting project they could find in, Aerojet,  
10 toxic waste incinerators, "Yucca Mountain, bring it." We had  
11 a very adversarial relationship with the Lincoln County  
12 folks.

13 MR. WALKER: Bob, we were talking about Citizens  
14 Alert's relationship with entities in the State of Nevada.  
15 What about its relationship with our native Americans, the  
16 tribes in Nevada?

17 MR. FULKERSON: Well, we worked hard to build  
18 bridges with the tribes, both from a moral perspective,  
19 since, you know, they were here first and they had a lot of  
20 wisdom and teachings about the protection and the care of the  
21 land and the water, and from a political perspective because  
22 of their sovereign status and their nation-to-nation  
23 relationship they had with the federal government. Plus, for  
24 me, it meant the chance to go out to places like Duckwater  
25 and Shurz and Pyramid Lake and other places, and Duck Valley,

1 and places that I love to get to and have meetings and camp  
2 out there and talk to folks. And that was part of--that was  
3 probably the funnest part of my job was going out to places  
4 like that and camping out and living and--with folks out  
5 there.

6           But, you know, I think the first contact was when  
7 the--a guy named Joe Sanchez called and said that we need to  
8 talk to Citizen Alert about what they're doing on nuclear  
9 waste because that impacts Western Shoshone lands. And I  
10 said, "Oh, okay," you know? I wasn't really aware of that.  
11 This was probably in about early 19--this was in 1984, right  
12 after I'd been hired, and then, of course--in fact, this is  
13 Joe Sanchez right here at a gathering that we had out in  
14 Battle--north of Battle Mountain with some elders, talking  
15 about Yucca Mountain, talking about Rock Creek, talking about  
16 the protection of the land and the water in the Great Basin.

17           You know, and Joe is a great example of the, you  
18 know, of the courage and the strength it takes to do this  
19 work. His reservation, the Duckwater Shoshone Reservation,  
20 is in Nye County, just directly north of the Nevada test  
21 site, and a year before he was born, the government did  
22 those--or, right around the time he was born, they did those  
23 ploughshares tests, which was this brilliant way of building  
24 new Panama Canals, and so there were very shallow nuclear  
25 weapons explosions and they all vented and they all went

1 north, and they all went over the reservation.

2 Joe's mom, who's still alive, making baskets out at  
3 Stillwater, a Western Shoshone from Duckwater, talks about  
4 how they--the gardens would be black in the morning, after  
5 those nuclear weapons tests, and so a lot of people, a lot of  
6 native people, lost their lives as a result of the government  
7 playing, you know, playing with their lives.

8 So they were natural allies on this, but, of  
9 course, because of the history, the really bad history  
10 between whites and the native people in the Great Basin, it  
11 took a lot of time to build relationships, so it wasn't  
12 automatic. But once those relationships were established,  
13 and, you know, and my predecessors, who worked so hard on the  
14 MX missile system, worked a lot with native people here, so  
15 we didn't have to start from scratch. There was already a  
16 pretty good track record, and we just--we built on that.

17 (20:00)

18 MR. WALKER: Bob, going back to Citizen Alert, did  
19 they get involved in the nuclear testing issue in Nevada?  
20 You know, in Nevada they've detonated, really, over a  
21 thousand nuclear weapons, so what was Citizen Alert's  
22 involvement in that?

23 MR. FULKERSON: Well, we had to get involved. I  
24 mean, for one thing it was the--an example of the federal  
25 government's lies that they told the people of Nevada, to

1 "trust us, just wipe the fallout off your windshields. Go  
2 inside, there's no problem, there is no danger," and yet  
3 people paid with their lives. I mean, you know, my friend  
4 Joe Sanchez went on to get advanced lymphatic leukemia, which  
5 is the most radiogenic of leukemias, and died from that as a  
6 "down winder." People in the northwest quadrant of the  
7 Nevada test site were impacted. We helped pass the Radiation  
8 Victims Compensation Act of 1986, which awarded money to  
9 people who were, you know, and their families of people who  
10 were impacted by the nuclear weapons testing issue.

11 But, you know, Nevada's had a schizophrenic  
12 attitude towards things nuclear and, you know, we love the  
13 money and the jobs that it was bringing in. And, you know,  
14 we would do events down in Las Vegas and, you know, the  
15 electricians would picket us. And it was, you know, it was  
16 not good, especially like, you know, Bill Vincent being an  
17 old union guy, it was really hard for him. But, you know, we  
18 knew we were trying to do the right thing. And we got  
19 arrested, you know, on several occasions on--trying to shut  
20 that Nevada test site down, you know.

21 But we realized again that we needed some science  
22 on our side and, you know, what are the impacts of nuclear  
23 weapons testing? So we got a grant to go around and collect  
24 water, and, you know, we knew from the hydrologic reports  
25 that water flowed towards Ash Meadows, and from underneath

1 the Nevada test site. So we went all over that area, and we  
2 even decided to go up north in places like Hiko (phonetic),  
3 and took water samples. We took water samples around Project  
4 Faultless out, you know, in central Nevada, where there was a  
5 nuclear weapons testing event, and tested the water primarily  
6 for tritium, but for other radioactive materials. And we  
7 went around in my pickup and collected these water samples,  
8 sent them to a lab up in Canada, and they came back and they  
9 showed, you know, higher than normal readings in several  
10 places.

11 Now, the Department of Energy will say, "Oh, we've  
12 been testing that for years and there was no problem," but,  
13 again, you can't trust them. So we had some independent  
14 verification that there was indeed a problem there. And  
15 those problems are getting worse today.

16 MR. WALKER: Bob, if there was no consistent  
17 citizen opposition to Yucca Mountain, what would the status  
18 of Yucca Mountain be now?

19 MR. FULKERSON: Well, you know, I don't think  
20 anybody can really say for sure. And, you know, I think it  
21 would be kind of arrogant to say that, "Oh, it would have  
22 been built." I mean, because maybe, maybe it--I mean, for  
23 sure another group would have formed, you know, and other  
24 people would have come in. We just happened to have an  
25 organization, I just happened to have been hired to do the

1 work. But, you know, if--and also had blessing to work with  
2 a number of incredibly talented people, people who  
3 volunteered. Like the people that made that nuclear waste  
4 cask and built that trailer for next to nothing, being on our  
5 side. People who, you know, who just loved our state and  
6 wanted to fight hard and needed a vehicle to express their  
7 love for the state, and their defiance at what the federal  
8 government wanted to dump on us. And so we became that  
9 vehicle.

10           And, you know, and so like in 1985 was the first  
11 tour that Citizen Alert did throughout the State of Nevada,  
12 and we got press all over, and we met in over a dozen cities,  
13 tiny towns in rural Nevada, cities like Las Vegas, in a grass  
14 roots effort. We took around a slide show that was not--that  
15 was narrated by John Houseman in that great voice, I'll never  
16 forget it, and it was all about Yucca Mountain and all about  
17 nuclear waste. And that was really fun, it helped us to  
18 build some bridges. And then you know, seventeen years  
19 later, you know, still at it, protesting other Department of  
20 Energy hearings and kind of trying to let them know that we  
21 are not going to let this happen, you know? So I think  
22 we--well, I think there's no doubt we had an impact, but  
23 certainly others would have come along if we weren't there.

24           (25:00)

25           MR. WALKER: Tell me about the printed press, the

1 written press. How did they respond to your organization?

2 MR. FULKERSON: Well, yeah, I've always said Nevada  
3 is an activist's dream, and it's an activist's dream because  
4 of two things; one is that we have great access to our  
5 elected officials. I mean, it's really easy to get to know  
6 our legislators, our congressmen, our senators. In places in  
7 larger states, that's, you know, unheard of. And the second  
8 one is because of our access to the press, and, you know,  
9 building relationships with individuals in the press and, you  
10 know, I still have people I went to high school with who are,  
11 you know, TV reporters that you can, you know, count on to  
12 help with stories and stuff like that.

13 And we, you know, we knew that this was a campaign  
14 for the hearts and minds, and that we were in the business of  
15 moving public opinion through education. We didn't have the  
16 money to pay for big advertising, like Ron Vitto (phonetic)  
17 and the nuclear power industry did when they held up those  
18 little petals, saying, "See, it's not dangerous." You know,  
19 they spent millions of dollars on advertising and they still  
20 couldn't turn the legislature around on that, no matter how  
21 hard they tried. And it's because we were able to get the  
22 press, and were able to do the grass roots cultivation and be  
23 on the TV's and in the newspaper pretty much once a week, I  
24 would say, for, you know, a ten-year period.

25 MR. WALKER: Bob, when you were at Citizen Alert,

1 what was your experience with military airspace and land  
2 withdrawals in Nevada, which were pretty significant in those  
3 days, and how did that relate to Yucca Mountain?

4 MR. FULKERSON: Uh-huh. Well, you know, Nevada has  
5 a long history with the military, you know, and more land and  
6 more airspace is withdrawn in Nevada for military purposes by  
7 percentage and volume than any other state in the country.  
8 And, you know, Nevada gets a lot of funds from that, a lot of  
9 money from that, and there's also a great deal of pride from  
10 being, you know, patriotic and contributing to the defense of  
11 this country. So, you know, we knew we had to tread on that  
12 very gingerly.

13 So we tried to look at it about it being our  
14 patriotic duty to force the military and the Department of  
15 Energy to following the Constitution, to following the Bill  
16 of Rights that guarantees liberty and protection of property  
17 that the Department of Energy and the military were  
18 infringing upon. And it was not a hard sell; in fact, it was  
19 veterans, like my dad, a Vietnam veteran, you know, 100  
20 percent disabled, that helped me to see that. It was  
21 veterans like Bill Rossey who took shrapnel in Okinawa.

22 It was veterans like the folks that we worked with  
23 out in Fallon (phonetic) to shut down the Bravo 20 bombing  
24 range, and here's--and when they were known to be bombing  
25 that area without permits from the federal government, we

1 went out there in 1985 and took it over, and we built this  
2 camp. And they arrested us, they took us into Churchill  
3 County Jail, and the next day more people went in, and  
4 eventually more people went in, and we had it shut down for  
5 the whole summer, and, as a result, we got, you know, a  
6 hearing before the House Public Lands Committee, and we got  
7 this thing called the Nevada Report, which is what we were  
8 asking for, which was a cumulative study, a comprehensive  
9 study of cumulative impacts, not just of the Nevada test  
10 site, but of the other military land and airspace withdrawals  
11 in Fallon, in Hawthorne and throughout the state. And it was  
12 a--that was a good victory to have. But we did it by cutting  
13 the issue as one of patriotism and one of forcing our federal  
14 agencies to follow the United States Constitution.

15 MR. WALKER: Bob, what do you see in the future for  
16 Yucca Mountain?

17 MR. FULKERSON: Well, again, that's a real tough  
18 call but I think the--pretty easy to say that the reason that  
19 Yucca Mountain has not been built so far, in addition to the  
20 huge amount of citizen opposition, is because of this guy  
21 here, Senator Harry Reed, and that's a picture of us, back  
22 when I had more hair and we were both a lot younger, taken  
23 about 1987. And he's been at it, you know, ever since. And  
24 without him there, I think it's going to be--it's going to be  
25 a little dicey.

1           The other trend that is not, you know, that is very  
2 disconcerting, is this idea of opening it up for  
3 reprocessing, which is a ruse. It will bring--because all it  
4 does is it brings a lot of nuclear garbage to Nevada, and  
5 then no plan to deal with it. This so-called "notion of  
6 reprocessing" is a ruse, and it can't be done safely. And  
7 what's also very disconcerting is that we have people like  
8 Mark Amaday (phonetic) and Joe Hecht, who have refused  
9 to--the first elected representatives in the history of  
10 Nevada, since Chick Hecht, to not come out and oppose 100  
11 percent Yucca Mountain. And that's very dangerous too. I  
12 mean, you know, to Dean Heller's credit, he has thrown down  
13 and said he will fight hard against it.

14                         (30:00)

15           So, you know, and then maybe the best we can hope  
16 for is a temporary victory anyway. I mean, you know, David  
17 Brower said, "In environmental battles there's no permanent  
18 victories," that they could--you know, if you stop them from  
19 clear-cutting that forest, they can always come back later,  
20 but once they clear-cut, it's gone forever. Same maybe for  
21 Yucca Mountain. We can, you know, we can, you know, on our  
22 watch we can do our duty, protect it for our watch and then  
23 hope that the next people who come along will do the same.

24           MR. WALKER: Bob, what lessons can you glean as an  
25 activist about the Yucca Mountain issue?

1           MR. FULKERSON: Well, I think that, you know, one  
2 is you never, ever, ever give up. You know, I mean, there  
3 was many, many times when it looked like, forget it, you  
4 know? We can't do this. I mean, you know, how many times  
5 did Congress--you know, if Congress passed the Screw Nevada  
6 Bill once, but there were many, many other times that they  
7 narrowed down the site selection process to just Nevada.  
8 There were many, many other decisions that Congress made,  
9 that the Department of Energy made, that we didn't want them  
10 to make, and it seemed like defeat, defeat, defeat, defeat,  
11 defeat, one after another on--you know, for many years.

12           Nevertheless, we were able to delay, delay, delay,  
13 delay, and the idea is, you know, not to look upon those  
14 little defeats as, you know, permanent, and that we can, with  
15 persistence, can come back. But that's only if you don't  
16 give up.

17           You know, I think the second one is you've got to  
18 have fun doing this, you know? I mean, we had fun out there  
19 raising hell, you know? We had fun traveling around Nevada  
20 in our trucks, with our camping gear, going to small towns,  
21 talking about the issue to people in Eureka, in Austin, in  
22 Panaca, in Pahrump, you know, in Elko. We had that--it was  
23 really fun. And so you have to really like what you do and  
24 love the places that you're trying to, you know, protect.

25           You know, I think another one though is, you know,

1 the political polarization across party lines is a loser, you  
2 know? That, you know, the good thing about the Yucca  
3 Mountain fight is that it was not--we didn't make it  
4 partisan, it was not a partisan issue, and that there were,  
5 you know, long-time Republicans with, you know, radical  
6 Democrats working together on this issue, you know, and the  
7 slogan was from--what we stole from the MX in our meetings,  
8 which was, "Leave your guns at the door," you know, "and  
9 today we're going to focus on how we're going to fight Yucca  
10 Mountain." Party affiliation doesn't matter.

11 MR. WALKER: You know, I think that was the case  
12 with all the governors--

13 MR. FULKERSON: Uh-huh.

14 MR. WALKER: --and most of the legislators too

15 MR. FULKERSON: Yeah. Yeah, it was. The governors  
16 who came in also had that attitude, and most of the  
17 legislators, and most of our Congress people and senators did  
18 as well.

19 MR. WALKER: Bob, in your long history serving as  
20 an activist in Nevada for Citizen Alert and now Progressive  
21 Leadership Alliance of Nevada, what about mentors? Have you  
22 had some significant mentors in your past?

23 MR. FULKERSON: Yeah, I've been blessed to have a  
24 number of mentors who, really, you know, I wouldn't be  
25 anywhere without them. Of course, Maya Miller comes to mind

1 first. She was the one that helped to start Citizen Alert,  
2 also helped to start PLAN. You know, and out there in Washoe  
3 Valley I would go out there probably once a week and talk to  
4 her to get her advice about things that we were working on,  
5 and the number one thing that I always took away from her was  
6 to be fearless, you know, and not to be afraid of saying  
7 things if I knew the truth, and not to be afraid of the  
8 consequences. Just do it and let the, you know, let the--and  
9 the consequences will be fine.

10           You know, and another person, of course, was Marla  
11 Painter. She was, you know, she helped to train me at  
12 Citizen Alert. We were working on registering voters out  
13 there in Ruby Valley, probably twenty years ago. And, you  
14 know, she helped to teach me to organize, all the nuts and  
15 bolts of organizing.

16           And then, of course, Abby Johnson, you know, who  
17 was the director before me, and I, you know, right after I  
18 got hired, you know, I had no idea what the heck I was doing  
19 and, you know, and she taught me things like how to work with  
20 a board of directors, how to organize our membership box  
21 because we--it was in a chocolate--hot coca box with about  
22 300 index cards of all the members and their history, and I  
23 had that on a desk, and the desk was a door over two file  
24 cabinets, and that was our office. And she, you know, helped  
25 me to set that up and how to raise money. Of course, Kit

1 Miller, Maya's daughter, was really helpful in how to raise  
2 money so we could fund this whole thing.

3 MR. WALKER: I'm sure you've raised a few dollars  
4 in your day.

5 MR. FULKERSON: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, we have--I have.  
6 I've been--I love fundraising. It's never bothered me, you  
7 know, and it's the idea that, you know, I'm not going to go  
8 out and buy a new hat or a new fishing pole, you know, with  
9 this money that I raise, I'm going to use it to help promote  
10 the things that I care about in Nevada by hiring people who  
11 can do the work, and by, you know, giving some gas money to  
12 get out to the rural areas to talk to people.

13 MR. WALKER: Well, thank you, Bob. It's really  
14 been a pleasure interviewing you today.

15 MR. FULKERSON: All right. Thank you.

16 MS. CLANCY: So a quick question here for you, Bob.  
17 We want to get your permission to use this footage for either  
18 archival research material--

19 MR. FULKERSON: What?! No, that's all right.

20 MS. CLANCY: --or for the web, little short pieces  
21 for the web.

22 MR. FULKERSON: Ach--no, that's totally fine.

23 MS. CLANCY: Good. Thank you.

24 (8:30 p.m. - End Tape 1.)

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

