INTERVIEW OF SUSAN FYE

BY ABBY JOHNSON

EUREKA COUNTY
LESSONS LEARNED VIDEO PROJECT

held in

CRESCENT VALLEY, NEVADA

April 21, 2011
MS. CLANCY: And Abby Johnson will be conducting the interview. It’s April 21, 2011 in Crescent Valley.

MS. JOHNSON: I’m Abby Johnson. I’m the Nuclear Waste Advisor for Eureka County. We’re doing the Eureka County Lessons Learned Video Project, and we’re going to be interviewing Susan Fye.

Susan, when did you come to Crescent Valley, and why did you come to Crescent Valley?

MS. FYE: We moved to Crescent Valley in 1994, in March, and there were a number of reasons why we came to Crescent Valley. For years, we had come out here exploring various parts of rural Nevada, primarily looking at wild hot springs, and an opportunity to come out to Crescent Valley where we knew there was a hot springs, and we hoped to find our very own. And, that’s what happened in March of 1994.

MS. JOHNSON: How did you first learn about the Yucca Mountain Project, and the Carlin Rail Corridor?

MS. FYE: In the Eighties, I had heard vaguely about Yucca Mountain, but it really wasn’t on my consciousness, my radar screen at that point. Moving to Nevada in 1989, we became more and more aware of it, and when Joseph was involved, as I was, in selling crafts and arts, we met some people who were very concerned about Yucca Mountain, and that was in the early Nineties. And, then, of course, when we moved to Crescent Valley, and probably in 1998,
became acutely aware of the proposed rail route coming through, or nearby Crescent Valley.

MS. JOHNSON: The next thing that happened was the Department of Energy released its Environmental Impact Statement in draft form, and was asking the public to comment on the EIS. I know you were involved in some of the outreach activities and awareness activities relating to that. Can you tell us what you did?

MS. FYE: I was involved more behind the scenes, if you will, in a secretarial role. I had communication primarily with you notifying us of when they had planned and scheduled these meetings, which was the first step, to find out exactly when the meeting was going to be.

The second step for us was I was a member of the committee, as I say, primarily doing secretarial work, getting the word out to all the committee members and to the community, printing up fliers and distributing them about who, what, when and where, giving them as much information on the fliers as we could.

At the committee meeting, in particular because we were a core group, we were very involved in perhaps reading the massive amounts of material that we were getting. We got, for example, one of the books was from the League of Women Voters, which came out I believe in ’98 or ’99, which is the Nuclear Waste Primer and was, for many people, easier
to read because it wasn’t volumes and volumes of very
technical information. But, reading the Draft, we came up
with certain questions, and we wanted those questions asked
at the meeting, even if they weren’t going to be answered.
And, so, part of my job was distributing those
questions to citizens who would be able to ask them. And,
that’s what I did continually.
MS. JOHNSON: As I recall, that was a very
effective strategy, and those questions were asked again and
again.
MS. FYE: And, again and again.
MS. JOHNSON: And, they were, some of them were
rather simple questions.
MS. FYE: Yes.
MS. JOHNSON: Like who will own the rail line? Who
will own the land under the tracks?
MS. FYE: Right. And, will it be a dedicated line,
or will, in the future, will it then be turned over? Some of
the questions were what compensation will you be giving to
people who the rail line, proposed rail line will go through
their property, or affect their mining claims, or their
grazing rights, let alone the property values here in town.
Having a nuclear waste train going through your backyard for
35 years is probably not a great selling point, if you’re
comparing property, say, in Lander County where you don’t
have the train. So, those questions were asked over and over
and over again, and we never really got good answers.

MS. JOHNSON: The actual day of the Draft
Environmental Impact Statement hearing in December of 1999,
what do you recall of that day and of the experience of that
many hours of hearing?

MS. FYE: I was impressed that in fact the
committee had managed to get standing room only. Practically
the entire day, people stayed, they were interested, they
were involved, they were asking their own questions. What I
was also impressed with was that this is a diverse community
that they don’t always agree politically.

We had the Western Shoshone Defense Projects versus
the mining versus the other grazing rights. They, under the
direction of the committee, and was actually stated in at
times to them, the preliminary meetings before that we had
with the public, was yes, you may have your differences, but
this is a common problem. Let’s focus on that.

At that meeting, there was highly emotional, highly
rational also comments, questions that were directed at the
problem, not bringing up past differences that these diverse
groups had had. And, I was impressed with it, and I think
that the officials who came were impressed. They thought
this was going to perhaps, in my impression, they seemed that
they thought they were just going to roll over us, that we
were a bunch of country bumpkins out in the middle of Crescent Valley, in the middle of no where, and they were going to snowball us with statistics that we wouldn’t understand. And, it didn’t work that way.

MS. JOHNSON: My impression is that a combination of the people speaking up and the problems of the many, many parts of the private land in the rail line corridor both were effective ways to tell the Department of Energy that this maybe wasn’t the route they thought it was.

MS. FYE: Right, that was my impression.

MS. JOHNSON: Let’s move on to the next question. What is your role here in the community of Crescent Valley?

MS. FYE: In Crescent Valley, I have been the Justice of the Peace, first Justice of the Peace pro tem from 1998, 1999 and through 2000 when I stood for election. I was elected in 2000 and was unopposed in 2006. At this point, I do plan on running again in 2012. So, I have, shall we say I have to keep a lower profile when it comes to actively participating in whether it be this particular issue or other ones, it goes with the judicial canons that unless it specifically has to do with the judiciary, that your role cannot be out front. They say it’s using your judicial position to unfair advantage.

MS. JOHNSON: But, at the same time, you must
understand the community rather well?

MS. FYE: I do in fact. There are a number of individuals and families in this community that came here not necessarily for jobs, there are not that many jobs in Crescent Valley per se, but they liked about Eureka County the shall we say lack of regulation and government control. I’m not saying they’re necessarily anti-government, but they are perhaps free thinkers and prefer to work under local rules rather than nationally imposed rules.

At the same time, while I’m saying they’re independent, they are very concerned about their community, not shall we say environmentalists per se, but it is their home. They have great attachments to it.

One of the things that they were really concerned about was if an accident should occur, whether it just be a derailment or construction workers, whatever was going to happen, what would be the emergency response here. And, it wasn’t an issue that had been addressed by anyone anywhere. Subsequent to bringing up those concerns, there were some discussions with emergency responders and law enforcement. But, the geographic area is so wide and so sparsely populated, that to get immediate response to a train accident outside of Crescent Valley, could take an hour, which might not be enough time to do anything effective as far as containment would be, let alone if there were injuries
involved.

Personnel, number of personnel, they’d have to draw from Battle Mountain, Carlin. Eureka is too far away. So, you have to—those concerns were very much in the public’s eye, and they were making those questions, too.

MS. JOHNSON: And, there’s only a volunteer.

MS. FYE: Only a volunteer fire department.

Staffing as far as law enforcement is, we have a sheriff substation, which is located in the justice facility, along with the court. We have an under-sheriff, and we have two other deputies. Normally, there are two of them on duty, the under-sheriff and a deputy, but they may be called out of the area, for example, up on Interstate 80, or over on State Route 278, and they would be already committed to doing something else. So, if an emergency happened in Crescent Valley, they wouldn’t be available.

The volunteer fire department, many of them have jobs. They may not be located right here. They may not be working at our mine. They may be working in Battle Mountain or Elko, so you’re looking at an hour for anyone to get here.

MS. JOHNSON: Let’s move on to the next question.

The politics of Yucca Mountain right now are uncertain, although that’s something that is more the nature of the whole issue of Yucca Mountain. If the Carlin route were to be revived along with the Yucca Mountain Project,
what would your reaction be and what do you think the reaction of people in Crescent Valley would be?

MS. FYE: If the Yucca Mountain Project were reactivated and the Carlin route were once again being considered, I, my personal reaction would be absolute opposition as a landowner and as a resident of the area. I think that we would then go through the same process that we did in the late Nineties, you know, assessing how the public felt.

However, my contacts that I have had with the people in Crescent Valley, as they’ve gone through these political yes, it’s on, no, it’s off, yes, it’s on, who knows, I believe that the opposition is, in the north county, remains steadfastly in opposition to the Carlin rail route. They don’t want a train or trucks going through their county, crossing their property, in close proximity to their properties any more now than they did, what, eleven years ago.

MS. JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. FYE: Okay.

(End of interview of Susan Fye.)
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 this matter.

Dated at Aurora, Colorado, this 1st day of June, 2011.

s/ Mary Chevalier
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