

INTERVIEW OF JAMIE GRUENING

BY ABBY JOHNSON

EUREKA COUNTY

LESSONS LEARNED VIDEO PROJECT

held in

CRESCENT VALLEY, NEVADA

April 21, 2011

1 MS. CLANCY: We are in Crescent Valley. Doing the  
2 interview is Abby Johnson.

3 MS. JOHNSON: I'm Abby Johnson. I'm the Nuclear  
4 Waste Advisor for Eureka County. We're doing our Eureka  
5 County Lessons Learned Video Project, and we're interviewing  
6 Jamie Gruening.

7 Jamie, when did you come to Crescent Valley for the  
8 first time?

9 MS. GRUENING: Well, I moved here in the mid  
10 1990's, and I was seeking a place that was peaceful and quiet  
11 and uncluttered and unhassled and beautiful, and I found that  
12 here.

13 MS. JOHNSON: And, then, when did you first hear  
14 about the Yucca Mountain project and the Carlin Rail Corridor  
15 in Crescent Valley?

16 MS. GRUENING: I don't really remember an exact  
17 time frame. And, I also don't remember exactly how it came  
18 to my attention. Word of mouth, I'm sure. It seems like  
19 there were some things in the local television news, perhaps  
20 radio news, I don't know. But, I think mostly word of mouth,  
21 and then maybe small notices in the post office about  
22 meetings or possible sources of information, that sort of  
23 thing.

24 MS. JOHNSON: When you started to learn more about  
25 the Carlin Rail Corridor, what did you find out about how it

1 might affect you?

2 MS. GRUENING: Well, I live seven to eight miles  
3 southeast of the township itself, and in looking into the  
4 issue, I was immediately alarmed, rocking the boat of my  
5 existence that I was happily establishing. But, to learn a  
6 little about it and the possible rail routes, I started doing  
7 a little, you know, opening my eyes and ears, listening to  
8 people, listening to news, reading some materials. Then, in  
9 exploring the Draft EIS report and looking at detailed maps  
10 of the rail corridors, I learned that, or discovered that the  
11 primary and secondary choice rail corridors for shipment of  
12 nuclear waste, one of them up here to be by, you know, the  
13 exact Draft EIS maps, three-tenths of a mile from my home,  
14 and the other possibly as much as seven-tenths of a mile from  
15 my home. That is too close for my comfort.

16 MS. JOHNSON: And, so, what did you do?

17 MS. GRUENING: Well, I listened, I talked, I read  
18 some, I, through different processes, wrote some letters,  
19 spoke at a hearing. I don't know what else I did do, except  
20 very concerned and upset.

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

22 MS. GRUENING: --not a "public speaker," I mean,  
23 I'm shy to even yak with people very much. I mean, I'm  
24 friendly enough, but--okay.

25 MS. JOHNSON: So, when you--the day of the EIS

1 hearing, they were taking testimony from people in Crescent  
2 Valley about what their concerns were. What did you tell  
3 them?

4 MS. GRUENING: Well, I had read probably not every  
5 page of the Draft EIS, because it, as I recall, was quite a  
6 volume, but a lot of it, and I was very concerned about  
7 health and safety issues, the real nuts and bolts of the  
8 process, just the construction of the rail line, what about  
9 access, road access to my home, because one way or the other,  
10 whichever route, the primary or the secondary, would likely  
11 have me cut off by a rail line. Would there be an overpass,  
12 an underpass, a guarded crossing, no access at all? So, I  
13 was concerned about that, of course.

14 But, also about the degradation of my quality of  
15 life literally on my property, the noise, the possible  
16 exposure, both during the construction of rail lines and once  
17 the project finished, and in use. I also of course was  
18 concerned, like many people, the nuts and bolts of property  
19 values, possible compensation, reimbursements. Emergency  
20 response for any accidents or illnesses or disruptions. I  
21 don't know what else in there, but I was very upset, and like  
22 I say, I did some reading, and to find the proximity nearer  
23 than many residents of the area, because I live out of town,  
24 and the rail lines were to be skirting town, well, not  
25 skirting my place, not by very much.

1           So I was very concerned, and I came to the meeting  
2 quite nervous. I'm not easily conversational, I'm certainly  
3 not a public speaker, but I made a number of points and had a  
4 lot of questions that I asked in my public statement. And, I  
5 had a map showing exactly where my specific location is in  
6 relation to the primary and secondary rail corridors.

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

8           Eureka County has maintained a neutral position all  
9 along, that is, they haven't taken an official position in  
10 favor of Yucca Mountain or opposed to Yucca Mountain. Do you  
11 agree with the County's approach?

12           MS. GRUENING: No, I don't, certainly on a personal  
13 level for, like I said earlier, the rocking of the boat of my  
14 home and lifestyle, but also on a little bigger picture, the  
15 unavoidable impact if the project were to go forward and  
16 progress, the unavoidable impact on the environment, both  
17 human and natural. So, when no stance was taken by the  
18 County, I was disappointed and, frankly, disgusted and I  
19 remain so.

20           MS. JOHNSON: If the Carlin route comes back, that  
21 is if the Yucca Mountain Project is revived and then you have  
22 to have transportation to the repository, what would your  
23 reaction be?

24           MS. GRUENING: Well, I would be no less concerned,  
25 no less disgusted, no less angry, for, as I said, the level

1 of my personal comfort and views, but also the bigger picture  
2 of the environment, the safety issues, and all of that.

3 I would again become involved. I remain shy and  
4 retiring, but I would become involved again in speaking and  
5 letter writing and participating and learning what more  
6 needed to be learned to assess accurately and speak as  
7 intelligently as possible and reasonably.

8 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you. Is there anything else  
9 you'd like to add?

10 MS. GRUENING: Well, yes. When I was contacted in  
11 regards to an interview of this nature, I wrote a brief  
12 statement, and I would like to read that. It's, like I say,  
13 brief.

14 Some years ago, I made public statements regarding  
15 the transportation of nuclear waste via rail through Crescent  
16 Valley en route to Yucca Mountain. The Draft EIS maps  
17 detailing the primary and secondary rail corridors placed the  
18 dedicated nuclear waste rail line between three-tenths and  
19 possibly as much as seven-tenths of a mile from my home,  
20 quite literally in my backyard.

21 Anyone can, I'm sure, grasp the gravity of my  
22 concern at that time. To be certain, I was relieved when the  
23 plan was suspended, or whatever the term would be. Should  
24 that plan be revisited in the future, my concern and anxiety  
25 would be no less. In fact, in the larger picture, the

1 generation of nuclear power, the storage of nuclear waste, or  
2 the transportation of nuclear waste to other storage sites,  
3 such as Yucca Mountain, frankly, anywhere near anyone's  
4 literal or figurative backyard remains immensely disturbing  
5 to me.

6           The huge risks and possible effects on the  
7 environment, both human and natural, have most certainly not  
8 decreased over these years. This remains clear and obvious,  
9 witness the awful and certainly unresolved situation in Japan  
10 at this very time.

11           Thank you.

12           MS. JOHNSON: Jamie, can you show us where the  
13 proposed rail lines would have gone in relation to where you  
14 live?

15           MS. GRUENING: Well, yes. I didn't come today with  
16 a copy of maps that I maybe had at the EIS hearings, but I do  
17 happen to have a map that I help people find me, a friend or  
18 a delivery person, or whatever, because I live outside of  
19 town by a number of miles, off a dirt road, and another dirt  
20 road, and another dirt road, as I said earlier, seeking the  
21 peace and quiet and beauty of this Valley, and I found it  
22 where I do live.

23           So, this is a map and it's not exactly to scale.  
24 But, like I say, this is what I send or fax to someone to  
25 find me. This is Interstate 80, and here's the state highway

1 that comes south from Interstate 80 through Beowawe and  
2 Crescent Valley and continues on south. And, there are a  
3 couple of ways to get to my place, but they all entail dirt  
4 roads. I live down here, very end, and the two proposed rail  
5 lines, one goes that way, and the other this way, like I say,  
6 very near to my home, somewhere between three-tenths of a  
7 mile on one of the proposed routes, and seven-tenths of a  
8 mile on the other proposed route. So, my peace and quiet  
9 would certainly be disturbed in literal ways and in  
10 figurative ways. You know, I came for the tranquility and  
11 beauty of the spot I live in.

12 MS. JOHNSON: And, we love this, I gather.

13 MS. GRUENING: Well, Yes. That's right.

14 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

15 Jamie, what would bother you the most about having  
16 the rail line build through Crescent Valley near your place?

17 MS. GRUENING: Two things on a very personal level.  
18 Like I say, kind of the nuts and bolts of things, the noise  
19 and the risk of continued exposure. I don't remember the  
20 exact numbers, I have them in my earlier statement from years  
21 ago, but the number of shipments over the number of years  
22 would have me exposed for the rest of my life.

23 And, I recall reading a lot of material and  
24 listening to people saying oh, the exposure is just very  
25 minimal. But, it's got to be cumulative, and being that

1 close to my home, I am now retired, I spend most of my time  
2 at home, so I would be greatly concerned about my own  
3 personal health, my animals, and anyone visiting me, but also  
4 the huge noise disturbance. The construction, I just can't  
5 even imagine putting up with that, or having to live with  
6 that.

7 And, the use of the rail line, I understand it  
8 wouldn't be constant like a public rail line, it would be  
9 dedicated, but it would be disturbing every time it's used.

10 I'll read it. When you sent this to me and I  
11 realized I wrote that? I said that? And, then, the other  
12 part you--

13 MS. JOHNSON: I mean, you really have--

14 MS. GRUENING: I have a transcript of the statement  
15 I made in 1999 to the hearing, and there's one little bit I  
16 would like to read, and it's in regards to the fear of  
17 exposure. Oh, come on, it can't be much. This is what I  
18 wrote in 1999 and spoke to the hearing.

19 "And, one further comment. Earlier today, I  
20 believe it was Mr. Morton who described low-level radiation  
21 and the exposure of low-level radiation as an energy rather  
22 than particles or mist or moisture or spillage, simply  
23 energy. This line of thinking suggests or seemed to suggest  
24 that, therefore, the consequences can only be minor because  
25 it is simply a matter of energy. I wonder if the energy of

1 low-level radiation exposure can have any significant impact?

2 We speak in words. Our spoken words are energy.  
3 They don't have particles. They don't have mist, moisture.  
4 They don't spill over. But, our spoken words are only  
5 energy. Do they have significant impact?

6 Thank you."

7 Having read that brief statement from years ago,  
8 the public statement that I had made, I do think also of some  
9 historical lessons, for instance, the down-winders who have  
10 been so tragically affected, many tragically affected by  
11 previous low-level exposure to radiation. And, there are  
12 other lessons through history that I can't cite, recent and  
13 not so recent, but it all builds to a picture of exposure to  
14 low-level radiation. It's not healthy for the human  
15 environment, the human person, or the natural environment,  
16 our plants, our animals, our water sources, our air, et  
17 cetera.

18 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

19 (End of interview with Jamie Gruening.)

20

21

22

23

24

25

