JOHN WALKER’S

INTERVIEW WITH BOB FULKERSON

EUREKA COUNTY, NEVADA

YUCCA MOUNTAIN LESSONS LEARNED PROJECT

held in

RENO, NEVADA

December 15, 2011
(7:53 p.m. - Begin Tape 1.)
(00:00)

MS. CLANCY: The tape is rolling. The tape is rolling. This is Gwen Clancy from behind the camera. It’s December 15th, 2011. We’re doing this interview in Reno, Nevada, and doing the interview is John Walker.

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

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

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

MR. WALKER: Bob, given your activism in the state at the grass roots level on MX, military air and land withdrawals and Yucca Mountain, what influence did the prehistory of these issues have on the Yucca Mountain
MR. FULKERSON: Well, I think a couple things. One is because people here rose up and were victorious against the MX missile, were--had some significant victories on military land and airspace withdrawals, also were having some successes on the Nevada test site, all those things gave people the idea that with enough courage and with enough determination, and by getting organized, we could also take on this massive foe of the nuclear power industry in the Department of Energy. So, you know, they kind of blazed a trail that we were able to follow.

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

MR. WALKER: How did those issues help Citizen
Alert move forward as an activist organization?

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

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

MR. FULKERSON: Well, you know, the Department of Energy was—and the nuclear industry were fond of showing this arid desolate place called Yucca Mountain, saying, “Oh, look,” you know, “isn’t this a great place for nuclear waste?” And, you know, it’s a pretty dry, desolate place. So we had to show people that Yucca Mountain wasn’t this
place in the god-awful deserts of Nevada. You know, Yucca Mountain was a mobile Chernobyl that was going to be rolling past their farms, their homes, their schools, their businesses, through their towns, every day for twenty-four-- every hour, twenty-four hours a day, for about thirty years. That was Yucca Mountain.

(05:00)

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

And then eventually, another one was built and it went all the way back east. And, you know, we did all this stuff on a shoestring. I mean, we traded the trailer that the nuclear waste canister was on, we traded an old computer
for, and these welders up in Dayton made it. The cask itself was made for a song, just donated material by a real talented fiberglass boat maker out in Lemon Valley. And, of course, you know, we just—we stayed with people along the routes. We had Marvin Resnikoff, who is a world-renowned expert in nuclear waste transportation, come with us. We had Bill Rossy (phonetic), a Western Shoshone elder, come along with us. At one point we had other experts in the field come along with us, and we really demonstrate to people along the route that, you know, this is going to impact them and they better come to Nevada’s defense.

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

MR. FULKERSON: Sure, I was hired as the Executive Director at Citizen Alert in March of 1984. You know, I—it wasn’t—I was going to be a teacher, and that’s what I thought my path was leading to, and when I was interning in Senator Laxalt’s office, a couple years prior to that, this issue of the MX missile came up. And a ranch that my grandfather had owned with Dorothy Gallagher in Pine Valley in Eureka County was going to be impacted by that, and I’d spent the best, most wonderful years of my childhood there, and I loved that area, and I thought, “How could they do this?”
And so when I came back to Nevada, I volunteered for this organization, Citizen Alert, and did some fundraisers and stuff like that, and they offered me the job. And I said, “Well, great, how much does it pay?” And they said, “It pays $1,000 a month, and you get an extra organizer in Las Vegas named Bill Vincent, and we’re paying him $300 a month.” And I thought, that’s great, you know, I’m there, I have my career. And, you know, I learned a hell of a lot, and I really learned a lot from this guy, Bill Vincent, who was an old labor organizer, a newsman. He knew Nevada better than anybody else in--you know, that I’d--and I really wanted to know Nevada as good as he did. He worked for the Reno Journal. He was an amazing writer. He did all of our editing and a lot of our public speaking. He had instant credibility being an elder, and being rooted in Las Vegas, and it was just a real privilege to work with him.

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

MR. FULKERSON: Uh-huh. Yeah, well, we knew that, you know, as long as it was viewed as just a Nevada issue, we would be isolated, and, of course, that’s why they wanted to put it there is because we were isolated, we were politically powerless; so we had to build allies. And how better to do that than by scaring the shit out of people and telling them
that this radioactive--these mobile Chernobyls were going to be by their doors in a way that had never happened in the history of this country before. And so we built these life-size mock nuclear waste canisters. And here’s an article that appeared in the Los Angeles Times as a result, and we had articles and TV stations in Denver, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, San Diego, all over the west, and then, eventually, all over the country, doing stories on Yucca Mountain and lifting up the transportation issue as the Achilles’ Heel in this whole national debacle.

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

(10:00)

MR. WALKER: Indeed. Bob, you developed a theme of “Nevada’s not a wasteland,” to counteract the image of Nevada as a dumping ground for nuclear materials. Could you talk about the effectiveness, and the limits, of that awareness campaign that you guys started?

MR. FULKERSON: Sure. You know, the--it was--the slogan was produced by my predecessor, Abby Johnson, and
the--I think she even designed the bumper sticker, which we had made, and probably tens of thousands of these things were made and put on bumper stickers and STOP signs and things all over the country. And, you know, the limitation of it was kind of like, you know, the George Lakoff thing, “Don’t think of the elephant.” You know, Nevada, “Don’t think of the”--you know, “it’s not a wasteland,” and people kind of picture wasteland. But, you know, that’s the way people view the desert anyway, and so why fight that. What we wanted to show is that there were real people living out here, that there were real issues with our water supply, and that we were willing to fight for the state that we loved with everything we had, and if they didn’t like it, you know, too bad.

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

MR. FULKERSON: Sure. You know, I think people going against the government, and particularly big entities like the Department of Energy, with a lot of physicists and people with degrees, there’s a natural amount of fear that they might get, and one of the best pieces of advice I got
was from Maya Miller, who helped start Citizen Alert, and, you know, she always said, “Don’t let your fear motivate you.” You know, “What would you say, what would you do, if you didn’t have that fear?”

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

Now we didn’t go quite as far as the folks in Deaf Smith and Swisher County went, because I also went down there and worked with those folks against the dump and was at a hearing when Ben Roosey (phonetic), the head of the Office of Nuclear Waste Management came down there, and they actually
had him hanging out in effigy. The Texans did that. In Nevada, we were a little bit more polite, we just took the hearings over.

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

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

But over the years it became much more of an allied relationship, and much more of a strategic relationship where we were really working hard to give them the political cover
and the support that they needed to fight this thing on the floor, you know, like Harry Reed. You know, once in a while we got stuck with somebody like Senator Chick Hecht, whose famous quote was, “We owe it to our gold star mothers to accept nuclear waste,” which then Bill Vincent decided to say, “The new slogan should be, ‘Nevada, wide as the space between Chick Hecht’s ears.’” So we had a different relationship with different people and, you know, and, I mean, and— it was regardless of party. I mean, you know, Les Aspin was the force behind the MX, and Bennett Johnson was the force behind the nuclear waste dump. They were both Democrats. There were Democrats in the legislature from Las Vegas who very pro-nuclear, Senator Joe Neal, people like Tom Hickey, who were both promoting a dump at certain points in their careers, and we had to go toe to toe with them.

(15:00)

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

MR. FULKERSON: Well, we didn’t really have much of a formal relationship with the government entities themselves, but with the people in those counties and in
those areas, you know, we worked hard to organize with them.
I think later on there was more of a formal relationship, but
when I was there, things were just kind of getting--you know,
people were still--you know, I mean, even Las Vegas. They
didn’t want to jeopardize the Nevada test site stuff, so they
were not all that great on Yucca Mountain at all. Of course,
Nye County still isn’t that great on Yucca Mountain. And,
you know, Lincoln County had a history of wanting to invite
every single polluting project they could find in, Aerojet,
toxic waste incinerators, “Yucca Mountain, bring it.” We had
a very adversarial relationship with the Lincoln County
folks.

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

MR. FULKERSON: Well, we worked hard to build
bridges with the tribes, both from a moral perspective,
since, you know, they were here first and they had a lot of
wisdom and teachings about the protection and the care of the
land and the water, and from a political perspective because
of their sovereign status and their nation-to-nation
relationship they had with the federal government. Plus, for
me, it meant the chance to go out to places like Duckwater
and Shurz and Pyramid Lake and other places, and Duck Valley,
and places that I love to get to and have meetings and camp out there and talk to folks. And that was part of—that was probably the funnest part of my job was going out to places like that and camping out and living and—with folks out there.

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

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

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

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

(20:00)

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

MR. FULKERSON: Well, we had to get involved. I mean, for one thing it was the—an example of the federal government’s lies that they told the people of Nevada, to
“trust us, just wipe the fallout off your windshields. Go inside, there’s no problem, there is no danger,” and yet people paid with their lives. I mean, you know, my friend Joe Sanchez went on to get advanced lymphatic leukemia, which is the most radiogenic of leukemias, and died from that as a “down winder.” People in the northwest quadrant of the Nevada test site were impacted. We helped pass the Radiation Victims Compensation Act of 1986, which awarded money to people who were, you know, and their families of people who were impacted by the nuclear weapons testing issue.

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

But we realized again that we needed some science on our side and, you know, what are the impacts of nuclear weapons testing? So we got a grant to go around and collect water, and, you know, we knew from the hydrologic reports that water flowed towards Ash Meadows, and from underneath
the Nevada test site. So we went all over that area, and we
even decided to go up north in places like Hiko (phonetic),
and took water samples. We took water samples around Project
Faultless out, you know, in central Nevada, where there was a
nuclear weapons testing event, and tested the water primarily
for tritium, but for other radioactive materials. And we
went around in my pickup and collected these water samples,
sent them to a lab up in Canada, and they came back and they
showed, you know, higher than normal readings in several
places.

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

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

MR. FULKERSON: Well, you know, I don’t think
anybody can really say for sure. And, you know, I think it
would be kind of arrogant to say that, “Oh, it would have
been built.” I mean, because maybe, maybe it--I mean, for
sure another group would have formed, you know, and other
people would have come in. We just happened to have an
organization, I just happened to have been hired to do the
work. But, you know, if—and also had blessing to work with a number of incredibly talented people, people who volunteered. Like the people that made that nuclear waste cask and built that trailer for next to nothing, being on our side. People who, you know, who just loved our state and wanted to fight hard and needed a vehicle to express their love for the state, and their defiance at what the federal government wanted to dump on us. And so we became that vehicle.

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

(25:00)

MR. WALKER: Tell me about the printed press, the
written press. How did they respond to your organization?

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

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

MR. WALKER: Bob, when you were at Citizen Alert,
what was your experience with military airspace and land withdrawals in Nevada, which were pretty significant in those days, and how did that relate to Yucca Mountain?

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

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

It was veterans like the folks that we worked with out in Fallon (phonetic) to shut down the Bravo 20 bombing range, and here’s--and when they were known to be bombing that area without permits from the federal government, we
went out there in 1985 and took it over, and we built this camp. And they arrested us, they took us into Churchill County Jail, and the next day more people went in, and eventually more people went in, and we had it shut down for the whole summer, and, as a result, we got, you know, a hearing before the House Public Lands Committee, and we got this thing called the Nevada Report, which is what we were asking for, which was a cumulative study, a comprehensive study of cumulative impacts, not just of the Nevada test site, but of the other military land and airspace withdrawals in Fallon, in Hawthorne and throughout the state. And it was a--that was a good victory to have. But we did it by cutting the issue as one of patriotism and one of forcing our federal agencies to follow the United States Constitution.

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

MR. FULKERSON: Well, again, that’s a real tough call but I think the--pretty easy to say that the reason that Yucca Mountain has not been built so far, in addition to the huge amount of citizen opposition, is because of this guy here, Senator Harry Reed, and that’s a picture of us, back when I had more hair and we were both a lot younger, taken about 1987. And he’s been at it, you know, ever since. And without him there, I think it’s going to be--it’s going to be a little dicey.
The other trend that is not, you know, that is very
disconcerting, is this idea of opening it up for
reprocessing, which is a ruse. It will bring--because all it
does is it brings a lot of nuclear garbage to Nevada, and
then no plan to deal with it. This so-called "notion of
reprocessing" is a ruse, and it can’t be done safely. And
what’s also very disconcerting is that we have people like
Mark Amaday (phonetic) and Joe Hecht, who have refused
to--the first elected representatives in the history of
Nevada, since Chick Hecht, to not come out and oppose 100
percent Yucca Mountain. And that’s very dangerous too. I
mean, you know, to Dean Heller’s credit, he has thrown down
and said he will fight hard against it.

(30:00)
So, you know, and then maybe the best we can hope
for is a temporary victory anyway. I mean, you know, David
Brower said, "In environmental battles there’s no permanent
victories," that they could--you know, if you stop them from
clear-cutting that forest, they can always come back later,
but once they clear-cut, it’s gone forever. Same maybe for
Yucca Mountain. We can, you know, we can, you know, on our
watch we can do our duty, protect it for our watch and then
hope that the next people who come along will do the same.

MR. WALKER: Bob, what lessons can you glean as an
activist about the Yucca Mountain issue?
MR. FULKERSON: Well, I think that, you know, one
is you never, ever, ever give up. You know, I mean, there
was many, many times when it looked like, forget it, you
know? We can’t do this. I mean, you know, how many times
did Congress— you know, if Congress passed the Screw Nevada
Bill once, but there were many, many other times that they
narrowed down the site selection process to just Nevada.
There were many, many other decisions that Congress made,
that the Department of Energy made, that we didn’t want them
to make, and it seemed like defeat, defeat, defeat, defeat,
defeat, one after another on—you know, for many years.

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

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

You know, I think another one though is, you know,
the political polarization across party lines is a loser, you know? That, you know, the good thing about the Yucca Mountain fight is that it was not—we didn’t make it partisan, it was not a partisan issue, and that there were, you know, long-time Republicans with, you know, radical Democrats working together on this issue, you know, and the slogan was from—what we stole from the MX in our meetings, which was, “Leave your guns at the door,” you know, “and today we’re going to focus on how we’re going to fight Yucca Mountain.” Party affiliation doesn’t matter.

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

MR. FULKERSON: Uh-huh.

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

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

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

MR. FULKERSON: Yeah, I’ve been blessed to have a number of mentors who, really, you know, I wouldn’t be anywhere without them. Of course, Maya Miller comes to mind
first. She was the one that helped to start Citizen Alert, also helped to start PLAN. You know, and out there in Washoe Valley I would go out there probably once a week and talk to her to get her advice about things that we were working on, and the number one thing that I always took away from her was to be fearless, you know, and not to be afraid of saying things if I knew the truth, and not to be afraid of the consequences. Just do it and let the, you know, let the--and the consequences will be fine.

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

And then, of course, Abby Johnson, you know, who was the director before me, and I, you know, right after I got hired, you know, I had no idea what the heck I was doing and, you know, and she taught me things like how to work with a board of directors, how to organize our membership box because we--it was in a chocolate--hot coca box with about 300 index cards of all the members and their history, and I had that on a desk, and the desk was a door over two file cabinets, and that was our office. And she, you know, helped me to set that up and how to raise money. Of course, Kit
Miller, Maya’s daughter, was really helpful in how to raise money so we could fund this whole thing.

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

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

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

MR. FULKERSON: All right. Thank you.

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

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

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

MR. FULKERSON: Ach—no, that’s totally fine.

MS. CLANCY: Good. Thank you.

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

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
TRANSCRIBER’S CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing has been transcribed by me to the best of my ability, and constitutes a true and accurate transcript of the mechanically recorded proceedings in the above matter.

Dated at Aurora, Colorado, this 1st day of January, 2012.

/s/ John Schasny

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