

ABBY JOHNSON'S

INTERVIEW WITH SANDY GREEN

EUREKA COUNTY, NEVADA

YUCCA MOUNTAIN LESSONS LEARNED PROJECT

held in

EUREKA, NEVADA

May 17, 2011

1 MS. CLANCY: This is Gwen Clancy from behind the
2 camera. It is May 17, 2011. We are in Eureka, Nevada. And,
3 conducting this interview is Abigail Johnson.

4 MS. JOHNSON: I'm Abigail Johnson, the Nuclear
5 Waste Advisor for Eureka County, Nevada. This is the Eureka
6 County Lessons Learned video project, and today we are
7 interviewing Sandy Green, who is the former Information
8 Officer and Coordinator of the Yucca Mountain Information
9 Office for Eureka County, and is also a former County
10 Commissioner.

11 Okay, Sandy, thank you for talking to us today.
12 When you came to Eureka, when was that, and tell us about
13 your background here in Eureka County.

14 MS. GREEN: My husband and I came to Eureka in 1969
15 because he wanted to raise cattle and sheep and farm. So, I
16 had done that. We managed to do that for about 18 years.

17 MS. JOHNSON: Did you have previous--

18 MS. GREEN: Absolutely not, came from San Diego and
19 the beach world and this was totally foreign.

20 MS. JOHNSON: But, now it's home?

21 MS. GREEN: And, now it's home after 40 years,
22 can't think of any other place that I would rather live.

23 MS. JOHNSON: At some point, you became the
24 Coordinator of the County's Yucca Mountain Information
25 Office. How did that happen?

1 MS. GREEN: There was an ad in the paper, and I
2 think there were some notices placed around town. I had
3 never heard of the Yucca Mountain office, so I think it must
4 have been fairly new, hadn't been in existence for very long.
5 I knew Carol Baluse (phonetic) from town, and she was leading
6 the job, she was the first one, and asked if I would be
7 interested in applying, and I did. The Commissioners
8 interviewed me, and I think there were a couple or three
9 other people they interviewed as well, and thought that since
10 I was a long-time resident, that I would care enough about
11 the County to be concerned about what was going on.

12 MS. JOHNSON: And, that was in 1994?

13 MS. GREEN: 1994, uh-huh.

14 MS. JOHNSON: And, then, so it sounds like you sort
15 of became aware of the Yucca Mountain Project around the same
16 time you became aware of the job?

17 MS. GREEN: Absolutely.

18 MS. JOHNSON: And, so, as you learned on the job,
19 tell us how that went.

20 MS. GREEN: That was a pretty steep learning curve,
21 having had no knowledge and really coming kind of from a
22 sheep farm background, the travel was very interesting, lots
23 of trips in the beginning to Washington, D.C. to talk to EPA
24 people and NRC people, DOE, some transportation meetings that
25 were held in Kansas City, and the travel was really very

1 interesting.

2 MS. JOHNSON: I think that at one point, you went
3 on a geology tour of the Yucca Mountain site to see what the
4 rocks looked like in the vicinity?

5 MS. GREEN: Uh-huh. And, fortunately, that was in
6 March where it was a little bit cooler than normal, but still
7 pretty warm. There must have been a group of 20 or 30 other
8 AULG people who were interested also in the geology, because
9 at that time, that was one of the most important things that
10 I think we were discussing.

11 MS. JOHNSON: I think we have some pictures from
12 that trip, and maybe we could look at a couple of them so you
13 could--

14 MS. GREEN: And, this was one of the volcanoes.
15 I'm not quite sure where that was either.

16 MS. JOHNSON: You know, actually, you do have
17 things written on the back.

18 MS. GREEN: I was better than I thought. Thank
19 you. Red Cone. But, that doesn't tell me exactly where it
20 was. It was about a 30 mile north and south trek over these
21 cones. And, it is--and, not being a geologist, this really
22 was pretty interesting to me, how they determined what kind
23 of rock it was and how it would be safe to contain nuclear
24 waste.

25 MS. JOHNSON: It looks like this one is in a

1 trench.

2 MS. GREEN: In a trench.

3 MS. JOHNSON: But, it looks like you didn't go in
4 the trench.

5 MS. GREEN: I don't think I went in the trench. I
6 was probably a little smarter than that. And, these were
7 true geologists, the majority of the people in this group, so
8 they actually knew what they were looking at, and were just
9 kind of discussing it amongst themselves, and then sharing
10 some of that information with us.

11 MS. JOHNSON: It looks like this one is a picture
12 that depicts one of the young volcanoes in the area?

13 MS. GREEN: Uh-huh, and this probably was more
14 north of Beatty, and they called this a Black Cone, and do
15 not ask me the difference between a Red Cone and a Black
16 Cone.

17 MS. JOHNSON: What's the difference between a Red
18 Cone and a Black Cone?

19 MS. GREEN: We will have to call one of those
20 geologists.

21 MS. JOHNSON: And, on the back, it says it's Trench
22 Number 8.

23 MS. GREEN: Yeah. And, you know, I'm wondering,
24 these trenches had to have been north of where the Yucca
25 Mountain site was actually going to be. I think they had dug

1 test holes all over that desert. So, this--and, I think I
2 took most of the pictures that were north of where the
3 entrance to Yucca Mountain was going to be.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Well, you went on this--Sandy, what
5 did you learn about the geology of Yucca Mountain?

6 MS. GREEN: Well, we did learn that it is a very
7 active, very young volcanic area, so that there are lots of
8 fault lines going through it. The last volcano, I think, was
9 probably 10,000 years ago, which in geologic time is a pretty
10 new one.

11 And, there are always those concerns about water,
12 and the heat that generated from the casks that were going to
13 be buried in Yucca Mountain, and what would happen with that
14 kind of drip, drip, drip in an already wet mountain. And, I
15 think those findings probably should have alerted all of us
16 to maybe the fact that it was not the safest place to store
17 waste.

18 MS. JOHNSON: Did you have conclusions about
19 transportation, Eureka County would be affected directly by
20 transportation to the repository?

21 MS. GREEN: And, I think transportation issues were
22 always at the top of everybody's mind, because they were
23 talking about rail, then they were talking about heavy haul,
24 and--

25 MS. JOHNSON: Explain what heavy haul is.

1 MS. GREEN: Heavy haul was truck carrying extremely
2 heavy casks, which would entomb any of the waste. One of the
3 problems, I think one of the routes was coming from Ely
4 through Eureka. I don't know that that ever was one--that
5 was not a preferred route, but it was an alternative. So,
6 trucks and trailers had to be designed to go through the
7 curves, and the casks had to be able to do that as well.

8 Those meetings were held mostly in Tonopah. I
9 don't think we ever had one held in Eureka, in the beginning
10 when they were trying to design a cask.

11 The rail issue came up when they were thinking of
12 having the rail go through Pine Valley, and then they changed
13 it all of a sudden to go through Crescent Valley, and
14 naturally that was a concern to residents in Elko County as
15 well as Eureka, because the train would come through Elko
16 County, and travel over the Humboldt, so that there were
17 those problems with accident happening, with trains being
18 derailed into a water supply, or even anywhere, that
19 passenger trains would meet other kinds of trains, and there
20 would really be some serious problems.

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

22 Sandy, once Eureka County learned that the
23 Department of Energy had moved the Carlin Rail Corridor
24 proposed route to Crescent Valley and Beowawe, I think you
25 took a tour of the actual where the rail corridor would go.

1 Can you talk about that a little bit?

2 MS. GREEN: Yes. I think you were with me and John
3 Balliett (phonetic), who was the Natural Resource Director,
4 and Lenny Fiorenzi as well, and we were in the Jimmy and
5 started really at the rail, and took what we thought would be
6 the proposed route, an all day adventure through some of the
7 most heavily mineral-laden dirt in probably the country. So,
8 we wondered at that time how you could build a rail through
9 that sort of ground and keep it from being mined at any point
10 in time.

11 MS. JOHNSON: And, that was back in 1999, probably.

12 MS. GREEN: Before a lot of exploration had taken
13 place, and it also went through really some generational
14 ranching communities. Some of those ranchers had been there
15 for probably 100 years. And, it really is some of the finest
16 ranch land as well.

17 So, it would have impacted not only Crescent
18 Valley, but that entire route. There just wouldn't have been
19 anything that could have been done. And, also, wildlife as
20 well. So, it really was a pretty negative factor to Eureka
21 County.

22 MS. JOHNSON: After you drove the route, did you
23 have a much better understanding of--I gather you did have a
24 much better understanding of the on-the-ground impacts?

25 MS. GREEN: Absolutely. You could see it. I mean,

1 it just was right in front of us.

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

3 Sandy, at one point, you represented the County at
4 a Department of Energy meeting on transportation in Tonopah.
5 Can you tell us about that?

6 MS. GREEN: Yes. That was really a very
7 interesting meeting because that's when I very first learned
8 that through their statistics that they had drawn up, that
9 they felt that those of us in the rural communities were
10 insignificant, that because we were low in numbers, we really
11 did not even fit into their statistics at all.

12 And, I think what started that conversation was
13 when they were talking about the downwinders, and the fact
14 that there were more sheep that were killed than people that
15 were affected. And, that is, I guess, what made us
16 insignificant, and that's what I'll always remember about
17 this project.

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

19 The poster that we have in front of us titled
20 "Protecting Public Health and Safety at the Proposed Geologic
21 Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada," depicts a sort of a
22 ring of agencies that are supposed to be enforcing safety and
23 public health standards that would make the repository
24 "safe." And, I'm wondering if in your experience, this
25 promise of safety is credible?

1 MS. GREEN: It never seemed particularly credible
2 to me whenever I attended any meetings, Washington, D.C.,
3 with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Department of
4 Transportation in Nevada, and EPA project workers in Nevada
5 as well, that just at a gut level, they wanted this project
6 to go forward so badly that they would make the science work.
7 And, so, at my gut level, there was really a lack of trust in
8 what their facts and figures were.

9 MS. JOHNSON: So, Sandy, many years later, and many
10 billions of dollars later, what are your thoughts about the
11 Yucca Mountain Project and where we're at?

12 MS. GREEN: As far as I'm concerned, I think it
13 probably is not a safe repository. I think they haven't
14 answered any questions about the storage casks, with their
15 sweating and the dripping from the mountain, the fact that
16 any water could conceivably go into the Colorado River. That
17 has been brought up. I don't think any of those answers have
18 been made. The questions are still out there, and I think it
19 really is still an unsafe place to store waste.

20 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

21 MS. GREEN: You're welcome.

22 MS. JOHNSON: We were going to be using the
23 material as archival DVDs for researchers, and also to take
24 little short clips to put onto the web, and we want to know
25 if we have your permission to use--

1 MS. GREEN: Absolutely, you have my permission.

2 MS. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you so much.

3 MS. GREEN: Thank you.

4 (Whereupon, the interview with Sandy Green was
5 concluded.)

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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 23rd day of June, 2011.

s/s Mary Chevalier
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