Nevada Test Site Oral History Project
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Interview with James Merlino

November 7, 2004
Tonopah, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Suzanne Becker

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[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 1.

Suzanne Becker: *We can just begin by getting some background, maybe about how long you've been in Nevada, when you came to Nevada, a little bit about your family background, that kind of thing.*

James Merlino: All right. My name is James D. Merlino. I've lived in Tonopah, Nevada since 1934, so I've been here all but five years of my life. Well, first, went to school here, through high school, and went to one year in Los Angeles, trade school after I graduated from high school here.

What year did you graduate from high school?

I graduated from high school in 1947.

OK.

Yes, twelve grades total, twelfth grade. And I worked, after coming home from school, for five years for a trucking firm here in Tonopah. They went out of business, so then I went to work for a local Mobil dealer here in Tonopah. I drove a truck for twenty years, hauled fuel, diesel, gasoline, and propane out of Bakersfield and Sacramento [California] into Tonopah and some other places in Nevada. And in 1972 this business that I was working for, the petroleum business, was going *out* of business, and there was an opening in the sheriff's department at Mercury. So I went to the sheriff and talked to him, and the district attorney at that time, and yes, there was an opening. I went down there in June of 1972. And as my luck was running then, about three weeks after I got down there, maybe six weeks, they decided they were going to have a layoff in Mercury, in the sheriff's department. Well, I was the last one hired, so I would be

naturally the first one fired, or let go. So that was on for about three weeks, and then I got a call one day and they said, Jim, would you like to come back? We're going to do some hiring now. I said, Well, yeah, I'd love to come back. So I went back and I stayed there until January of 1994 when I retired, twenty-one years and six months later. Good job. Very good job.

Which I want to talk about, but I'm just curious because you've been here in Tonopah your whole life. It's a mining town, was your father a miner?

My father, when we came in here, yes, he was a miner.

Was that why he came out here?

Yes, we came out of Idaho. They were closing down the mines up there, and mining was doing very well here in the Tonopah and in central Nye County here. And I remember at the time they said you didn't have to go apply for work. You walked down the street and somebody would walk up and ask you if you want to go to work. So he did. He worked underground and then he elevated himself to a hoist man working above ground, which was good. Then he went to work in one of the gaming joints here as a racehorse keno dealer, and did that for, oh, probably ten years. And then he and his wife—my mother passed away in '39 and then my dad got married again in '40 or '50—and his wife lived in Hawthorne [NV], so he moved down there, but we stayed here. I have two brothers. They live here in Tonopah. One was the assessor for thirty years here and the other worked locally around town for a freight outfit. Both of them are retired also. I have two sisters. One lives in Minnesota, one lives in Texas. And so we see each other quite often, and life has been good here in Tonopah. For us, it has.

And you decided not to go the route of mining?

No, I didn't have any interest in that at all. I knew it was hard work, I knew it was underground, and I knew a lot of the older miners and their health didn't hold up too well because of working underground and the dust and everything. So I had no desire whatsoever. And my dad, he might have frowned on it had I mentioned going down there. I think he would've, I really do. And I've always managed to [work]—I've only been out of work, I think, two or three days and that's when one business closed down and I got the job driving the tanker two days later. So I've been very fortunate.

Had you ever thought about going into sherriffing? Is that what it would be called? Sheriffing?

[00:05:00] Well, the sheriff's department.

Yes, had you ever considered that?

No, I didn't. I was so busy driving I was perfectly content. I have to be honest and say if those jobs hadn't have left town, I would've probably stayed with those jobs because I was doing well. I liked it and financially I was doing well. But when the jobs left, well, I wanted to stay here but I didn't want to work for the sheriff's department here in Tonopah. I was practically born and raised [here]—I was five years old when I came here, and I thought well, you know everybody here and you have lots of friends and I said, `No, I'd like to go down there,` and they said, `Well, that's fine, we have an opening, so we'll put you up down there.` And that's just what they did.

Ultimately you ended up, then, working for the Nevada Test Site?

That's correct.

And what were your initial thoughts on that, if any?

Well, I enjoyed it and I knew probably 90 percent of the people that were working for the sheriff's department. They were gentlemen that were from Tonopah that I had gone to school

with and knew, and so I wasn't a stranger to them. I was a stranger to Mercury, of course. But I didn't mind being alone down there. You know you're working in a car patrolling and you're by yourself. Well, when I was driving for twenty years, I was always by myself, so I had no problem with that. And those who were down there when I got there had already been there, oh, three or four or five years. So they were experienced and they just took me under their wing and showed me the ropes. Then almost immediately at that time there was a three-week course you had to take within the first eighteen months of your hiring called Peace Officers' Standard Training. I think now it's fifteen weeks, and should be, but that's all it was then. So I went to school.

What is that all about?

That's just law enforcement rules and regulations and laws, and what the people expect of you. You get the law books. It was drug information and hazardous information and things like that. And so we took that right away. One week here and then the other two, the classes were taught in Las Vegas. So it's just to give you just a very minor part of it. You picked up the rest of it as you worked.

Living here, which is virtually down the road from the test site, I imagine that you were well aware of the test site being—

Oh, yes.

And I'm sure it was a part of your general background and your existence. What were your perceptions? Did you have any thoughts about?

Well, I had an idea—well, everybody had an idea what was going on down there somewhat because when I was driving, sometimes I would be coming into town, say, four or five o'clock in

the morning and they would have a test down there. Well, I don't know if your aware of it [laughter] but when that went off, everything lit up like as bright as—brighter than it is today.

So you got to see a lot of the atmospheric tests that they did.

Oh, yeah. First one I ever saw it wasn't announced, and it went off, and I was coming towards Tonopah about forty miles out but looking towards Tonopah, and it just lit up. I thought, my God, did the whole town blow up? I was terrified. At that time I was married and I had my two children and I thought, oh no, what is this? And then I found out what it was. After that they would announce them sometime, and a lot of the people would go up on the summit here, and from there you could look way down. They would post the time that it was going to be; if it went, [you] would witness those. So I did have a pretty good handle—know what to expect. And I met some people down there that introduced me to a lot of that. I have to say that that was the only place in the free world where that type of thing was taking place, and so I felt very, very fortunate to be a part of that. And you know those technicians and those scientists were great—all that I met were great people. And I got to go to the weather briefings and stuff like that, so I was very fortunate, and I learned more all the time. The people would come and go and I would **[00:10:00]** meet them. I feel very fortunate to have worked down there. I do. It was good. It was good. And like I say, I was single so it wasn't that I was leaving a wife at home for five days a week and come home on weekends. And my children were being raised by their mother, so I didn't have a worry there. They do very well. They're all over the walls here.

Yes, I see that.

And so that wasn't a worry. And when I was driving, I was gone, sometimes I wouldn't get home for three or four days and sometimes I'd be home every other day, so I was used to that.

So you're used to having that very sporadic schedule and being away.

Yes, exactly, it wasn't strange to me at all.

And did you stay down in Mercury?

Oh, yes, we lived right there. We had a room and the cafeteria was open, three meals a day there, no problem. It was just a very good job, a good learning job, and the government treated us *very* well. We had a fairly nice building and we had new cars about every two or three years. We were county employees paid by the [federal] government. The county would pay us and then the county would submit a bill to the government, our bill for our six deputies down there, and the government would pay the county. So it was a very nice situation.

So you were down there also when they were doing the underground shots when they switched to that, as well.

Yes, that's when—yes.

What did you think between seeing the above ground tests and then switching to the underground tests? I guess I'm just wondering—well, you already said what your perceptions were, but it's interesting talking to other people that have been in the area for a long time and remember when the test site came to be and the whole program of testing was just sort of part of everybody's lives. It depends who you're talking to but everybody has their varying thoughts of—

Oh, yeah. The overhead, well, there was an awful lot of things happened there. I can't even describe it because I can't come up with words like that. But underground apparently they could determine whether it went off like it should, it will do this much or it will do that much. I don't know if you've ever been on the site. I would assume you have. You've been to Sedan.

Yes.

OK, and you witnessed something there. Every time I would drive by there and look at that, I couldn't *believe* that. So those kind of things. But I know scientists expected something from the

device underground and they could determine yes, this did work right, or no, that didn't. I wasn't privy to that but I was out there when we would patrol the roads and make sure that nobody went into the actual site. And I've seen the ground move like an earthquake.

Like a ripple?

It is. Yes, "ripple" is the right word, I think. Yeah, I've seen that but it didn't catch me by surprise because the guys said, `Now, Jim, we'll go out there and sometimes the ground will roll,` and sure enough it did roll. But I never had a problem.

It must've been interesting. Interesting sensation.

It was. Really, like I say it's something you'll never see anyplace else, I don't think. So I felt very privileged to have been there. And I met some *very* nice people.

You were probably told when they were going to do the different tests.

Oh, absolutely.

And you actually patrolled on the grounds of the test site?

Oh, yeah, we worked up there. Sometimes you wouldn't leave there your whole tour, the whole week. Sometimes you'd get called out on the highway maybe to assist NHP [Nevada Highway Patrol] or just go out there, take a ride out there and see if everything *was* all right on the highway. But yeah, we patrolled up there, all the areas. We worked five in the morning till ten at night, and then we'd go on call. Whoever was on call would call in to Wackenhut [Security, Incorporated], who we worked with, and worked very well with. I enjoyed working with them. They would take our calls and if something went wrong, there was an accident or something, that person would say, `I'll be on call tonight and you have my phone number, so if something comes up, you just call me.` It was a very good operation.

What were the main things that you were called for? What types of—?

Well, most of it when we were patrolling, but we wrote a lot of speeding tickets, and then—

OK. And these are to test site employees?

[00:15:00] Oh, absolutely. Yeah, we wrote a lot of those, and accidents, little fender-benders, and there would be—with government vehicles and also a lot of civilian vehicles, if you take your car to work and you'd have an accident, those type of things. And there was a lot of equipment there and we'd have accidents with the trucks and trailers. Just like you do anywhere else, only it's on a government installation.

Sure. Right. Which is huge.

Yeah, it was. I mean we would get, oh, you could tour out there two hundred and fifty, three hundred miles a day and hardly ever go in the same place twice, from Mercury clear up to Area 20 and back and around.

You know the grounds well, I would imagine.

Yes. I don't remember all the grounds but we put a lot of miles on it and seen a lot of things out there.

When did you start to deal with the whole issue of protesters?

Well, they had protests down there before I even got there, but they allowed them to come right up to the gate, the gate that is existing now, I think. When we started having them, we were down from the gate just a little that other side of the road that goes to Desert Rock. We would allow them to come into there. They did, they just painted a white stripe across the road, and as long as they stayed on this side, we didn't have a problem. If they crossed, then we would arrest them and hold them for a while. And then it kept getting bigger and bigger, so we decided that let's not let them in this close; let's keep them out there at the cattle guard. I'm sure you've crossed over that a number of times. There's a little trailer out there, and then the holding facility

is still out there. So we did all our demonstrations out there, the big ones. But that was in early ’80, ’81 and ’82, and it started out—the one I remember the most was the forty days of Lent for Easter.

It was in 1982, I think?

Eighty-two, early eighties, yes. They were young people, just early twenties, maybe not even that old. They were girls out of Oregon, I think, and every day for forty days there was somebody there. They were that dedicated, I have to say this; they were dedicated. Sometimes there’d be maybe five or six of them there, and then maybe for a day or two, only one. But they never broke that idea, we have to have somebody here every day for forty days.

And they did.

And they did. We didn’t have any problem with them. They’d just come down they had a thing they believed in; they didn’t think that the devices should be set off, we didn’t need that, and the government [said] yes, we needed deterrence here just in case. Things weren’t going too well with Russia at that time, and so that was a deterrent. I have to sit here and tell you right now, that *was* a deterrent, and it worked. It did. I believe that. But that’s when we first started that, and that’s where we held them up right there.

So it was in the early eighties when you really remember starting to be conscious of the fact that protesters were coming down.

Yes.

What were your initial thoughts about that?

Well, you know, you’re always apprehensive as to what are they going to do. And when we were there, it was just the five of us and the lady dispatcher. So, you always wonder, if they get a whole lot of them down here, can the five of us handle it? And you have to bring the guys out

that are on their days off. But we never had a problem. But that was the biggest worry, that you get that many people and some are just—they're activists from their heads to their toes and they think they're right and they think they can do anything they want. Well, you can't allow that. And to have a weapon wouldn't have been at all hard to do down there, and sometimes in winter they got heavy clothes on—so those kind of things. You're worried about yourself, you're worried about your people, and you worried about them, too. Anything could happen. But fortunately we didn't have that. There were a few weapons confiscated in there but no guns, to my knowledge. I don't remember any guns. A few knives or something like that. But that was the biggest concern we had. And we got along well with those people and we had sometimes half-a-dozen people **[00:20:00]** maybe the next one for, say, the Franciscans, they come out there maybe with twelve hundred, fifteen hundred people. You'd look out there and [think] my God, what are we getting ourselves into? But they just didn't create—we spent a lot of time but it wasn't that tough.

It seems like you had a rapport built up—

We did. I have to admit that, and I'm proud of that inasmuch as I think that maybe kept anybody from being injured, them or us. Oh, there was some knee-scraping and you're chasing them in the desert and they go through the brush and they get scratched and fall down, and we would fall down, too. So there was that kind of stuff. But when we had the demonstrations there, the government was perfect. [They asked] `What do you need out there? Tell us what you need and you'll have it tomorrow.`

So there was an open line of communication between you and the protesters?

Oh, I never seen anything like it.

And did you know ahead of time when they were coming?

I did know. They would call me up and sometimes they'd say, Well, Jim, we'd like to have a meeting with you. So we would meet in Wackenhut's office outside the gate, right at the gate.

That little hut that's off to the side?

To the right as you come up to go in, and it's the building that's to the left. And we would meet in there. A couple of times we went downtown and met with them down there. But they got to the point where they'd say, Well, now, we're going to come out there, going to be fourteen days, and it'll start Monday the sixth and end on the twentieth, and we're going to be about, oh, it was always a guesstimate because they never did know actually. It might be fifteen, and then again it might be five hundred, and we're going to cross that line, Jim. I said, Well, you know, that's fine. And then when they would do that, if there was going to be a thousand, that'd give me or us the opportunity to call the under sheriff up here who was my immediate boss and tell him, I need some people. So he was taking people from Tonopah and Beatty, Amargosa, Pahrump, and we'd have the Mercury force, and then Wackenhut was there all the time. They never turned us down for anything and we would work shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Had a beautiful working relationship with those people, from the top brass right down to the guy on the street. With the big ones, we would hire NHP and they would come out and work with us. It worked good.

There's a book that was written about the Nevada Desert Experience.

Nevada Desert Experience. Big group. Big.

Big group. And you're mentioned in the book several times. One of the things that they talk about is—I don't know if you remember, I think his name was Michael Affleck. He was—

Affleck?

Affleck, yes.

Oh, yeah, I know Michael well.

What he says is that the first time that they met you, that he met you, you really challenged their concept of what it meant to protest because you were the person that was very friendly and very willing to understand what they were doing for the cause, and trying to work with them. In the book he talks about how it's like well, OK, now we have to completely rethink how we're going to do this because we didn't expect this. Were you aware that you had—it seems that you had a very profound impact.

Well, I wasn't really aware of that because I didn't know those people at all, like I didn't know you till right now, so I didn't know really what to expect. I knew they wanted to come out there and demonstrate, and I just had to wait and see how they were going to do it. But I did talk to them. I says, I'm looking at it this way. I have a daughter and a son. Now if they choose to demonstrate, I would hope that wherever they demonstrate, if it's going to be nonviolent, that they will be treated nonviolently. That's all I would ask of anybody if they decided to do something like this. They didn't and it doesn't make any difference but that's what I wanted. If those people can act that way, then I can in return. As a matter of fact, one thing that really would bowl you over—it bowled us all over—we were having demonstrations and the cattle guard's here, both sides of the road like this. We had the demonstrators on this side of the road and the opposites, the workers, on this side of the road.

So the demonstrators and the workers were lined up alongside of the road opposite each other.

[I thought] Oh, this is going to be *disastrous*, you know. But I'm telling you there wasn't no problems. Sure, they had their placards, everybody, and they were kind of yelling back and forth. **[00:25:00]** There was no violence, no physical contact, and I thought, this *can* work if we just be reasonable about this. And I didn't condone what they did. I thought *we* were doing the right

thing out there, but I couldn't say to them, now, you're not allowed to do this. It just didn't set well with me. And yeah, we got along very well, like I say. But they would come to me and say, Well, Jim, there's going to be this many people and there are going to be a lot of demonstrations, a lot of demonstrations and a *lot* of trespassing going on. The thing that bothered me more was if there was a shot going to go off and they would publish it. Somehow people had a way of knowing what area. It's going to be in Area 20. That word would get out somehow. The test site isn't completely fenced. It's as big as what they say, Rhode Island, I think, and there's no way you can fence that. There's no way you can patrol that. And they would come in at night and get into that area. Most of the time we would find them before the shot, but sometimes it was very, very close. And what we wanted to know after we got them [was], is this *all* of you that did this? Because when that goes off out there, there's an awful lot of things can happen. There's mountains out there, canyons and gullies, and we want to get them out of there before the shot goes because if it goes, *anything* can happen. One time there was some out there and we *didn't* find any of them before, but we found them afterwards. They told some hair-raising stories, that the ground was shaking, the rocks were moving, and it was *scary*. So that put more fear into us, too, that somebody could get hurt out there or could get lost. They did it numerous times. They would come into Mercury and we'd catch them in Mercury. I don't remember any damage, very little graffiti or any of that kind of stuff.

Can you talk a little bit about the procedures that were involved in the—people cross over the line—it seems to me that there are a couple of different protocols that were in place, depending on what was going on, maybe, or the size of the crowd? Generally how did you deal with people after they crossed over?

Before they would cross over, we'd stop them. They'd come down and we would put eight or ten men in front of them, and they'd give you a chance just—all I had to tell them was, Look, I'd rather you didn't do this, but if you do this, then you will be arrested. You're trespassing. If you went to court, they couldn't say, We didn't know he was going to arrest us. They never said anything about it.

Right. They were warned.

So you know you spiel that out all day long, pretty quick you're saying that in your sleep [laughter] and only four or five come across. And we'd do it that way. They'd come across, and sometimes they would sit down right in front of you and then they'd lock arms. And then they got these things, they were pieces of pipe, and they'd put over their arms and they would have a padlock inside there. So you had to wrestle with that. Most of them, if they did sit down, you'd say come on, get up, or we'd get two guys—we always tried to use two, and so one guy would try to pick somebody up, they'd slip. It's hard. So we would do it that way. Then we'd take them over to that holding facility over there and keep them there until we got—if there was, say, a thousand or fifteen hundred of them, if you arrest them, you can only hold them so long in that facility. So we would wait till we got maybe ten busloads, which is five hundred people almost, fifty people to a bus, and we'd haul them to Tonopah or we'd haul them to Beatty.

That's a long haul.

It is, but what I was doing, we didn't have to worry about those people coming back right away. Because if you released them, sometimes they would cross back over and turn right around and come back in again. This could go on indefinitely, and it gives them a certain amount of satisfaction; we're working them to death out there. But that's the way we would do that. And some would chain themselves together.

So they would cross over the line and sit down?

Yes. Oh, yeah.

And then they'd be linked together?

Locked together sometimes. Some of them would and some would just walk across. One time down there, and this was in the early—Greenpeace. Everybody's familiar with Greenpeace. Not familiar, but they know about Greenpeace. They'd come out there with a hot air **[00:30:00]** balloon, and they got it up. You get to know them people after a while. They were there about three or four days and then even they're there with Greenpeace, you're going to be there. Somebody's going to be there. So I worked days. I'd be out there and [they would say], Well, Jim, we're going to fly that. Want to go with us? I said, No, no, Jim Merlino is not going to go riding in your balloon, let me tell you. That would look great. And then it was good to be at demonstrations, so the day of the demonstration they got up in the air. I don't think they had a lot of experience with it, and they had the basket and they were up in the air. And what they wanted to do, I think, was they could say they'd come into the test site but they didn't trespass at the cattle guard, which is true. They came through the air. That ground out there looks like it's level as this table. But it has gullies in it, and it had little rises and little gullies. Well, they come swooping down over the cattle guard like this and then I guess they turned the fire off too soon, so it came down and the gully was like this. Well, the basket hit the top of the gully and the basket went like that and unloaded everybody.

So it tipped over and dumped them all out then?

It dumped them right on the desert. That was a plus for us.

Just to keep you guys entertained.

No one got hurt. But that was our dealing with Greenpeace. That big old balloon. I can still see that hot air balloon.

That's great. I would've never thought of that.

But it was interesting, yeah. They didn't try that anymore.

Yeah. Didn't seem like it was overly successful.

No, it wasn't. I think they were just a little inexperienced with their hot air balloon. I'm sure there are things you have to know about that.

I would imagine.

So that was one thing different. We had a peace camp out there on the other side of the road. I don't know if you were around then.

Yeah, I've been to the peace camp.

And there was some people lived there, one guy in particular, Art Casey [sp]. He stayed out there, oh, I don't know, about a year, I think.

Just lived out there?

Yes, and somebody would bring him groceries occasionally. And I'd go out every day and my other guys would go out also and talk to Art. We all got to know Art very, very well. And finally it got just so cold out there, and he didn't have any—he was living in a tent, and so somehow we got a hold of some friends of his who live in Santa Barbara and they come up. We asked them to come up and look at his conditions and [asked] `See if you can't talk Art into leaving here, and when spring breaks, bring him back.` And so, that was where they had the camp when they was out there for four or five days. They would camp right in the sagebrush. There was no water. There were sand huts but that was all. It was tough living. And Art was no kid then. Art was sixty-five, seventy years old out there. Very intelligent, nice fellow. I liked Art. I got along *very* well with Art. And it was tough living but that's where they'd live. When they'd all come out, then they would have different meetings out there amongst themselves, make plans for the next day. I think as you go underneath the underpass coming out now, if you go straight

you go right through—it looks like it's been leveled off a little bit and the sagebrush is gone for them to park now, and you see way back up there there's—well, the Indians called it a sweat—

A sweat lodge?

A sweat lodge. It's still there, they didn't tear it down. But finally it got so bad up there, people living and just throwing junk out and bringing out parts of lumber to build just any kind of what-do-you-call-it. We got in to BLM [Bureau of Land Management] and had them come out and take a look at it. That's BLM property. And so the government told us if they will give us the right to do it, we'll supply the trucks, the loaders, the Teamsters, the operators. We'll clean that whole mess out. So we give them a couple weeks notice, said don't be here, take whatever you want. And yes, and in fact I got a letter from, it was a lady that was running the BLM through the Las Vegas office, Lenore something, and she said, `We can do this, Jim, and you can legally do that. You have our permission.`

So you can legally—what they consider the peace camp, you guys could go in and clean that up and—

And cleaned it up because it was—

Cleaned up of like trash and debris and—

Trash and—it was ugly.

Really. From people living up there?

[00:35:00] Yes. Sanitation was zero and it was just not a good place. It wasn't good right outside of the test site. That's the first thing you see on that side of the road, and there's a test site just on the other side. So yes, we did get that cleaned up, but here again the government give us the dump trucks and the loaders and they have operators and Teamsters. So it worked very well.

Had you had experience with protesters before the test site?

Never. [laughter] Well, I think that's where I was lucky. When the first ones came down, like I say, those five young ladies from Oregon, they were just really nice young girls, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, I think some were maybe college. They were just very nice and clean, easy to get along with and polite. I thought, this isn't bad at all.

So you had a good experience right away.

Yeah. They're nice to you so you reciprocate.

Are there any particular incidents that stand out?

Well, there are some down there. Some of them would come every time. If there was a demonstration, it didn't make any difference. It was Nevada Desert Experience or just anybody coming. They always seemed to be there. They were professional demonstrators. That was what I thought, and they were getting paid somewhere, I assume. To live you have to have some money. And some of it was—well, they'd lock themselves in the sand hut. It would be so easy to just accidentally tip them over. But you know that didn't happen. I'm sure that went through a lot of people's minds. You want to stay in there, well–but it didn't happen because we had a lot them inside the holding facility. And then you get these celebrities down there. Martin Sheen was a regular.

Right. I was going to ask you about that.

Martin [said], How's your family, Jim? [And I said], Fine, how's yours? He was no trouble. You know some would fight you to put the handcuffs on. Martin would come in, he always had this priest with him—he had the white collar—and this lady was with them, always. And Martin would just come across.

> [He would say], Oh, we're coming across, Jim.
>
> And I said, Well, OK, you know what happens.

And he'd say, OK.

And just bring them right in and then we'd put them in the holding facility with the rest of them. And he didn't expect any favors and he didn't get any favors. But it was interesting, and I wouldn't trade a day for it. There was nights that I was tired and I wished they would go away. But it was a good job, and the people worked good together down there. The first one, we needed a lot of things. You need generators for lights, and you had to have the light standards, and you need lunches for people, you need gas for some of the vehicles, and you need rooms for some of the people that are staying over. And meal tickets. Well, I went around to each one and asked them, and finally I think it was Joe Dryden, he was the manager of the test site at that time. The big manager was downtown; Joe was—

Joe Dryden?

Joe Dryden was his name. Yes. I think he was the actual manager onsite.

And this was during the eighties?

Yeah, I'm sure that was it. And Joe told me, he says, Jim, you don't have to come in here to ask me for this and this and you're driving yourself crazy. You just go tell them what you want, and I know that you're not going to be asking for things that you don't need, I know that now, so you just tell them you want it, and if they have any problems, just tell them to call me. So after that I could just go, everybody helped us. Wackenhut was there *all* the time for us. Nobody ever turned you down at Wackenhut. But we didn't ask for things that we didn't need. We needed a lot of lunches. We might need 150 lunches, but we had 150 people working. So things like that. And everybody contributed, so that made it easier. You knew you were going to have vehicles, you were going to have buses, you were going to have all the cuffs you needed and people to operate them.

They were charged with trespassing, and is that just a written ticket or is that an appearance in court, or what is the procedure?

Well, we wanted, to start out with, taking them to court in Tonopah. We had a district **[00:40:00]** attorney there and his name was Dunleavy [sp], last name, and he said, You can bring them up here but we're not going to take them to court. He said, This would tie the jails up, tie the court system up, and he was right. But it was a little disheartening because you know you're working out there, in the wintertime it was cold, in the summertime it was hot, and you're doing the best job that you can do, *all* the guys, *and* the gals. We had a lot of ladies helping, women deputies and women of Wackenhut. Absolutely the best job in the world, seriously, but we felt well, gee, we're arresting these people down here, we're on the dirt rolling around with them, we take them to Tonopah, and you kick them out. But we did our job. We wrote tickets and we give them those tickets and we kept tickets. After every demonstration, every day when it started out, I'd just start a diary for each day, what happened that day, how many we arrested, how many people we had, and then at the end just put that all together in a—and then the main man at DOE [Department of Energy] would get one and Wackenhut would get one, I would keep one, I'd send one to the sheriff, and anybody else that was involved knew day by day what happened. Sometimes the arrests started at ten o'clock and we finished with the arrests at 3:30 that afternoon, things like that. So they would have something if it ever come up as to what was going on down there.

Is that type of document accessible to the public?

Well, I don't know. I sent them out right out of the office. I'd sit back there and take my notes from each day and compile them all, give them to Agnes and she would type them up and get Photostats or copies for everybody that was on the list. It worked well because then they

wouldn't have to call up and [ask], what happened on this day, or how many did you have on Tuesday of last week.

Just for my purposes, it would be interesting to see that stuff I'm interested in.

Yeah, and it was just written from me and then typed up by them and it was what happened that day and that night. Sometimes we would work all twenty-four hours. We had men working nights, too. So what happened during the night, yeah, it was a way for us to keep track in case something come back. It was documentation, is actually what it was.

Right. Now are there things that would be considered more, I guess, severe offense versus *crossing over a line? Something that somebody would actually get arrested for* versus *getting written trespassing tickets, or they could be prosecuted?*

There were some. When we first got started, we weren't having all that many, and there were some that went to the court in Beatty. I think there was just a small fine issued for that. After that, we would just cite them. When we would bring them up here in a bus—in fact we brought up, there must've been 750 of them—and then unloaded them in Tonopah, the population increased 25 percent, for crying out loud. That wasn't our worry. You would drop them off and the only way they could get back, somebody from there had to come up with cars.

So people had to come get them.

Come and get them because there was no transportation out here for them. They didn't get right back on the bus, naturally. That didn't happen. But that put a little financial pressure on those people because they had to come up here, [put] gas in their cars, and haul all them people back. But seeing as how the DA [district attorney] said no, we can't—I could see his point, that we didn't have room in the jail for that many. In fact, we had some one time, but this was early, and Hawthorne is a hundred miles down the road in Mineral County. They have a jail, too. And

Fallon. We had to take some of them up there to hold them because we didn't have the facilities for it. So after that, we'd just write them a ticket. And they knew they weren't going to go there, so they were a little happy about that. But we did bring some to Beatty and drop them off, and some to Tonopah. When I got home one weekend they said, Thanks a lot, Jim. Thanks for bringing *those* people up here. But it was understood. They understood what we were doing.

A couple of folks that we've talked to for this project, one is Rosemary Lynch—

Oh, Rosemary, God love her, God love her. Yes.

She expressed the very good rapport that you guys had.

Well, her and I, honestly, I got pictures out of the newspaper, me hugging her, her hugging me. I always understood her. She made it simple. She's a very bright lady **[00:45:00]** been all over the world but always with a demonstration or something. But that doesn't make her a bad person. I thought the world of her. I still think the world of her. She would come up and we'd always have a little conversation off to the side. She'd tell me where she'd been or what she was doing. I liked her, and I admired her. I didn't approve of what she was doing, but that didn't mean that I didn't like the woman, because I do. Up to this day I do, absolutely. And there was Father [Louis] Vitale. I'm sure you've heard of Father Vitale.

Yes, we also spoke to him.

Yes. Oh, he drove me crazy, this guy.

Really.

Oh, yes. But you know he just believed in it. We were down there one time and we arrested him in the afternoon. He was staying just the other side of the overpass, up there where that level spot

was. We'd hold him for about an hour and OK, we'd turn him loose. In fact, we'd even take him up, drive him up there about three-quarters of a mile and fifteen minutes later—

He'd be back.

He'd be back. He did this, and I know he was just testing us, I know it well. It just got, we'll haul him out in the desert and dump him off somewhere, but we didn't, you know. And that went on most of the day, up till about midnight. I think at midnight he finally figured, ah, I've been nuisance enough for you folks. I'll stay up there this time. But he was there and he spent a lot of time up there. And the people, they thought highly of him. And he did make the jail. He made jail in California for about nine months or something. I don't know what he did. I wasn't involved in that but I did hear. [Beginning October, 2002, Louis Vitale served a three month prison term at Nellis AFB Federal Prison for protesting the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, GA] [So] we had the Franciscans, a lot of monks, and young ones. You know they had the garb. I got to know a lot of them. They would come across [and say], `Hi, Jim, how's the family,` or stuff like this, `Are you going to arrest us again today?` [And I said], `If you cross the line, I'm going to.` But we had just a good rapport. And if I had to do it again, I'd do it the same way, I think. They were people out there expressing themselves, and as long as they didn't create any harm to anybody or damage something, I think you ought to treat them the same way.

Well, there are a lot of people that would probably think the opposite.

Oh, I'm sure.

That's a good ethic.

Yes, whatever way you feel is the best, and that was the best for me. I think by being that way, a lot of people that could've gotten hurt *never* got hurt at all. And we met an awful lot of people

down there, all different kinds, different people that did different jobs. We even had a couple of senators out there one time.

Really.

Yeah. They didn't get arrested, though. They didn't trespass.

Do you remember who those were?

I think one, and I shouldn't probably say because I might be making a mistake, so I can't remember the name but I think this lady may have run for vice president at one time [Geraldine Ferraro]. I think she was out of New York or New Jersey. But I'm not really sure about that. She just was on—outside of the what-do-you-call-it, off in the desert—they could get up and make speeches, and she was on there. I didn't go up and listen to the speeches.

I was going to ask if you ever listened in on the activities.

No, I didn't do that. That was theirs, and I was on this side of the fence and they were up there.

Did you get a sense of an "us-them" idea; like it's us against them? Or did you feel more like this was one big thing?

Well, I knew that *I* had a job to do down there, and I just put the shoe on the other foot. They believe that *they* have a job to do, and the job, if you will, was crossing that cattle guard, and mine was to arrest them if they did. So that's what I thought. And they did what they felt was right in their mind, then I did what I thought was right. I think we both accepted that because there was very few people down there that I didn't, or all of us didn't, really get along with. We got on a first-name basis. My people did the same thing. They would know people by their first names and [say] `Hi, Mike, how are you`, or `Hi, Jerry`, or `Hi, Obie`. Oh, yeah.

[00:50:00] *So it seems like the culture of the test site itself, it seems like there was pretty good camaraderie.*

Good. Yeah. And like with Wackenhut, they had some of those, oh, they look like a stripped-down car. Dune buggies, if you will, but military. And the military still uses them but they're pretty advanced. But they had a bunch of those. So sometimes they [the protesters] would cross the fence, but maybe a half-a-mile up above where we were or a half-a-mile down. And you can't see them because of the lay of the land, but they'd be out in that desert and be running around. Well, Wackenhut would come down there and chase them with those cars, so they couldn't get away. It's better than out there running around in that sand; you're going to wear somebody out after an hour or two. So they would be right there with their vehicles, gather them up and bring them up there and we'd cite them and give them a ticket.

That was it?

Oh, yeah, it worked perfect.

Did you have a lot of rapport and interaction with the other test site workers?

Well, not so much the workers. If we needed something out of the carpenter shop, well of course we knew those people anyhow, who were just working there. But not so much with the civilians because they were rarely ever out there. Just those people were out there that—well, like Holmes and Narver took a lot of pictures. That was their function. And then there might be a Teamster or two down there if there was a truck standing by for something. But really no; and they didn't come out there. They just stayed away and let us have all the room we needed.

Right. So I guess I'm just curious about perceptions, and the whole reason that the protesters were out there— which was protesting, I guess, for the greater cause of humanity or that—

I think that was their thinking, yeah, stop this nuclear testing and go to the table. But I think they just overlooked the fact that if we were to stop the testing—of course they'll say well, if we would've, then the Russians would. Well, we're sitting over here and we can tell you what the

Russians are doing over there? You know I think that's a stretch. In my mind, that's a stretch. And even today, every now and then, if you can believe on TV, they'll say they still have so many nuclear warheads over there. So twenty years ago they must've had quite a few, too.

A lot.

So I think their thought in some respect was good, but it would have to work for everybody at the table. We couldn't just give it up and them continue on with their testing. And I think that's where the rub came in.

Maybe you touched on it earlier but I'm trying to get a sense of how the workers, the actual test site workers, perceived the protesters. It sounds like things were fairly evenhanded between the two groups, that they were fairly congenial.

They never said an awful lot about it, but then again you have to realize what the people, the demonstrators, wanted was to stop the testing. Well, if you stop the testing, you just took away, what, five thousand jobs? That's just a figure. I don't know. And all of us are conscious of our own livelihoods. So I can see where they would say, `I don't approve of that demonstration simply because I need this job.` I think that could [have] come into play, although no one ever laid it out like that. But there was an awful lot of people working there.

It was one of the largest employers.

Yeah, if you shut it down, well, they're out of work. So I'm sure they thought my job's in jeopardy if this goes on. I'm sure most of them would say let them do what they're doing but we don't approve of non-testing.

But there was never huge conflicts or anything like that.

[00:55:00] Oh no, no, just like I told you, we had the pros and the anti here and I thought boy, this is going to be a test. And at the end of the day I was walking on cloud nine to think that here

we are, shoulder to shoulder, just twenty foot of highway separating us. We had our placards and they had their placards, and we're talking, swinging them back and forth a little bit. But there was no reason for us to go out and tap somebody and say knock it off. Didn't happen. But they were there, both sides. We only did that once and it was fine with me. It did work.

There seems to be a common understanding, like what you were saying, is these are just people, these are their jobs. You go into work, everybody has family to support.

Exactly. Well, that was just like a little city, only there was no children.

I guess that's why I'm curious about the culture, because it was such a little city and there were so many people out there. It just seems like there was a lot of camaraderie.

Oh, there was, because you worked together. And if you stayed there like I did, then at night there were things. There was a movie house. There was a softball diamond, tennis courts, horseshoes, a bowling alley with a restaurant, and there was physical fitness. The whole building was physical fitness, iron and all that stuff. And there was those things to do. And then they had a real nice steakhouse which they still have there.

Yeah, I saw that. Was that good?

Oh, it was excellent; and the price was beautiful. The cafeteria was good, too. We ate there for twenty years. I did and never had a problem with it. There was a lot of work out there, and so guys needed to get a good night's rest to be able to do this. Some days, sure, it'd be slack, but other days you actually worked hard.

So there's always been this talk about radiation and the grounds being possibly contaminated. What are your thoughts on that?

Well, I'm sure the ground is contaminated, but any contaminated areas out there were well-fenced. That was from most of the overheads, and some of the overheads, you've seen it on TV

any number of times and so have I, happened in Area 5, the train trestle and the tracks and the buildings and the trees bending over like this. Well, they have a low rate or—

Low readings?

Yeah, they have it in Area 5 where they store that stuff. They do it so it's laid out—in what-do-you-call-it [a grid]—and they know right where this box is in that diagram. They can go right out there and cover it if they have to. They took *good* care of that. I mean there was no nonsense about it, just throw it over behind the bush and forget it. Didn't happen. Didn't happen.

So you were never worried about the impact, the health effects, or anything like that?

No. I had twenty-one years down there and come away healthy and no problems at all. I guess there's some that did get cancer, but if it came from there, I don't know. It could've. But no, I think that mostly was from the overheads, some of that stuff, I assume. I know some people that have applied for that—

The compensation.

If you can prove it it's fifty thousand or a hundred thousand dollars or something like that. And rightfully so if they can prove it, that's where it originated. that's where I got it, maybe it's justifiable.

So you were there in '71, so you weren't really around when Baneberry—

No, Baneberry had happened. Exactly. I know right where it was because some of the guys took me up there, and yeah, that was interesting. That was Area 12—or no [Area 8]—Baneberry, because that's when it blew across the canyon. Interesting.

So I'm just curious of what are some of the things that stand out in your mind a little bit about those years. Any interesting things that you've encountered or interesting people or calls that you had to go on.

Well, when they were going down hole drilling, and then when they got ready to put the device down, they would put these, oh, they were buildings, probably twelve foot high, twelve foot **[01:00:00]** square, might be four or five or six of those on top of each other, and they would lower that down. And I got to know, one of the gentlemen's name was Wolfe [sp], the other's name was Gordon Jacks. They took me into one of those buildings one day and they said, This is what we're doing. We're going down hole with this, Jim. We just thought you'd like to see this. Well, I felt privileged, believe me, but I thought what in the world is going on here? But that they would take me and explain some of that to me, why they're going down hole, I mean I was—

So you saw the process that they used to get the device down; I think I've seen them, they're the tall buildings and then they—

Yeah, like modulars. And they put them on with a crane, one on top—

Right, and there's a big cylinder in there?

Yeah, the pipe. I was very, very impressed with that, and then to think that they would take me down there and show that to me. And then, you know, in the tunnels. We'd go in the tunnels every now and then in Area 12.

Wow. What was that like?

Well, it was well-lit and clean. There wasn't stuff laying all over; there was rooms where the tools were kept, and they were orderly. And we would go in there sometime, maybe we were after somebody for something, and we could go in there and put the hard hat on and go along with all the rules and regulations—those people made it very easy for us. It was a good job, it truly was.

It sounds like it.

Well, like I say, I was there twenty-one years and I'm telling you, it just went by like that [snaps fingers]. And I am not sorry about a day that I spent down there really.

Did you ever think you'd be *down there for twenty-one years? When you took that job, did you think that?*

Well, I didn't have any idea because like I say, when I first took it I worked about three weeks, and then I was the first one they fired, or let go. I said well, this is a short job. So when I came back, I knew I'd be there for a while because it got down to about five of us and they couldn't operate with much less than that. They wanted to have complete protection, twenty-four-hour. So I didn't worry about that. And then I was fortunate, too, I was put in charge of it, I think it was in 1980. I had made lieutenant. So I thought well, I'll be here a good deal of the time. If there's going to be a substation here, I should be here as the leader of it. Then I got the captain's job seven years later, for seven years. Although retirement, I didn't start really kicking it around in my mind until I was about sixty-three and then I said oh, I'll get my paperwork in order and at sixty-five I can leave here, and it's time. I could've stayed but I felt it was time. The fellow that's got it now, he took my place and he's doing a good job, and I knew he would. So that was good in that respect.

He probably doesn't have to deal with some of the same issues that you did, because it seems like, particularly with the protesters, that it has died down a little bit.

Now it would have to be maybe they're complaining about Yucca Mountain, because there is no testing. I don't know that because I haven't been there.

Did you retire before they put the moratorium on testing or was—?

No, it was '94, and I think the last test was like '91 or '92, I think.

Right, '92.

And when they were having the tests, we would go in the fire station and there was about six different—the sheriff's department was there, H&N [Holmes and Narver] was there, DOE was there, Wackenhut was there. So there was that cooperation, too. You could meet those people. And sometimes they would change within the department but somebody else from the department would be there. You know they could delay that, oh, an hour, and then if the weather—you know how they do that. And it was necessary. So you'd sit there and you would talk [or] read newspapers, but you met a lot of people through that, too. They were always people that were in upper management in that company. So that was a good operation. I liked **[01:05:00]** that. It was boring sometimes. They'd usually let the sheriff's department out of there after it was over, so if I was there, maybe even two of us were there, we could get out there and get on the road, because it was over, and they were going home. So we'd cover traffic.

I'm going to stop right here because we're getting close to the end of the disc and I don't want to run out of time.

[01:05:27] End of Track 2, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 2.

OK. So just shifting gears a little bit, you mentioned that you had two kids?

Yes, a daughter and a son.

Do they live in the area?

My son lives here. In fact, I walked today on the track up there and his wife was—Donna, his wife, she *jogs* around the track. I walk around the track. But he lives here. He's a maintenance man for the Nye County School District, and she works in the administration office. And I have three grandchildren by him, two girls and a boy. The two girls [are] in college and the boy's out now. My daughter lives in Las Vegas. I have two granddaughters with her. Shannon graduated

from UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] a year ago June, and Carrie graduated from Colorado Southern two years ago.

Oh, nice.

Doing well, yes, doing well. I'm as proud as I can be of them.

And they've not been affiliated with the test site at all? A lot of times you'll find families tend to work—

No, no.

Do they have thoughts about it either way, do you know?

No. My son is perfectly happy. He's worked out here at TTR [Tonopah Test Range]. You know about TTR.

No, what's TTR?

Well, they do some testing out there. It's not on the order of Mercury, but it's all government and has been for twenty or thirty years out there, I think. They have security out there and they have operators and Teamsters and plumbers and carpenters and that type thing. At one time, and this isn't top secret anymore, they had that Stealth [fighter plane] out there. That's where the Stealth was, and they kept that *very*, very secret. At least *I* wasn't aware of it and I had no business even knowing about it *anyway*, but I certainly *wasn't* [aware]. It's strictly a government operation. It has been good for the town. But no, the kids have no affiliation there.

Right. That made me wonder if there were certain areas that you had more access to on the test site than not?

No. We had access as law enforcement, we were badged anywhere, but say we went into never-never-land. You know what that is, I'm sure. Area 51.

Area 51? The one we're not allowed to talk about?

Yeah. It isn't there, so how can we talk about it? But nevertheless, if we had somebody who worked out there and say there was a warrant out for his arrest or something, we would call *them* because they have security. We'd just call them and tell them who we were and what we had, and they would meet us at the gate—usually the cooperation *there* was outstanding. Usually when we went out there, we didn't have to go roaming around in that area looking for this person. He would be at the gate. They would go get him and bring him out to us. And then it got so for a while there they would meet us—I don't know if you are familiar with that area out there, but before you get out of the valley to go over the hill to go down, they had a little guard shack down there. They'd bring them clear out there, which was about eight or ten miles. I don't remember that much now because we didn't go out there very often because we didn't have a need. Most of the people out there, they didn't have warrants for them because they were pretty reliable people. You know what I mean. But yeah, we had good cooperation there. We could go anywhere.

Did you have clearance where you had to have—?

Oh, absolutely. Yes.

What level?

All at the top.

Top. OK.

Yeah, but you know we had to pack the badge all the time and change badges every so often. But we just usually would get on the horn and say we would like to get in here because of this gentleman or this lady, or maybe some bad news to tell somebody. And they would set it up for us. It was just a good operation overall. Sometimes you don't realize how good an operation it was until you actually get away from it and you start thinking about it.

Right, a little perspective.

Yes, seriously. One time, they had some wild horses out there. Nobody bothered them. They didn't shoot horses, they didn't shoot deer, or anything like that. But I come in the **[00:05:00]** office one day and here's this colt. What is going on here? And they said well, so-and-so was out there and this colt was by itself and we didn't want to leave it out there. You know, you're taught [that] if you find something like that you just leave it alone, because Mama's over here feeding on just the other side of the hill most of the time.

So I said, `Well, whereabouts were you?`

[And they said], `Well, we were just a little this side of [Area] 12, up there on that main highway.`

And I said, `OK.`

This girl worked with Animal Control or something, so I said, `Well, I'll tell you what. [He's] not too big. Maybe we can put you and me in the car and we can take him back out there to his mother.` And so I says, `You know about where?`

[And she said], `Yeah, I know about where.`

Sure enough, [by] the time we got out there, there was about six or eight horses, not a big band or anything. So we got the little colt out and dropped him off there and the other horses could see it. I'm sure he made out all right.

I didn't realize that they had animals roaming around.

Just the mustangs. That's what they are. Mustangs come in and then they move around. And they get pretty tame because nobody ever bothers them, nobody chases them or anything.

Well, it's a pretty huge area for them.

Oh, yeah, and up there in the mountains, there's a lot of water up there, wells. It doesn't take much, just a seep. I've seen chukars [partridge] up there, deer, and mountain lions up there.

I bet. It is *a beautiful piece of land.*

It is, seriously. Up on the mesa is dynamite. Oh, my God.

Yeah. It's pretty amazing.

And there's always some things going on up there, too. There were some drill sites, and on those fender-bender accidents. You'd get to go up there and find your way out on them dirt roads and find out where the drill site is, and things like that. Yes. It was good.

What about the area, I think they call it the—well, it's just the highway coming in, I guess, Widowmaker Highway? I've heard that term used before.

Well, when they first started that [NTS], that was just a two-lane road from Las Vegas all the way to Mercury. And that was what it was. I think it was appropriate, that name, because they tell me, and that's before I got down there, but you get ten thousand people going to work in the morning and ten thousand people coming home at night, all of them in a hurry. And there were some dips in the road where you couldn't see over it. I don't know how many people they lost, but I think it was the correct name for it. Everybody was in a hurry, you know, and a two-lane road—so that freeway was a good investment. *Definitely*.

In the twenty-one years that you were out there, did you see a lot of changes?

Well, of course they went underground with the [testing], and then in the tunnels, that finally slowed down. Well, it didn't slow down till about '90, though I could see where it was getting quieter all the time. So my leaving there, I thought this will be all right. But no, the camp was pretty well established. Every now and then out in the forward area they may put up a new warehouse, in Area 6 or 3 or 2. They put [in] a road to take you up to Area 20 and come in the back way. When I first got there, it was all dirt. So that was an improvement. I think they may've

thought they were going to do more work on 20 because they did have some shots up there. Then when they signed that peace treaty or whatever it was, they didn't have any more.

Right, the partial test ban [moratorium]. Do you think that they will ever reopen the test site?

Well, if some of these other countries come up with this, it might be we are going to, certainly to stay on an even keel with them. I don't know how the politicians feel about that. But I don't know how you would ever hold your own with them if they had it to use and you didn't have it to use. I'm sure we have extras around and I'm sure they test. They can test them now, they tell me, without actually firing them. Now I don't know how the hell that would work. But you know in this day and age, nothing surprises me anymore. So if they can test it and find out age is not deteriorating this, fine. I don't have a problem with it at all.

Right. Yeah, I'm just wondering if we've moved on into a new way of doing things?

[00:10:00] Well, right now, the way it is, and I'm certainly no expert on this, but North Korea, they've fired a couple of missiles here and there. They weren't loaded.

There's definitely buildup, I think, in other countries.

Yeah, and Iran has the potential, or the capability, with just a little more work. And don't think some of those people would be afraid to use it. That's probably not correct to say about those people, but they threatened to build them. Why are you going to build it if you're not going to use it? That's why I don't know. So it could possibly happen. It could. I hope it [does not], only inasmuch as if it does, that's terrible. The outcome could be just the end. I hate to think of that.

Did you ever think about that when you were at the test site, of the magnitude of what exactly goes on here?

It never worried me because I always felt that we were in good hands, that the people that were building these devices and detonating them had as much control as you can possibly have over

something like that. And I think that's a true statement simply because we didn't have a lot of blowouts or contaminating a lot of air or wiped out a city or a country. So I think that they *do* have good control over that, those scientists and those people that go underground and [test]. I think we're in good hands. And you know some of them were young, some of the scientists.

When I was with Wolfe and Gordon they said, `This device belongs to those two,` and they were probably thirty-five, forty, a lady and a man.

I said, `Is that right?`

[And they said], `Yeah, this is theirs.`

I though, my God. I was impressed.

Wow. I guess a lot of the scientists that worked on developing the capabilities, there were a lot of very young people, so that doesn't surprise me.

Yeah. They were young in my eyes, I'll tell you. Right on top of it.

That's impressive.

Yes, it is. It was to me.

You had a pretty good span out there of dealing with the protesters, too. Did you see any changes in the types of people or the way people did things? Obviously it sounds like the crowd got bigger and got smaller at different points but—

Well, it did. You're right there. And the smaller ones, you were less apprehensive about them because you know you could handle them. And the smaller groups, you probably knew more of them. But I think at one time we arrested about eight or nine hundred people one day. I don't think anywhere in Nevada has ever been that many arrested in one day.

Right, that's huge. And do you remember what that—?

It was a big one. I think it was Nevada Desert Experience. And they were just all over. I mean everywhere you looked, there was just people bobbing up and down in different colored clothes. It was just *overwhelming*.

Now was that in the eighties, do you know?

Yes, it had to be in the eighties then because we never had any that big in the nineties. Of course I was only there for, well, three years. January of ’94 is when I left. So yeah, it was in the eighties. And you *certainly* didn’t know all of those people. But we would take a ride out in there. They had dirt roads out around there, those camps. In fact I’m sure you know this gentleman. Nick—he was the manager. When I retired, Nick came out for the retirement party. He was an Italian man. I just can’t think of his last name. White-haired gentleman. Good-looking guy [Nick Aquilina]

We probably do have a name from that—you remember what he did?

He was the [NTS] manager downtown at that time. The top man. Just a great guy. And I took him out there. He said he wanted to go through that place so I said OK. So I took him out there. They had a little gate. Opened the gate. [And they said], `You got no business out here.` [And we said], `Yes, we do have business.`

So they didn’t want to let you guys in?

[00:15:00] They knew they had to. They would always put that on you [and we would say] `No, no, just open the gate, let’s not fight about this`, and they’d open the gate. So I took Nick around so he could see just how bad that—

So they had it gated off.

Well, there was a road there, so they built kind of a gate. If it was somebody that didn’t have a badge and a gun, [they’d] turn them around.

Right, and they had people at the gate monitoring? That's interesting.

Well, there was some things going on out there they probably didn't want everybody to know about. So that was one of the reasons. But [we would say] no, this is the sheriff's department, just open the gate. We will be back out very shortly. So took Nick to there so he could see it, [to] get a first-hand look at it. It's a bit awesome, and there were some very weird people. I mean—and some were not with us. They were about that high walking around that place. But they didn't give us that much of a problem.

This seems like it's a really unique experience. I don't know if you've had any other experience with activists or protesters or anything like that, but do you think that this is a typical relationship?

I don't know. I think the people make the relationship. But of course you watch TV and some of those people, they think we're living that. You see these demonstrations, well sometimes union demonstrations. I have nothing against the union, but you'll see them, and then the clubs come out and the head-bashing, and I'm thinking, now everybody's going to get hurt here but who's going to gain what? I mean we all go to the hospital? We won that war. But that's a little different. I've never been involved in anything but that down there, but if I *were* to get involved, I would still go into it the same way; you're a human being, I'm a human being, respect me and I'll respect you right back. I would try that. If it didn't work with them, I guess you just have to change your mind. But I'd give that the first shot automatically.

Well, it seemed to set a precedent.

I hope it did some good. I know it saved a lot of people getting hurt. I know that. We had a demonstration on that highway you came up today. Out there at mile marker 33 is where Clark County's line is and Nye County starts. It's this side of that little restaurant that's no longer open

there. Cactus Springs. This side of the little town down there where the Air Force is [Indian Springs]. Well, anyhow, they come down there. Oh, there must've been a couple hundred of them, [Bangs table] and blocked the highway.

So they were standing in the road.

Clear down there. That's, oh, ten or twelve miles from Mercury, from the cattle guard. They had the road blocked. U.S. 95 blocked.

Now is that something that you guys had to deal with?

Oh, yeah, yeah. We were the only ones available. And they didn't tell us about that one. They didn't tell us about that one at all. So we went down there, and then those are the ones that sit down and you got to practically pack them to the bus. That was a little different.

Then one day, the buses come off the main highway and make that [turn] to the cattle guard to come into Mercury. Well, here this bus is coming along and there's people on both sides of [the road] where they drop off there. And the bus drivers are being very, very careful. We worked well with them, too, and they worked well with us, and I appreciated that. But this one guy jumps out with a sheet of cardboard and puts it up, right over the windshield, where the bus driver can't see. So he stops, naturally. Well, unbeknownst to the bus driver, this guy slides *underneath* the bus and handcuffs himself to the front axle. Oh, I'm telling you. So we get out there, and somebody has reached down and turned the guy around, and they just think he's just hanging onto the frame and they're pulling on him while he's handcuffed.

So he's not coming off.

No, he's not coming off. So I got underneath there partially and said, `What's going on?` [And he said], `Well, this is it, Jim. We're blocking the road.` And he did. He had that off-ramp blocked. So we off-loaded the people. They had to go to work.

[00:20:00] *This was a bus bringing in workers.*

Yes, bringing the workers in. There was probably twenty or thirty buses for the [test site] And we finally got—I think we brought a wrecker out there and jacked that up. He had taken the key and laid it up on the frame somewhere, just in case.

Good thinking.

But yeah, he stopped that bus and jumped underneath there. You know they're pretty far off the ground, high off the ground, so he just rolled himself underneath there. There were active minds out there. Seriously. And sometimes I thought, My God, these people, you get them together and they think up some of the damndest things. But yeah, we had some problems that day. Now you look back on it and you think, My God.

There was always something going on, some little old thing. One time in there, they were all girls, about five of them. They snuck in to Mercury during the night and they hid out somewhere. And they all had this—oh, that stuff you can wrap meat in and put it in the oven.

Tin foil?

Aluminum foil. Their costumes were all made out of that. And they finally, they got to where [they thought], Oh, we've got to do something. We've got to let them know we're here, you know, make sure they know we're here. So they all came out, and so we brought them up to the sheriff's office. They looked like tin men, the Tin Man in *Alice in Wonderland*. Things like that. You have to appreciate the work that went into it. They had the hats on and—

Yeah. That's amazing.

Yeah, things like that. Nothing should catch you by surprise, but some of that stuff did.

It sounds like you saw some pretty interesting and strange—innovative, I guess.

And then you would go to a meeting (a protest) and they would say, Well, Captain Jim, we brought this out for you, and there'd be a baseball cap or a—I got a cup up here.

Oh, they gave you a mug, and they signed it.

Yeah. Things like that.

And so you knew these guys.

Oh, yeah. And Jessie Cox there, she was one of the last ones that was kind of a chairman or chairwoman of the [Nevada] Desert Experience. And I'm watching TV one night here, three or four years ago, and they're in this room and there's a bunch of people at this table. Then they moved the camera around, here's this lady talking. It's Jessie Cox. She's teaching them how to protest. And I said, I know her. Great girl. I got along good with her.

Who's Nancy? Do you know who this is? (looking at a mug signed by several protesters).

Yeah, I knew all of them. They weren't at the party, listen to me. They come out to—we had a meeting there at Wackenhut's office, and I think there was a bunch of candy kisses in there [in the mug] and stuff like that. [And they said], Well, we thought we'd bring this out to you, Jim, in front of all the Wackenhut men. But things like that. It kept your humor up.

So how did that go over? It seems you had a really good working relationship with these folks—were the other security people OK with that?

Yeah, they were.

Because it seems like you really set a precedent as opposed to, you know, could've been very impersonal and potentially dangerous like you said.

And some of them *were* like that. They did their job but there was no handshake and no hugging, no nothing like that. But I didn't have a problem with that because inasmuch as Wackenhut worked with us, we were the lead. They wouldn't do anything that would jeopardize us. But

some of them there, they just didn't believe in this and they didn't feel they had to socialize with these people. They'd take them and they'd handcuff them. And I didn't have a problem with that at all. However you want to run this, I would never—the only time I would ever mention anything, I would say `Well, you know, we're being a little rough here, I think,` if they were jerking them around or something. And some of **[00:25:00]** them were young kids, or young men, I should say, and they might want to rough them up a little bit. Well, that wasn't what this was all about. They knew how I felt about it.

It sounds like you had, you set a pretty good example.

Well, I think so. They were easy to work with. Most of them knew that hey, we can get this done if we do it right. I didn't expect them to go out there and do what I did or anything, but I *did* expect them—these are people, let's treat them as human beings, let's not be abusive. That wasn't what this was all about. And even if you're tired of staying down there, I couldn't see anybody taking advantage of somebody, handcuff them, then work them over, or something like that. And they didn't. I think it's just people being people together here, and it worked for us. I think Mike [Bordner] runs it the same way down there now because I never hear anything; Mike calls me every now and then and I talk to him. And Mike's had some trouble. He lost a couple fingers, I think, in a saw accident at home, and then he had some form of cancer but they cleared that up. So he's had some real problems, personal, health problems. But I'm sure Mike handles it pretty much like I was because he was working with me all that time. He came on in '80.

So he had a good amount of experience.

Yeah, he had as much as I did.

And I don't know if there's as much that goes on out there right now.

No, not anymore. I think at Lent they come out. But Mike tells me, oh, maybe fifteen or twenty. Because there is no testing.

It seems like that it's still—the Lenten and then for the anniversaries of Hiroshima and the bombings.

But no, I think it's very, very light. To my knowledge, Mike has never had to call out any more. He just handles it with his own people, where we had 150 people down there. I don't know how many NHP we had that time, but busloads. And we needed them.

Yeah. Boy, that sounds like quite the time.

And you know they'd bring out their music and they'd bring out—there were some Orientals involved in that.

Some what?

Oriental people. [protestors from Japan] They didn't play any wind instruments. Just drums.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. That can get on your nerves after a while.

So they're out there drumming.

Yes. They would sit on the ground, and most of them do, outside the fence, it was right by the cattle guard. You're trying to talk to somebody and this *boom, boom, boom*. But we put up with it, and they didn't cause any problem. But it was a learning lesson, I'll tell you, it really was.

"Learning" in what way?

I learned that I could deal with people that thought differently than I did, and we could converse about it. I could arrest people and I wasn't the hated person the next day. It wouldn't bother me *all* that much, but I was glad that it worked that way. And I learned that people have the right to demonstrate, *especially* if they do it nonviolently. I firmly believe that. Like I said, if my kids wanted to do it, if you do it in that fashion, you should be treated in that fashion. I told the kids

down there that, too, because they asked me about my family and, I'm as proud as I can *be* of those two. And they talked about their kids if they had them. So those kind of things, I think, develops a common bond, if you will.

Sure. Definitely. Do you think that there was any impact from that (proteseting) that repeated over time, the continuous presence of protesters? Do you think ultimately, from your perspective, that there was an impact?

I don't know that there was as far as the testing. I think that came about when we signed up with Russia, I think. That had much more to do with it. I just don't think that in itself. Because to my knowledge it was the Russians and us that signed that agreement, and then it slowed down down. But I don't know. It's pretty isolated, too, when you stop and think about it. **[00:30:00]** You're out there in the middle of that desert. I'm not sure that people back East even knew that was going on. But I have a stepmother and she lives in San Angelo, Texas, and we talk on the phone.

> And one time she called me up and said, `I saw you last night, Jim.`
>
> I said, `Laura Del, what are you talking about, you saw me last night?`
>
> [And she said], `I saw you on national television.`
>
> Because we got a lot of that out there.

Yeah, I bet.

The big ones (protests). Yes, uh huh. And the first couple we had out there, we had quite a few of them, and they came across. We didn't arrest them because they were photographers, *but* every time you were getting ready to put handcuffs on, *boom*, somebody would stick a camera in your face and you'd turn like that and knock your glasses off. After that I went to the powers that be down there and I says, `From now on, I don't want any more photographers over here, because they're not just satisfied to get back and take pictures, they want to get right in with what you're doing, and they're in the road, and the`

camera is hitting you on the head, and it's hard enough when you are wrestling with some of these people that you just—and a camera, you know, a couple thousand dollars' worth of camera goes flying up in the air because you kicked it or something. [And they said], Well, Jim, it's your demonstration. You can do whatever you want. So we wouldn't let any of them in after that. That created some problems, but we didn't have no more getting hit in the face with a camera. But we had H&N, Holmes and Narver, and they took all the pictures for us.

Now that created a problem but like I told them, No, no, these people work here. They're working here. They're not demonstrators.

[And they said], Well, Jim, you can't do that.

[And I said], Well, yes, we are going to do that.

And so we didn't allow any more of them in there. They'd have to stay outside and take their pictures.

From behind the line?

Yes, behind the lines. I don't think it broke anybody's heart because some of them didn't want to associate with them anyhow, but we took care of that. But, Yeah, I seen you on TV last night, Jim.

So you had all sorts of different components that you were juggling. You had the protesters, the media, the other test site workers and your own crew.

Yes. But there was no problem within the test site, with the employers or the employees or the management down there. They didn't like to see it. They had to come through it in the morning and go out at night with it. We had their full support, I think. I never had to question anybody or was I ever questioned about anything that was going on. We had meetings, a lot of meetings. If I knew we were going to have a demonstration and there was going to be seven hundred people

there, I'd just get a hold of Wackenhut and all those powers and we'd have a big meeting and say this is what's going to happen, this is what time, and then we'd just coordinate that. And it worked. Excellent. Nobody ever stood up and said, I'm not contributing to this. [They said] What do you need? And the cafeteria, what a sweetheart bunch that was. You know we'd have lunch down there. Trying to feed about 150 of us and here they'd come with vans loaded with the soft drinks or the iced tea or coffee, sandwiches, ice cream or potato chips. If you ate at eleven o'clock, they'd be there at 10:30. I mean just no problem at all. And it was an extra load on them. Wrapped all the [food] load it in the vans, bring it down.

So obviously, you guys played a major part in the test site, I don't want to say "makeup," but people were aware of you and your presence and then obviously that you were out there on the front line, so to speak, dealing with the protesters. Was [that] sort of a big, or at least a known, part of the test site culture at that time?

Oh, at that time it was. And I think after so many of them went by, those demonstrations, they went well enough. There was no accidents, nobody hospitalized, nobody run over. Oh, I think, a bus backed over a girl [who] laid down behind the bus and the bus driver *naturally* didn't see her *behind* him, for crying out loud. He just got her leg pinched a little here, but she did this all on her own and you couldn't blame the bus driver. If you'd done it right alongside, he could've *seen* her down there, but at the back, well—but I think that it went well and everything **[00:35:00]** was accomplished that *we* wanted to do. I think they felt well, we got five hundred arrested today, so we're satisfied. So I think the people on board said they're handling that all right out there, so we'll just go to work and they'll get us out. We made sure that no buses were stopped going out and people were going home, because the *last* thing you want is a couple of busloads of angry men getting out and going after it with them. We'd have *never* got that broke up.

No, that could've been a bad situation.

Oh, that would've been. Bad publicity, it would've been. Ugly.

But nothing like that ever happened.

Never happened. It *never* happened. We'd get out there, we knew they were coming out between 4:30 and 5:00. Just get out there, get in with them, that was it. I think they didn't have that much animosity to the workers *personally*. They knew there was so many thousand or hundreds working out there, but it was just the test site. They didn't have fault with them, I don't think. In my mind, I never heard them say anything about the Teamsters, the plumbers, the carpenters, or management, or—

It was more the symbols, the symbolism, of the test site.

A symbol. Yeah, I think that's the right word. I think you hit it right on the head.

That's interesting. Something that I've heard in talking to folks that have protested or been a part of that—it's not that they hold anything against the people, *themselves.*

No, and that made it easier for us.

So I notice on the side of the road there's a sign that says something to the effect of beware, protesters in the road, or—

Oh, yes.

Was that sign always up there or is that something that you guys had put up?

No, that's something they put up. What they're supposed to do is put it up when you have them and take it down when you don't have them.

Right, I think it folds up, so they can put it down.

Well, that's good.

I just thought that was really interesting. You see signs, you know, Deer Crossing or School Zone. It's right before you come around the bend and go under the overpass.

Yes. There was just a lot of things down there. Like I say, I met a lot of people down there that [I] knew through that, and they would tell me something, oh, we're going to do this, Jim, and they'd do it.

Did you ever get any other nice mementoes?

I don't remember. I remember this one, and then, well, I seen Jessie on TV that night. Oh, Jessie was something else. All of them were, these kids, and Patty here, and Nancy. And then every year, sometimes that management would change a little bit. They'd drop out or they'd just be doing something else, [or] didn't even bother to show. But the word got out, that if you go up there and you act decent, you go ahead and break the law, trespass, but if you do it in a decent fashion, nonviolent fashion, you can go. You don't have any problems with the powers that be. And I think that got out somewhat. Because I remember one time there was a lot of folks down there, and this guy in a beard wearing shorts—it was summertime—but he had the Russian flag. And somebody told me, Jim, this guy, he was underneath the underpass, he was walking down, he's coming down here. And that was just about all we'd probably need. So I told some of the people that some of the powers that be on their side would stay—they'd make sure everybody got through, and then *they* would probably come through. They wouldn't come through first if he's sitting over there. So I told them, I says, You know, this is not good. So I said, Well, I'll give you a chance. You go up and you talk to him and tell him that if he pulls that flag deal out here, I can't guarantee his safety. People might not go for this.

So essentially him carrying the flag is not necessarily something that's against the law but it would've possibly made people angry enough that something could have happened.

It could've. It could've excited somebody. Exactly. And I didn't really feel we needed that. For him to have the right to pack that if he wanted to, fine, pack it. But not in a crowd like that where there's so many unknowns. You don't know what's going to happen. They did convince him to come on down but you roll that flag up and put it away. So that worked good. I was afraid **[00:40:00]** it was going to get a little testy if it got right down there because even *my* people on *my* side weren't too crazy about that. And the demonstrators, some of them weren't even aware that guy was going to *do* that, I would think. But it was handled. He might've been a little unhappy about it but that's only one out of a thousand, so it was no problem for me to do that.

Yeah, that could've been a bad scene.

It could have. And once it got out of hand, God only knows what would've happened. You have hotheads on both sides and sometimes just one match fires the whole thing.

Right, all you need is one confrontation and who knows who that's going to draw in?

Exactly.

Well, it sounds like you had a very good philosophy and a good approach, which probably really made that a very peaceful era.

Well, it was. You're always alert and my guys were always looking around, which we get paid to do. But really, we've had some strikes down there and some of the strikes were a little tougher than this.

Really.

Yeah, you know, and these people you *knew*, you worked with them.

These are people striking at the test site.

Yeah, [a] unionized strike. They'd be out there for a couple of days. I remember one time it was in the winter because they had these cans with fires that you warm up. Those cans always smoke

and always make you black. And you know you feel sorry for them because they *want* to go to work but they want more money or they want more and better conditions. You don't take sides on that, and we didn't, but we had to keep the highway open. That was what our function was, and it wasn't for like or dislike. But most of *them* people that worked, they *all* knew us. That helped us in some respects. They never lasted a long time, for three days, a week maybe.

Interesting. Are you still in touch with any of these—?

No, not since I've left down there. I've been back there once. I went to a retirement party for one of the guys that was working for me when I left down there.

Mike [Bordner] invited me, the captain who took my place, he said, `Why don't you come down?`

And I said, `Well, good, I'll go into Vegas afterwards and spend some time with my daughter.`

And he said, `Well, come on down, we're going to start at lunch about noon.`

So I went down there, the first time I had been down there. It's changed. Mercury's changed. The sheriff's office that *I* worked out of all the time I was there is no longer there. It was a wooden building. And the theater, the big theater right next door, it was a wooden building. They did away with those.

They took the whole building down?

The whole building. It's just a lot there now. And so I was surprised to see that, but I wasn't really because Mike told me, `Well, we're not in the old office anymore, Jim, we're over here by the post office now.` Well, I remember where the post office was. [But] it was great. It was a nice retirement party. Then the guy that retired came through town about

three weeks ago and he called me up and he says, Let's go out for coffee. So we went up and had coffee with Obie and I. Obie, he worked down there.

Obie?

Obie Martin. So he give me a buzz, and we went and had coffee. But Obie, oh, he came about '80, somewhere around there, and he left this year. That's twenty years. And then he had a little bit of time, I think, in Gabbs, the town in Nye County, so same system.

Have you been back to the test site at all?

Just that one time.

Just that one time.

Just that one time. But you know I had—well, I love to play tennis. Don't play that good but I still love to play, and I used to play down there at night. And the fire department down there, they had to have so much physical exercise per week or per month. They had to run or lift weights—well, they counted tennis in on that, so I always had three or four partners to play tennis with. It was right down below where we lived there. They had lights, two courts, so I would play tennis, weather permitting. I worked day shift then and I would play after dinner every night.

Wow. That really is like its own little community.

Oh, it was. It was. They don't have any gaming joints and no bars. **[00:45:00]** They had a church there, a hospital and everything down there that we had here. So yeah, it was just a good camp, well thought out. They took good care of their employees, made everything reasonable.

It sounds like it.

Oh, yes, it was no problem. Good retirement. Very good.

It's hard to find these days.

It is.

Well, sounds like quite the adventure.

It was, really. And I wasn't that—well, let's see, I was forty-four when I went down there. I was born in '28 and I went down in '72. Yeah, forty-four.

It sounds like it was quite a shift from you were driving and then you were out at the test site.

Two very different things.

It was two different things. Like I say, I drove from here to Bakersfield and hauled the fuel out of there, and then sometimes they'd send me to Sacramento and I'd haul fuel out of Sacramento. They stayed pretty much in central Nevada, and they hauled fuel into Beatty down there. And it was a good job. Like I say, I didn't mind being alone and I was alone all the time, so I could handle that. And I used to like to drive at night. That was the best time because that's when the traffic was least, so I didn't mind that. That paid good. So job wise, of the ones I've had, I've enjoyed them.

It sounds like you've been very lucky.

Because I hear these guys talk, `Geez, I hate this job`, and I'm thinking, My God, I never did say that. As a kid you hate some jobs, pulling weeds and stuff like that, but no, they were jobs that I felt comfortable with. So I can say I'm lucky and I know it.

That's fortunate.

It is. Seriously. This day and age.

Well, gosh, I thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me.

Oh, my pleasure, believe me. I wish I remembered more to tell you but like I say, it's eleven years this January I've been gone from there. But that's about most of it right there.

It sounds very exciting, actually.

It really was. There's an awful lot of satisfaction in working with a lot of people; you're not out there individually trying to satisfy everybody there, but you're trying to show them that you can do your job. We as the sheriff's department, *we*, all of us, I thought we *did* the job. So I've always felt good about that. And the guys put out just every bit as much energy as I did for it. They worked just as hard, just as many hours.

And that's probably a sign of good leadership.

Well, hopefully, but they were just good help. Good help. *Absolutely*.

Do you have any thoughts or anything that we didn't talk about that you feel would be important?

No, I don't think so. You know it sounds like all we did was have demonstrations down there, but you know that wasn't the case. There was just our regular patrolling and things like that. They do the same thing here. They patrol the streets. We didn't have a lot of crime down there, I can tell you that.

Well, I would imagine.

Very little bit of that stuff.

Most of that would probably have to come from inside, I would imagine.

Yes. But there was very little of that. We had just a few accidents, fender-benders. and stuff like And then there'd be some thefts we'd find out about, just like they do everywhere else. But we were just law enforcement officers on a government installation.

Well, I think, unless you have other things to add or—

No, Suzanne, I can't think of anything else. That twenty-one years went by in an hour here. But that's the way it is. Now if you ever get a chance to talk to Mike, the guy that took my place, he

was in on all those demonstrations because he came on board in 1980 and he is the commander down there.

Actually I would like to talk to him. What's his name?

Mike Bordner. **[00:50:00]** Mike was there with me on every one of them and did an excellent job, and then he's done for the last ten years since I've been gone. They've had some but not nearly as large, but there are some that go on. But yeah, you call Mike and tell him if you want that you come up and interviewed me.

I'm going to. I would love to talk to him.

He could refresh you on what's gone on since.

It's been great talking to you because you were there for the highlight—that was the heyday, so to speak, with protest and just with activity happening at the test site. On average how many people do you think were employed out there while you were there?

Oh, I don't know, there must've been—when I first went down there, that was in '72, I'll bet there was eight to ten thousand, probably. That's just a guess—I'm sure the upper management could tell you, but I don't know that. But [Area] 12 was going and all the areas were going then, and I would guess it was between eight and ten.

Yeah, because I'd be curious to hear his experience now, since you were there when it was really active both on the site and the protesters and everything going on—I don't think Martin Sheen's been out there in a while so.

Oh, no, I'm sure he hasn't. I see him on that TV—

Oh, yeah, The West Wing.

But this guy was just always the perfect gentleman. Always remembered your first name. Mike'll tell you the same thing, `Hi, Mike, how are you?` Oh, yeah, he was always on top of it. Sometimes he'd come out in [what] looked more like a limousine than a bus.

I'm sure.

He'd fly into Vegas—but he was just with the Franciscans all the time. I think he is Catholic. But he never made a scene and he never tried to gather all the attention. He'd just come across like everybody else.

He was there for his own—

Oh, yeah.

That's great. Anybody else that you remember like that?

I remember one time Teri Garr, she's a movie actress, oh, and a beautiful woman. I don't know that she got arrested or not, though. There would be so many come through at one time, you just couldn't keep it—

Yeah, sounds like it was just massive.

And some of them used to come down but I don't think they would go through the arrest procedure. They just would contribute to it by being there.

Now you used to put everybody in one big pen. Now there's a separate—

No, there's two.

There are two?

It looks like one but there's a divider—

And is that men and women?

—and you put the men in one and the women in the other. Then there's a doublewide trailer there. That's what we all used as our offices and that's where they kept the food, and they [ate]

out of there. There might be another trailer there now. It seemed to me I thought I saw it. I admit I didn't pay any attention when I went in that day. But it's pretty much the same as it was when I was down there.

Now I'm just curious, after you write everybody out the tickets and they get processed, what happens on your end of things from there? Do the majority of those get dismissed or do they have a fine that they have to pay?

Well, [there] was no fine because the DA said no, we're not prosecuting.

So that was it. They're not going to tie up the courts?

No, that was exactly what he—and he got away with it. And I can see, at the time we were all pretty disillusioned. Well, what are we doing out here? We're arresting these people and you're turning them loose up there. Come on. But then he couldn't have housed them, the county *couldn't* afford to keep them—

That's a lot of people at once.

It was a financial loss. The county just couldn't support it. That's all there was to it. But it was just heartbreaking to some of us. Man, we're down here busting our you-know-what and you're kicking them out.

Did that ever make it seem like it wasn't worth it?

Well, no, it never did that. We were there to do a job and we got paid for it. I think if it was washing dishes, if I got paid for it, I'll do it. You know it's just one of those things, and the guys pretty much felt the same way. There was no slackers down there at all.

That's great.

Yeah. They'd give you everything they have.

It's a good work ethic.

It is. It is. Seriously.

[00:55:00] *Well, I think I will try to get a hold of Mike. It'd be great to get both of you guys' stories and get a whole scene of—*

He can give you the last decade, and I think it would probably prove interesting to you, to see how far it's gone down, or if they're different groups entirely.

Just how it's changed; just how the test site has changed, and doing security at the test site is probably different now than it was twenty years ago.

Oh, absolutely. There's still a few down there. When I went in there to get my badge to go into the party, sure enough, one of the kids was there, still working behind the desk ten years later. What are you doing here? What are *you* doing here? It was good to see him. And then some of them came down to Obie's retirement party, and I knew a couple from the cafeteria, and then the Wackenhuts, so that was cool. But I think Mike could cut you in on what happened since '94, and I know he's had them, he's told me that, but not the big ones like we used to have. I'm sure he's glad of that.

I'm sure. I think I will give him a call. Thank you.

And you tell him that you talked to me. Mike will go along with it, I'm sure. I'm sure he will.

OK. Great.

It won't be near the trip either as it is to come up here. [Tonopah]

Oh, yeah, it'll just be a short drive.

An hour.

Short hour drive.

An hour and you're out there.

Yeah, it wasn't actually too bad of a drive.

It isn't really because the traffic is—

Well, there's virtually no traffic so that was nice.

Yeah.

Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

Well, you're welcome, and thank you for coming up, really.

Yeah. My pleasure. It's good to get out of town for a little bit.

Oh, yeah, find out how the other half lives, huh?

Yes, exactly. It's nice to be back up in an area like this.

Well, good for you. Good. I suppose the weatherman says it's going to rain or snow but as yet we haven't had any of it.

There were a few sprinkles on the way up.

Oh, did you really?

Yeah, little bit.

Just a little bit.

Just little pockets but nothing major.

Well, it just hasn't gotten here yet then. We haven't had any moisture for about ten days now, or two weeks, so we welcome anything we get. The drought's in.

Well, hopefully not.

[00:57:28] End Track 2, Disc 2.

[End of interview]