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

# Interview with Dorothy Ciarlo

**August 18, 2005**
**Boulder, Colorado**

Interview Conducted By
Suzanne Becker

Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews conducted by an interviewer/researcher with an interviewee/narrator who possesses firsthand knowledge of historically significant events. The goal is to create an archive which adds relevant material to the existing historical record. Oral history recordings and transcripts are primary source material and do not represent the final, verified, or complete narrative of the events under discussion. Rather, oral history is a spoken remembrance or dialogue, reflecting the interviewee's memories, points of view and personal opinions about events in response to the interviewer's specific questions. Oral history interviews document each interviewee's personal engagement with the history in question. They are unique records, reflecting the particular meaning the interviewee draws from her/his individual life experience.

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

**Suzanne Becker:** *If you'd begin with where you're from and when you were born.*

**Dorothy Ciarlo:** I grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas, and I was born in 1933, the depths of the Depression, and my parents weren't Southerners. My father had gone there as a professor at the medical school in the biochemistry department. I say that because I never really considered myself a Southerner even though I spent my entire childhood there.

*So you grew up in Little Rock.*

Yes. And that was the time of segregation. It was a big deal for me personally.

*How so?*

Well, because it was two separate school systems and I saw black kids being harassed on a daily basis, and for whatever reason I reacted very negatively to that. And I always felt somewhat estranged in Little Rock. It just didn't feel like a place that I was comfortable with. And that was probably made more so because we spent our summers out here in Colorado, and so I had a different—

*Were your parents originally from Colorado?*

They were actually from the Northwest, but I think they couldn't get that far [laughing]. We drove for three days and that was as far as they could get.

*And you just spent the summers here.*

Yes.

*In the Boulder area?*

Actually near Estes Park on the YMCA campgrounds there.

*That's beautiful!*

Yes. And my father built a little cabin there which we still have.

*Really. Is it still there?*

We still use it.

*I spent a lot of time up in that area.*

Oh, have you?

*Yes, I love it. So that's really neat. If you could talk about a little bit more what it was like growing up, particularly in the South with segregation and during the Depression. You were obviously aware of segregation. Were you aware of the Depression era as well? You were fairly young.*

Only tangentially. Looking back I can see it was more that everybody was poor, and I really didn't have much contact with people who were unemployed. And I think by the time I have a good memory [of it], the Second World War was starting and the people were employed. But I do remember that my parents always used to say that I was born in the year my father didn't get paid. I think the Arkansas government, the government employees didn't—they got paid in scrip rather than money.

*And your father was a professor?*

He was a professor.

*At the University of Arkansas.*

Yes. He was at the medical school, so he trained doctors.

*What was his name?*

His name was Paul Day**,** and he did research, so I grew up having a belief in science and that kind of thing. And I went to school in Little Rock throughout and then, as I say, we came out here in the summers and that gave me a little different perspective.

*Yes, it was different than being in Little Rock.*

Right. Yeah.

*What was your mother's name?*

Her name was Mildred Garrett Day.

*And was she employed?*

She was not. She had, I guess you would say, a health problem. Something happened, it's not clear to me what, when I was actually very young. She was in bed till I was six or seven, and after that she was kind of semi-invalid. I now think it was more psychological, eventually. Who knows what it was originally? Actually I always think of coming out here, my mother seemed to be healthier than in Little Rock, so I look back on it now and that's kind of interesting.

*Makes you think. Now you mentioned that in school you sensed segregation and* **[00:05:00]** *it was something that made you feel uncomfortable?. Did you grow up in a fairly politically conscious family?*

Well, I wouldn't say politically conscious, but humanitarian. My dad did some what I think were rather courageous things. They don't seem like that much now, but he was on the board of a visiting nurses' association that gave care to African Americans, and that was real unusual. And because my mother was ill, we had an African American young woman that took care of me when I was very little and did housework and helped. And she couldn't go in the public library, and so he would go get her books for school from the library. Those things were examples to me

of a different way of—I think both of my parents were very uncomfortable with the racism and with segregation.

*I would imagine, coming from the Northwest. Whereabouts did they come from?*

My father grew up in Oregon, mainly, and then moved to Washington, and my mother grew up mainly in Washington, different little towns there.

*So I would imagine that there's quite a contrast.*

Yeah. And of course in Little Rock in the South at that time, people had lived there forever. It was a very isolated kind of place. It's so different since Clinton has become president. The whole state is viewed differently. But back then, it was pretty parochial and if you hadn't lived there all your life, you were a Yankee and that wasn't a good thing to be.

*So there was definitely an outsider status.*

Oh, very strongly, very strongly, yes.

*And you went to grade school and high school there?*

Yes, I did.

*Did you go to the university?*

I didn't. I wanted out and I had an older sister and she went to college out of state, to a liberal arts school in Ohio. I considered going there and then I decided I wanted to branch out into something really different, so I ended up going to Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, which was a Quaker school and kind of plunged me into a very, *very* different environment. It was rough.

*I bet. What was that like? How did the environment—?*

In some ways it was wonderful because I guess one of the things that I really disliked about Little Rock at that time, or the South—that part of the South—was a kind of anti-intellectualism

and no curiosity. It was unacceptable to have curiosity about things. And of course Swarthmore was the opposite. People there, many of them, had come from *very* privileged backgrounds and were very well prepared; I was horribly prepared. But it was still very exciting, and I'm sure I was formed by that.

*What year was this that you started?*

I started in 1951. I might just say, before that, relating to the Nevada Test Site [NTS] and my experiences there, for whatever reason, August 6, 1945, the atomic—

*I was going to ask you about that.*

I remember it very clearly.

*You do.*

Yes. And I talk to other people exactly my age and they don't have any recollection of it.

*Because you were twelve or so?*

I was eleven or twelve. I think I was eleven.

*You were young.*

Yes, and I remember hearing about it on the radio and feeling this sense of *horror*. And I think they described [it], because I have heard recollections, I've heard people much more recently say that when they did the test before they actually dropped the bomb in Hiroshima, that there were **[00:10:00]** people many, many miles away who saw something. What I remember hearing on the radio is that a blind woman a hundred miles away saw a flash.

*Now its funny because other people have mentioned that and I don't know if that is a true story or an urban legend. I was speaking to somebody else who was driving through that area on her way to college when they had tested that and had later heard that story.*

Isn't that interesting.

*So I've read two different things and I've always been curious.*

Yes. Well, I'm sure they would have been saying that on the radio right around that time, and where they got it. But I think of course they were using it to say this is bigger, you know. But for some reason it horrified me.

*I suppose you probably remember where you were when you heard it.*

My recollection is that I was in our cabin, and that would make sense because that's where the radio was. Of course, that was before TV. And I don't remember talking with anyone about it.

*Do you remember your parents having a reaction?*

I really don't.

*But you as a child, when they were describing it, just thought it was fairly horrific.*

Yes. Yes. And I had always been kind of upset by the whole war thing and the stories about the cruelty and the destruction. So I was already involved in that sense.

*Now did that particularly lead you to—I mean were you a politically active kid or teenager?*

I wasn't. In the South at that time, the Republicans were the liberals. It's horrifying to think, but I remember I went to Swarthmore and I thought I was a Republican because [of that]. I quickly learned that things were different.

*Yes. That must've been a very different experience.*

So political in the sense of electoral politics, I wasn't at all, but I think in terms of being aware of things. I remember that I tried to do a few things in the Church with regard to race relations and didn't get anywhere. And then I remember in a history, I think it was an American history course, I did a paper on the development of the hydrogen bomb. It was just in process. And that *really* affected me. I was horrified. I thought we should've learned. So I remember doing that and feeling very upset about that.

*Do you recall if any of your peers were conscious or having any conscious thoughts about this?*

I really felt quite alienated in that sense. I mean I had friends but—I do remember one fellow that was quite bright and I thought I had something in common with him intellectually; but I remember him joking around about Eleanor Roosevelt and making fun of her, and it was really very upsetting to me. So I mainly just kept my mouth shut.

*Now you entered college at the height of the Cold War and actually the year that the test site was, I guess if you want to call it, activated.*

Aha. I didn't even know that.

*In 1951. Yes, that's about when the test site started up. And I'm just wondering if you were at all conscious of this Cold War era that had been going on or was taking effect.*

I was. What I think about the strongest at that time, well, I was aware that nuclear weapons were continuing, were taking off, and that was upsetting to me. And I decided from the moment I got to college, or even maybe before, that I was a pacifist. I didn't know what a **[00:15:00]** pacifist was, but I decided I was a pacifist. So I got involved in a little peace committee at the college. We didn't do much but—

*Did you do things on campus?*

Yes. And I think we had speakers. It got me in touch with other likeminded students, which was very, very good.

*It must have been very reassuring.*

Yes. Yes. And just the fact that there were people who believed—that just felt very supportive to me.

*Yes. Definitely.*

But I was going to say something else. Well—I did then decide to major in psychology and decided I would be a psychologist. So I did that. Oh, I know the other thing that I was going to say. You asked the effect of the Cold War. What I remember from my college years was the effect of the [Senator Joseph] McCarthy, anticom [anticommunism] and the McCarthy era. That was a really big, big thing in those years. I remember trying to collect money for the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] and having students turn me down at Swarthmore because they were afraid that the ACLU was considered to be a, quote, "Communist group," and things like that. There was that cloud over everything.

*That's interesting. A little bit of that going on today.*

Yes. A lot of parallels.

*It's interesting to find it that prevalent on a college campus, I guess.*

I think it was throughout the whole society at that time, insidiously.

*That's a good word for it. Insidious. I guess I just have to ask you, out of curiosity, women going to college at that particular juncture in time was not as common, obviously, as it is now. Did you have any qualms about it or was it ever an issue for you?*

As you can probably figure out, I wasn't very happy in Little Rock, although I never thought of it in terms of women versus men at that time. I think I saw my route out as intellectual achievement, and I had the example of my father who'd grown up in a working-class family and put himself through graduate school, and education was certainly stressed in my family. So I never even thought that women—I knew that there was, "women weren't supposed to achieve," but I associated it with being in the South. When those of us who were going to college talked about it, I remember some of the other girls saying it's OK for the guys to go to eastern schools,

but not the girls. And I didn't like that at all. And that didn't affect me. Well, it affected me in the sense that I wanted to go to an eastern school.

I didn't really think much about what we would now call feminist issues then, although I know I did feel very—I *really* reacted strongly to the kinds of rules they had for girls going to college. You had to be in the dorm, and you had to have your date escort you to the front porch, and I sort of quietly rebelled [laughing]. I lived in a particular part with my roommate my senior year where you could manage to sneak in without signing in or out, **[00:20:00]** so I never signed out and never signed in. I remember one of the other sort of rule-following girls said, `You never seem to go out.`

*Because you were never signed in or out.*

Right.

*Good ploy.*

Much, much later I have thought about that in very different ways. But at that time I really didn't—.

*Well, it wasn't something that was, I think, even talked about or recognized, but obviously it's something where you realized that there was a difference.*

Yes. I also remember I didn't let the boys pay for me for dates. I think I really felt like if they paid, I had to kiss them whether I wanted to or not. And I don't remember talking with anyone else about that at that particular time. Later, I did, as times changed.

*Right. In hindsight.*

Yes

*You majored in psychology. Did you feel any differences in the classrooms or in coursework in terms of dealing with people, professors?*

I think Swarthmore was a pretty unique place in a lot of ways, because I didn't really think much about male-female issues. I thought a lot about race issues, because I had been so influenced by that. I tried to date every African American in the school, and there weren't many of them. So there was that kind of curiosity. A lot of my friends were foreign students. Partly that was because my roommate was from Japan, and I think that heightened my awareness of the Hiroshima experience.

*I was going to say, having such a clear a memory of it and then having that connection. Was that something that she was aware of?*

She was. I don't remember us having long conversations about it. You're probably familiar with the "Hiroshima Maidens." It must've been somewhere in the fifties, [May 1955], that some philanthropist in this country [Norman Cousins] brought a group of disfigured young women who had gone through the Hiroshima bomb experience.

*I haven't actually heard about that.*

Well, they brought them over for surgery so that their appearance could be improved and they wouldn't have such a hard time becoming wives. And my roommate was a host. They came to visit the school briefly and I remember her talking about that. I don't remember actually seeing them.

*That's really interesting. I had not heard about that.*

I think that—the Hiroshima Maidens it was called—influenced a lot of people who had direct contact. It was sort of like that direct visual experience.

*Sure. It's one thing to hear it on a radio and it's so far away, but when it's tangible or visible, it's something different.*

Yes.

*OK, so obviously this is something that you've been conscious of. You're conscious of segregation. What was the climate like on the campus of Swarthmore in terms of race relations at that point?*

It was very much a northern liberal school. If anything, people might've gone overboard in terms of liberal white guilt, I think you would call it. So it was totally different from my experience in Little Rock, which I expected. I mean that wasn't a surprise to me. I think I personally had to go through some experiences; just like I remember the first time I held hands **[00:25:00]** with an African American, it was a very strange experience. And that seems so odd now but the segregation, it just scarred people in ways that it's hard to understand now. But I grew out of that very quickly. In fact, I fell madly in love with one of the African American students and had a brief relationship with him, and that affected my life, really, in a lot of ways.

*In terms of?*

Well, actually partly because he was also a pacifist at that time. I doubt that he still is. So we had this unique bond. And kind of interesting psychologically, I think. In a sense it was moving out of my previous experience and solidifying my pacifism. I had already felt, before I went to Swarthmore, that I was a pacifist, but this was the icing on the cake.

*Finding likeminded people really helps reinforce and shape those ideas. Were you involved with the civil rights movement?*

Really by the time the civil rights movement got really active, I was in graduate school and involved in doing that, so I wasn't involved directly. I continued to have black friends and be interested and give money and things like that, but I wasn't really active. I kind of stayed away from it because I felt like my feelings were *so* strong that I couldn't be very useful in this messy sort of way.

*Well, I think, passion on any level for a topic is good. So the obvious question is you graduated in 1955?*

Fifty-five.

*OK, and from there did you go right to graduate school?*

I took a year off and lived in New York with a couple of friends and worked as a secretary, which drove me to graduate school.

*Where in New York did you live?*

It was near Greenwich Village.

*Oh, wow, what a time to be there.*

Yes. And one of my roommates worked for the American Friends Service Committee in New York City, and through her and some natural affiliations I had, I was peripherally, you might say, involved with the Quakers. And there were several well-known pacifists that in pacifist circles were big deals. One of them was a man by the name of A.J. Muste. I think he founded this organization called the Fellowship of Reconciliation. I'm not sure of that. [He was not a founder but worked with the organization for many years].

*I've definitely heard of it.*

And there was another man by the name of Bayard Rustin. He was African American and just an astonishingly brilliant and charismatic man. And he was a Quaker. At that time, the pacifists and the Quakers that worked in the American Friends Service Committee circle tended to be middle-aged, homely white men—not homely, very good people but not very exciting, and Bayard Rustin was very exciting. I read a biography of him **[00:30:00]** recently which was really excellent, and it explained his connection with the peace movement and then the civil rights

movement. It was called *Lost Prophet*. I just saw recently that they're going to do a PBS [Public Broadcasting System] program on him [*Brother Outsider*], which I think will be fascinating.

*I have not heard of him. I definitely need to look him up.*

I think so. What fascinates me about him is that, well, I knew him at a time [when] I was young and impressionable, but he was the only black person among the peace people. He became very committed to nonviolence and read, as did the other Quakers, about Gandhi and the strategy of nonviolence as well as the morality of it, so they became real students of nonviolent as a social action technique. And then, this is aside from me but Bayard Rustin was tangentially involved, I think, in planning the Nevada Test Site action. He also, shortly after that, in '56, started working with Martin Luther King and became very influential in, as I understand it, convincing Martin Luther King to adopt the nonviolence as a strategy.

*When you read about nonviolence principals, often the two people that you do read about are Gandhi and then Martin Luther King, so that's really interesting.*

Yes. And this is kind of the behind-the-scenes person.

*Yeah, that's amazing. And you were part of that. That's really quite amazing.*

Well, it's interesting because I knew those people and of course they hardly knew me; I was just a young person, but they were very influential.

*I bet. So what types of issues were being focused on at that particular juncture?*

Well, at that point I think I was more aware of the Cold War and what was going on, the buildup of weapons and the things that were being rationalized on the basis of anticommunism and that whole way of looking at things. So then in my personal life, I moved to graduate school.

*Where did you go to graduate school?*

University of Chicago. I started the graduate program in psychology and was really kind of conflicted because I was in the psychology program, which was very academic and not at all social psychology. I would have been very happy as a social psychologist, but I didn't know anything about it and Chicago didn't really have an active program. So I just decided to become a clinical psychologist. I was interested in [that] very much, but I also felt a little sad to give up some of the social-issue kind of involvement. So I think that's really what motivated me to take the summer job with this protest at the test site. I had been at Chicago one year and I had the summer off and I just wanted to do something different. I knew there was a long road ahead in terms of graduate school and professional training, so I wanted to do something different before I plunged into that.

*And so what type of job? How did this opportunity come about?*

Well, I can't remember how I got the job but I know I would've been slightly known when they were looking for a secretary for the project.

*OK. And what project was—?*

They called it Nonviolent Action Against Nuclear Weapons. That was **[00:35:00]** both the name of the project and the, I think they called it an ad hoc committee of planners.

*What year was this?*

That was 1957. The action took place on the test site in August, but they started planning it, I think, in May, and I was hired in June, first of June probably. Somewhere around in there. As I say, I don't remember how I got the job but it was easy for me to go back to New York and live in the same place that I had lived in.

*So basically you'd heard about it through connections, groups that you were involved in, networking kind of stuff?*

Probably. Yes. And the man who actually hired me was the man that was directing the project. His name was Lawrence Scott. He's described a little bit in some of the newspaper clippings that I have. I had not known him with this sort of group of pacifists that I had been involved with. I always had the impression at the time that the people who were the inspiration for this project were A.J. Muste and Bayard Rustin and some of the other people that worked with them. These older Quakers and people that were very disturbed about nuclear testing, not only nuclear weapons but nuclear testing, and felt like something dramatic had to be done to make people aware of what was really going on.

*And obviously at this point you were aware of the Nevada Test Site?*

Yes. Yes. And the atmospheric testing was getting some publicity even that early, and people were worried about the dangers of it. So I think they planned this knowing that there was a level of anxiety in the general population that could be tapped as a way to bring attention to the larger issue of nuclear weapons. I know that's why they decided to go to the test site. My recollection is that there had never been any protests at the test site. Now, I could be wrong.

*This may very well be the beginning of those early protests that we hear about.*

Yes, I think this was the first one.

*I think you're right.*

And from the reaction we got when we went to Las Vegas, I mean there was a lot of interest in the group.

*Really. Within Las Vegas?*

Yes. By that I mean the press gave us *much* more attention than they certainly would now. And this term Atomlopers was invented by the newspapers.

*Do you know where that had come from?*

Because the project people were being very public about what they were going to do, trying to get attention actually, they had visited lots of the churches trying to get church support, and the newspapers and anyone else who would listen, to tell them that they were going to have a group of people that would nonviolently enter the test site on the day of August 6th, which was also a day in which they were scheduling an atmospheric nuclear test [Stokes, actually shot August 7, 1957] which, as I look back on it now, you have to wonder what the government—It was really astonishing.

*That's something. I had no idea. But I suppose I should know that. I can look up to see what test that was. But that's interesting. I hadn't thought about that.*

Yes. So the planners had that in mind, that they would do this civil disobedience act on the day of the test, and basically say that we're willing to give our lives to protest this because it's so **[00:40:00]** important to us, and linking it to Hiroshima because that was just twelve years after. So that was the plan. And as I read from the newspaper clippings, I wouldn't have remembered this but there were eleven people who actually committed civil disobedience.

*Did you?*

No. I was the secretary. I was busy with the mimeograph machine. And I think there were about twenty of us in addition, so I suspect there were about thirty people involved.

*How long did you spend planning this, because you mentioned that you went to New York.*

Yes, and among pacifist circles they put out news about this and raised money and I was of course the person that sent out the letters and collected the checks. And they had strategy meetings I remember sitting in on. I can't remember the details of them, but I know that they talked about the symbolism and how this might catch the attention of the press. And I remember, this stuck in my mind even then, I remember one of the leaders saying, `Now we have to`

understand that if Marilyn Monroe breaks her ankle, there won't be anything in the papers about this.

*And that is true.*

But you know as I look back on that now, I'm just so struck with how different it was then than later. Now, protests are just so common and every-day, and it was so different then. It was so sort of shocking to people. I remember my best friends said, You shouldn't do this. You shouldn't work for this group. It will ruin your career. Because there was something about a very public protest really opposing the government. That was just shocking.

*Sure. Absolutely. Did your parents, your family, know that you were involved in these sorts of things at this point?*

They did. I told them and they didn't raise a fuss.

*They were supportive?*

Yes, I suppose you'd say they were supportive. We didn't talk a lot about that kind of thing but they certainly never criticized it. And I do remember when we were driving from New York to Las Vegas, we came via Colorado and went up to Estes Park and spent a few hours at our cabin, and my mother even whipped up lunch, which was rare for her. And my father was very impressed with Lawrence Scott and the other people that were with us. So that was definitely supportive.

*That's pretty neat. That's quite a drive from New York to Las Vegas.*

Yes. You were asking me about the issues of gender. I was the only female among the five of us driving out. And the project itself, in the newspaper clippings it says there were one or two women but I don't remember them. I felt like I was the only one. Of course I was young and they were all older. I felt glad to be there and glad to have my role in what I did, but I certainly didn't feel equal to them. And I must say that I think that influenced me in that it certainly wasn't an

equal balance of men and women, and there was definitely a feeling that the men were the planners. It was standard.

*Very common at that point.*

*Very* common, yes.

*But you probably did a lot of the behind-the-scenes work that made everything go, and be cohesive.*

I think of myself then; I was pretty young and disorganized but things got done.

**[00:45:00]** *That's quite an experience, though. How did you interact with them, or did they interact with you a lot?*

It was always very cordial, very much so, and I never felt put down or depreciated. I felt young. I was fairly shy and wasn't a brilliant organizer, so I think I really viewed myself as a support person, and felt comfortable with that, reasonably. And of course it was a summer. I wasn't going to make my profession at this. I had a role to play.

*Right. So what did you think of Las Vegas when you got to it?*

I remember it as *unbelievably* hot, and as this kind of dispersed place with a lot of *very* conservative people. And I remember the church people that Lawrence Scott visited with were pleasant to him but there were *no* supporters in Las Vegas. None. That's my recollection anyway.

But I do remember one thing with respect to the anticommunism thing. That was one of the big things that everybody working on the project was very worried about, that if one person who said they were a Communist or could be called a Communist joined this project, then that was just death for the whole thing.

*That's interesting. So there was very much an image, if you want to call it that, to maintain.*

Oh! Absolutely. Yes. And I remember when we got to Las Vegas, which I think we probably got there about a week before the action, there was this fellow—we had a little office that we rented—this fellow from Las Vegas that discovered us and he was this large, unpleasant-looking fellow who looked like he really probably didn't fit in anywhere. He announced to me that he was a Communist and was very interested in what we were doing. And I remember thinking, I've got to get him out of here. I remember I took him out to coffee and told other people, you know, we just sort of developed strategies to deal with him. And actually I'm pretty sure that they had set—I don't remember this clearly but I think they had set some rules about who could join the project. You couldn't come in at the last minute.

*Right. Sure, that makes sense. Do you remember at all where you set up your office in Las Vegas, by chance?*

I don't. I don't have the foggiest idea.

*I'd be curious as to where that was.*

I have ordered some notes that are stored in what's called the Peace Collection which is at Swarthmore College, and they haven't come. I got on the Internet and found that they had some minutes and so forth from the Nonviolent Action Against Nuclear Weapons, which later moved into an organization that was I think renamed Committee for Nonviolent Action.

*That sounds right.*

They went on to do a lot of civil disobedience. This group was sort of a predecessor of that and there's apparently a collection of notes and so forth.

*That would be* really *interesting.*

So I'll share with you whatever they send me and I'll give you the reference, too.

*Yes, please. I would like to look that up. Wow, what an exciting time. So you were in Las Vegas a week prior to doing the action.*

That's my recollection.

*And you spent that time organizing?*

Yes. And as I say, defending against the possibility that Communists might come or people who'd call. It really didn't matter whether they were real

**[00:50:00]** Communists or not. It was the image, as you say.

*But basically anything that could potentially sabotage the goals or compromise the organization.*

Yes.

*So when you got up to the test site, I mean what did you think about it?*

Well, I remember it, you know, this picture here—

*Yes, maybe this is a good time to look at the pictures.*

I suppose I've seen the picture but you know the *hugeness* is what I remember.

*And here you guys are just set up in sort of this little tarp peace camp area.*

Yes. And actually this was set up I think the day of the protest and then the following day. What actually happened was that they had planned to have the protest on the day of the testing, and then the testing was delayed because of wind or something, I don't know. But they went ahead and entered on that day, as I recollect. There'd been a lot of advance publicity that this would be done, so they had extra guards and so forth.

*Now did you contact the security at the test site to let them know that you were—?*

They did, yes. I didn't personally, but yes.

*But this was an organized event.*

Oh, absolutely. Everything was announced in advance so that they would be fully aware of it. And there was this theoretical plan that these people—they were prepared to walk great distances and to walk into the test site and stay during the test.

*Now this camp, was this set up outside of Mercury on the highway, do you remember?*

My recollection is it was inside, but they couldn't have been.

*Well, behind the line. I mean it's still on the other side of the property?*

It had to be behind the line, yes.

*I'm just wondering if it's the same—there is a little area that is now known as Peace Camp up there where throughout the eighties and the nineties when the protests were really picked up again, is where everybody camped and the hub of activity was. I'm just wondering if this is possibly the same location.*

It might be. I know that this camp was not far from this guard station and where the people that were committing civil disobedience actually walked into the site, and then of course they were arrested immediately.

*Right. Right. Did you say overnight up there?*

We didn't stay overnight. There was something about—I think that we camped overnight the night before so that we could get there very early. I have a vague recollection of that. And then we went back to Las Vegas that evening, and then the next morning when the atmospheric test was actually done, we were there doing a vigil, what they referred to as a prayer vigil, during the testing, and we witnessed the testing.

*So you saw it.*

We saw it. You know, what we did was turn our backs on it, and I remember that was not a problem for me. I had no interest in seeing it. People now say, `You didn't even *see* it?` But

I had no interest in seeing it then. And there was this feeling that we did not want to look. It was a way of showing our dismay and moral repugnance, I guess you would say.

*Sure. Could you feel it or hear it?*

You could feel it, and actually it lasted a long time so you could see the effects of it.

*Right. The dissipation of the cloud and whatnot.*

Yes. Of course we were many miles from it. I don't know how many.

*Sure. They were pretty big tests, so that doesn't surprise me that you could—people in Las Vegas used to say that they could always tell because either the water in the pools would slosh back and forth or there'd be rumbling of plates and glasses in a cupboard or people would be drinking their coffee in the morning, because they did them very early, and the cup would be shaking. So—definitely powerful.*

**[00:55:00]** This particular man, I might just say something about him [examining Photograph 1].

*And this is in a picture of just prior to crossing the line at the guard station?*

Right, yes. And these two, I don't remember him, but this man I remember very clearly. His name was Albert Bigelow and he was a very impressive man to me. He had been I think a Naval commander in the Second World War, and whereas all the others were sort of lifetime pacifists that had never served, been in the service, he had. And he had had some involvement with Hiroshima. I don't know what it was, but I know that he also had hosted, through his Quaker wife I think, the Hiroshima Maidens. Through his own knowledge of the Hiroshima blast plus this more recent experience with the Hiroshima Maidens, he became very upset about nuclear weapons and the making of them.

*Yet he was part of the security at the test site?*

No, he became one of the protesters. But he didn't have a history as being a pacifist. So he really was different from the rest of the [protesters].

*So he had actually been in the military and he came to his pacifism a little bit differently than you did.*

Exactly, which lent a lot of credibility in a way. Everybody was always very interested in him. And I think he was an architect. He had a very successful mainstream career and was a good-looking man.

*He looks very impressive.*

Right. I noticed in the newspaper articles they make reference to him. He lent a lot of different kind of credibility to the project.

*That's interesting. Do you remember—did you encounter any of the workers while you were out there, going in or out of—to work?*

The guards were around but I don't remember having any direct interaction. Not with the workers.

*And how did they receive you guys, the guards?*

My recollection is they were very polite and very well trained. They were contained.

*And those folks that crossed the lines, they were then arrested?*

They were arrested as soon as they crossed the line. [See Photograph 1a]

*Were they taken somewhere?*

They were taken to Nye County. I wasn't there so I don't know. But this is a picture of it [examining Photograph 2].

*Do you know if that was on the test site or did they go up to Tonopah?*

No. They went to Beatty. That was it. Yes.

*Beatty. OK. And were they held or were they released?*

They were released. They may have been held for a few hours, I don't know, but I think they were released pretty quickly. And they were released on a five-hundred-dollar [bail]. I don't think they had to pay a penny. They were arrested for trespassing, and then as long as they didn't trespass again, they were released. And they had a lawyer, and I wouldn't have remembered his name but it's in those clippings, named Francis Hisler, who represented them. I'm pretty sure actually he came and was physically present.

*How did they get back from Beatty? Did somebody go pick them up?*

I don't remember.

*OK.*

**[00:59:31]** End Track 2, Disc 1.

**[00:00:53]** Begin Track 2, Disc 1.

This is Lawrence Scott, the director [examining photograph]. And then this is Albert Bigelow.

*And do you remember any of these folks? [pointing to others in the photograph]*

I don't remember them. Oh, this is a man named David Andrews who was a minister, I think from the South. Lovely man. He drove out with us. And there was a man whom I don't recognize here named Jim Peck who participated in many, many peace and civil rights demonstrations over the years. I think he's a well-known figure in New York as an activist, a kind of lifetime activist. And the others, I know there were a few that were Mennonites. Most of them were Quakers. David Andrews was a minister but I don't think he was a Quaker. With the exception of Albert Bigelow perhaps, there weren't any, how shall I say it, just political people.

*Right. So this was fairly a "faith-based," I guess you want to call that.*

I guess you would say so, yes. Certainly Lawrence Scott was a very religious man. I think there were other people like Albert Bigelow who was not particularly religious. But in a sense I had the feeling, you know, many of them came to their convictions from religious grounds, and their commitment, but there was also a political sense to it. I think actually the American Friends Service Committee in New York was not just—it wasn't really religiously—I think it was more politically based, what we would now call progressive. So it's kind of a merging, maybe. But I think it was very much a planned strategy, if you will, because it was safer to come at this from a religious point of view.

*Right. And that strategy has persisted until current times, so that's really interesting. Afterwards, after the action had taken place, what was the sense among the group?*

I think there was a lot of satisfaction. People felt like it had gotten a lot of press. There was even a little article in the *New York Times* which I have a copy of. I didn't realize I had these things. I don't have that much but I do have a few things. And then I do remember we watched the news, the TV, *The Huntley-Brinkley Report* was the news report, the two fellows, what we would now call anchors, newsmen, and [Chet] Huntley, I remember this so clearly, coming on and of course we were all wondering, are they going to have it on the news? He came on and the first thing he said was that there had been this protest at the test site at the time of the testing, **[00:05:00]** and he said, `A group of sincere and perhaps misguided people`, and then he proceeded to say what we did. But there was a collective sense of relief. It doesn't sound very flattering now but at least we were considered to be sincere.

*Right. Yeah, I mean I think that still stands.*

But I'm absolutely certain that was the phrase he used because it was so—I think for me it was a little sad that he had to say "misguided."

*But I mean I guess that goes along with the, you know, the test site is considered such this patriotic part of our history and protecting the country. It's interesting because I don't know how you perceived it but when I look back and read things, I guess if you want to call it the spin on the test site and nuclear testing was so positive and it was such a novelty, particularly looking at Las Vegas history, I mean they really viewed this as well, look what Las Vegas has. So you were definitely the first group to stand up and—*

And you know one thing that strikes me as I look back on it, now in protests the press always goes after the weirdest-looking or the hippies or whatever. And when I think about this group, we all looked, even though they were casually dressed, we were so respectable. I don't think the press at that time even had a concept of looking for the weird people. I think that came a lot later.

*Well, like you say, it was such a new concept at this point. There wasn't much going on. Do you remember how you felt afterwards or what you were thinking about?*

I think one of the impressions I had was—I was young and idealistic and horrified that they were testing these weapons. And although it went well, in a way, I think I was looking for something that would really put an end to this. So I think the ultimate impact on me was that we were so small and vulnerable and against this enormous—I think I was left with that feeling. When I look at that picture, that's what I think about. We looked so small and vulnerable.

*You were a little group out there in this giant desert.*

And I think for me personally, although I've always been glad I did that, I think I'd already decided that I did not want to become a professional pacifist and devote my life to demonstrating, or being in a small, marginalized group.

*So you'd already had a sense of that.*

I'd already had a sense of that and I think this, for me personally, reaffirmed that I wanted to be in the mainstream more in terms of at least how other people perceived me, not so much how I thought of myself privately.

*Sure. So what was it like, then, going back to school after that summer?*

It was weird. And it was weird at the time because I had just had my first year of graduate school and all of my friends in graduate school were really not politically active at all—they were not activists in any way—and they couldn't *imagine* what I was doing. I remember my boyfriend at the time—not the person I married—he was very upset that I was doing this. And he wrote me all these letters. I remember we had these letters back and forth. I had him read Gandhi, and I remember he was an intellectual and he'd talk about all the flaws with satyagraha [Hindu concept for "truth" and "holding firmly"]. But I think he learned a lot. I remember—and this says where psychology was at that time—he was in therapy at the time which, as graduate students in psychology, everyone was in therapy. And he **[00:10:00]** told his therapist—actually I think it was an analyst—what I was doing and so forth. And his analyst said, `Why are you staying with her? She's crazy.`

*Oh, wow. Yes, that does say a lot.*

Yes. And of course he knew that was a *little* bit extreme.

*I would say so.*

But I think that said a lot about psychology and the times, too, that if you stepped out of line in any way, it had to be interpreted and there must be reasons that were personal rather than—

*Right. And also I think it's reflective of the times, like the Huntley-Brinkley news report said, "well-meaning, sincere, but misguided." Anytime that you stepped out of those bounds but particularly in academia, it's very stringent, I would imagine.*

Yes.

*That's a lot of courage. But that must have been just such a contrast between what graduate school is and then having had that experience for the summer.*

It was. It was. And I think it left me with some real mixed feelings about, should I really be going on this course which is so traditional, or should I be becoming more of a social activist?

*Well, it's interesting. You'd mentioned early on particularly, your father was a professor of chemistry and then trained medical students?*

Well, scientifically. He was a Ph.D.

*Scientific. So essentially you've had this scientific grounding and you said that you had a belief in science and, this is exactly what this is. This is science, depending on who you talk to, the use of nuclear weapons, and even going into psychology at the time was very scientifically based.*

It was, yes.

*Did those two aspects—how did those play out?*

I think it was very conflicting to me that science was leading us down the wrong path. Yes, that was very much a problem for me. When I said I would've been happier in certain ways as a social psychologist, you know later as I got into the program and learned more about social psychology, there were fascinating things going on in social psychology then that were out of the mainstream of psychology that I didn't have the opportunity to pursue.

*You said at some point you came back and you were thinking, well, is this the right path to go or should I go more into social activism? What made you decide to stay on that path?*

I think basically it was making a living. And I don't remember just thinking of it quite like that. But my year as a secretary had been rather—it wasn't traumatic, it was incredibly boring. And I think for me at that time, either women got married and had children and let their husbands

support them or they had careers. And it was very clear to me, since I didn't have any clear plans or people that were appropriate to marry, that I'd better have a career.

*So you stayed that route.*

Yes.

*And did you remain politically active or did that sort of—?*

I did in a partial way, a small way. I did some things politically in Chicago, for the first time.

*That was also a really interesting time to be in Chicago.*

Yes, I worked for the Democratic Party. And I was kind of involved—well, I can't say I was really involved. I was involved in spirit in the integration of the neighborhood around the University of Chicago, which was a really big deal at that time.

*Was that in Hyde Park?*

**[00:15:00]** Yes, and they were trying to keep it an interracial community, and it was a big deal. I had several—I remember I had one good African American friend who was a teacher, a male, and we talked about race. So there were ways in which I was kind of doing things that felt—

*So you were socially conscious.*

Definitely. Yes.

*But kind of staying [low], making your way through your path.*

Yes.

*How long were you in grad school?*

I got my Ph.D. in 1960, and then I stayed another year for my clinical internship. So I left in '61. Then I took a job in Boston—I couldn't quite settle down—and worked at Children's Hospital for a couple of years. And then met my husband Jim and we got married.

*In Boston?*

In Boston, yes.

*How did you guys meet?*

He was in the clinical psychology program at Harvard and he had an internship at Children's Hospital, so that's how we met.

*Great. What year was that that you were married?*

Sixty-three. And then he took a job in Middletown, Connecticut at a college there. We stayed there a couple of years, and I worked as a research associate at Yale and commuted. It wasn't a very high-level job. It sounded better than it was.

*Sometimes this is the case.*

Then we moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan and stayed there for three years.

*Was one of you at the university there?*

My husband was. I was definitely being—at that time wives accompanied husbands. That was the model. But I did work. And then our first child was born in Ann Arbor.

*That was what year?*

Nineteen sixty-five. And then I did work part-time there at the Student Counseling Service, which is a fun job.

*I bet.*

We lived there three years, and then we moved to Denver.

*That means you're really back out here. Was that also for a university position?*

Well, my husband had moved into the field of program evaluation and he got a job with a program that was starting up at the Denver General Hospital. It's a big mental-health program. He got a job with them. I came out. I was pregnant again, following him, except that we had jointly decided we wanted to move here. So he got a job because we wanted to move to this area.

*OK, so this is where you guys wanted to be.*

That's right, yes.

*OK. And that was?*

That was '68. Then our second child, our son, was born. And after a year, I took a job with a community mental health center in the area, the Adams County Mental Health Center. I stayed there about seven years and worked part-time and then eventually full-time. I did a lot of clinical work, but the community mental health movement at that time was very much involved in social action in the community. There were a lot of issues with Hispanics, which they called at that time Chicanos. There was a Chicanos civil rights movement, you might say, that I was very involved with. I wrote the affirmative action plan for the center. I think it was one of those things that was, shall we say, dumped on a woman.

**[00:20:00]** *So somebody said, hey, write this plan?*

Well, I had said some things about there should be women in management because there weren't, and so they said, `Well, fine, why don't you write the affirmative action plan?`

*Wow! That's neat.*

And then I stayed there through some changes in the center and actually became clinical director of the center—no, it was associate director, in charge of the clinical program. Then a new director came who I just couldn't work with, so I left and went to another community mental health center and worked there for about two years. Then I went into private practice, I think again more for a variety of reasons. I found that it was just impossible for me to work full-time with kids, so I needed to have more control over my work life.

*Absolutely. How many kids do you have?*

Two. I have a daughter who's thirty-nine.

*What's her name?*

Her name is Catherine Ciarlo, and she lives in Portland, Oregon.

*Where you just were?*

Yes. And she's actually an environmental lawyer, but she doesn't practice as a lawyer. She's using that as background.

*Good place to be doing that work.*

Yes.

*And you have a son?*

And then I have a son. He's thirty-seven. And he's a historian. He finished his Ph.D. a couple of years ago and he's teaching at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology].

*Oh, wow! That's great! So you get to go east and west.*

Right. Yes.

*What's his name?*

His name is David Ciarlo.

*Your involvement with Rocky Flats, how did that come about?*

Well, that really came about when I decided to retire. I retired when I was about sixty-two, sixty-three maybe, and I wanted to do something different, basically. It was time for me to quit doing clinical work. And I just wanted to get involved. I loved oral history. I had already dipped my toe into that. And I loved the idea of using—I'd been a therapist for many years and always liked to hear people's stories and I thought it would be great to continue that and then not have to do the other things that you have to do as a therapist. So I just was intrigued with oral history. I volunteered with a local oral history project here that's connected with the Carnegie Library,

which is a local history library. They had a really active oral history program, so I learned to do oral histories.

And then I had had an interest in Rocky Flats. I'd never done any kind of demonstrating. Of course here there have been protests at Rocky Flats for years and years and years, and I'd never been involved with any of them except for one big one. I never really knew as much as I thought I should know about Rocky Flats. I just couldn't deal with it. When I discovered that there'd been all these oral histories done of people in Boulder and the region and absolutely nothing on Rocky Flats—it was like it didn't exist—I thought, that's weird.

So I just started nibbling away at picking up oral histories. I started with retired workers, and I started with them because I thought if I started with the peace activists, I'd never be able to get the workers. So I was really pretty deliberate about not interviewing any of the activists for a while, until I had interviewed a lot of the workers. Of course when I first started I knew **[00:25:00]** *nothing* about Rocky Flats, and what I got was pretty bare bones. But you know eventually—

*It's fleshed out a little bit?*

Yes. Yes. And I got more. One of the earliest people I got, which was very helpful, was the labor leader at Rocky Flats, who was a very interesting man. He was just a wonderful—he really believed in unions and he did a lot with the union situation at Rocky Flats, which antagonized a lot of people. But he also had dealings with the peace and environmental activists and was somewhat sympathetic, at least to the environmental issues, but was himself in a difficult position because he had the union folks who didn't trust the activists *at all*. I did a number of interviews with him and that was very helpful to me and helped me get some other people and helped me understand.

*Well, obviously still a passion and an interest for you, this thread, this nuclear thread.*

Absolutely. Yes. I really felt like I wanted to return to that and try to do something, even if just collecting information.

*You'd mentioned that you'd already had a little bit of experience in oral history before. How did you start doing oral history?*

Well, I started with the project. I started interviewing a few people locally before I did the Rocky Flats people, just to build up my skills.

*How did you become interested in that, in oral history?*

You know, I'm not sure. I read some Studs Terkel.

*OK, he's a good one.*

The whole idea of personal narrative has always interested me. I think had I been able to go into research in psychology, I would have loved to have done work with oral history or personal narratives in some fashion.

*Yes, that's very interesting. And I'll bet your skills really lend themselves to talking—*

Well, certainly years of learning to listen, it's easy to do that.

*How long have you been involved in the Rocky Flats project now?*

Let's see, I did my first oral history in about 1998, so it's been some years now, and it's kind of ballooned, as I mentioned to you before, I think, there's been more recently since I first started, there's been this interest in developing a Rocky Flats, what they call a Cold War museum, and some money through the Colorado Historical Society, a grant from them to do oral histories. I've been now working with a group, a committee at the museum, and we're trying to gather a variety of people, the whole spectrum.

*Absolutely. I think that's important.*

Much like your project, which is *so* important, I think.

*Both; I think they're very much interconnected and it's just a whole chunk of our history that we don't really know about, people aren't really exposed to, no pun intended. That's the unique thing about this project—we don't really know much about the Nevada Test Site other than it was this place that we did nuclear testing.*

Exactly. Yes. But it has such an incredible history.

*Right. And I would assume that you are learning—I guess that is a question I have. What types of things have you learned from your project?*

**[00:30:00]** I think I went into it with some of my own biases about the kinds of people that would work at Rocky Flats. And of course I've ended up *liking* them. They're extremely likable people and I can't help but think that many of, especially some of the old timers, are more similar to the protesters than they are dissimilar, in terms of having a certain, how shall I say it, a feeling that they wanted do work that had meaning to them; and a sense of, I guess you'd say, idealism about the country and patriotism in the best sense. So I think that I've had some of my stereotypes blown apart, which is good. And I knew a lot of the activists, although I tried to keep that hidden. I have been involved with peace work in Denver, but I hadn't been an activist at Rocky Flats, so I never felt I had to disclose.

But you asked me what I learned. The thing that has been so eye-opening to me is to understand that when you institutionalize something like making nuclear weapons into the whole military system and the industrial system of the country, it's just hugely important [that] everyone gets invested in it in one way or another. Well, not everyone, but many, many, many people get invested in it through no conscious choice of their own. It just happens. But then once it's happened, so many people have so much at stake.

*So the militarization, basically, is what happens.*

Right. Yes. The militarization, without people even working for the military.

*Right. It just seeps into aspects of our lives that I think we're not aware of.*

Exactly. Yes. And so many of these good people that work at Rocky Flats, they may have taken the job as young people on certain grounds, because they needed a job and it was excellent pay and so forth, but then they just couldn't have not believed in what they were doing. One of the things that I really come to appreciate with the workers is that they were isolated in their own area and ostracized after all the protests started, and they felt kind of like they were under siege. So there was no way in the world that they would begin to change their minds about what they were doing, going through that. So I've learned, I think, a lot of things about how activists of a certain type really rigidify the attitudes of people, quote, "on the other side."

*Right. They almost reinforce—*

Yes. I had always kind of felt that way, and I feel that way even more strongly now. I think some of the activists understood that and some didn't, and some of my interviews with activists have been just fascinating. One woman who was very instrumental in the early protests—her name is Pam Solo—really understood this because she came from a union background herself. She really understood the need to try to do symbolic protests but engage people very, very broadly and try to engage workers, too. And so one of the early protests **[00:35:00]** they had, she tried to do this, and the people that were protesting kind of changed it and did the action that became sitting on the railroad tracks for a long period of time, which in certain ways brought a lot of attention to, you know. But in certain other ways, and she said this in her interview, it was very disheartening to her because she saw that what she was trying to do in terms of really broadening and allowing a whole lot of people to understand what was going on at Rocky Flats was just kind of cut off.

*Right. I guess anytime you get two sides together, you're always going to have that us-and-them division.*

Even within the protesters, yes.

*Certainly within the protests. That's really interesting. Your project sounds quite fascinating.*

It is fascinating to me. I think for a while when I was just interviewing the workers, it was depressing to me. It was getting too depressing. I also have interviewed workers, maybe four, who are ill, and that's disturbing.

*Is that something that they freely attribute to the work that they did?*

There's one category of workers or former workers at Rocky Flats that is clearly the result of working at Rocky Flats, and that's people who have chronic beryllium disease. Are you familiar—?

*Absolutely. That's very common with the test site, as well.*

I didn't realize that. So I've interviewed two people with chronic beryllium and they're very angry and upset. And a couple of other ill workers, it's not so clear they really became ill because of their work at Rocky Flats. In both of their cases, they feel that but it's not so clear-cut. And of course I'm sure you're familiar with all the issues about: is there a higher incidence of cancer or not? I've interviewed one of the key health physics people on site and he's given a good account of all the things he did to prevent worker health issues. That was very interesting to me because there's no doubt that he's a very sincere man, if perhaps misguided [laughing].

*But I think that's an interesting point because I've also spoken to a couple of people who are health physicists [at the NTS], and you really have no concept of the guidelines that were put into place and the measures and the safety precautions that were taken until you talk to them. I found that really, really quite interesting, and extensive.*

Yes. Absolutely. And of course at Rocky Flats there were changes throughout. What they did in the early years was pretty horrifying in a lot of ways. But even with all of the safety precautions they did use, some of the things that I have learned—and I've played some tapes for my little group at the Carnegie and it just horrifies people—I have two or three people describing what it's like to become contaminated and then to be scrubbed down and so forth. I am so glad I have that because I think you can read about people getting contaminated and you don't understand what that means, and to hear someone describe what it was—working there and what it was like and laughing about it. It's just astonishing. I have a feeling that years from now people are going to think, oh, my God.

*I think that's one of the most unique things about oral history is that you have that narrative, and like I say, you can read chronologically about things in a history book or a* **[00:40:00]** *textbook or even details of what happened, but when you hear people actually experience this, talk about it. It's really something else.*

Yes. Yes.

*If I could backtrack for a minute you mentioned a little while ago that you had done some peace work in Denver and I'm curious to hear about that.*

I became involved with the antinuclear movement in the eighties. Actually I had done some protesting against the Vietnam War years ago in the sixties. Then I had not really done much. Then in the early eighties, the first thing I did was to participate in what they called an encirclement of Rocky Flats. That was the one Rocky Flats thing I did in 1983.

*And what was that?*

That was a large demonstration planned by churches and people that weren't into protesting in general, to encircle Rocky Flats, to hold hands, along the lines of, if we can we need to encircle it

so that we can close it down, some of it. And that was during the Reagan buildup of nuclear weapons where there was a lot of citizen alarm building about the possibility of nuclear war and the danger of the nuclear arms race.

Shortly after that, there were a group of us that were from different professions that got together. There was actually an organization formed and they invited us to join. It was called the Colorado Coalition for the Prevention of Nuclear War. I was asked to join because I had been active in a little antinuclear committee of psychologists that I and a few other people had put together through our profession. What had actually started that in Denver, it was probably in ’83 or ’84. They had started talking about having a removal—what is it they call it? Evacuation of Denver in the event of a nuclear war.

*I didn’t realize that.*

I mean it was absolutely bizarre, but there was just talk of it.

*This was the city you’re talking about?*

The city was talking about it, and they were going to evacuate everyone up to the mountains, to Idaho Springs or something like that. It was a totally bizarre idea. And so several of us psychologists talked about this unrealistic thinking and we, as psychologists, have something to say about unrealistic thinking, entering into it from that point.

*And so you formed a—*

We had a little committee and tried to educate other people in our profession. Then because of that, I was asked to join this larger group that was really trying to do things in the business community in Denver as well as the usual peace groups. And for several years we put on meetings and conferences and that sort of thing, aimed at the more conservative people. I think for that period of time we were pretty effective.

*Yes. I was going to ask how they were received amongst the general population.*

There were some people that got involved with that that would *never* have been involved in a regular peace group, or even the very moderate side. Well, we even had a few Republicans. Republicans then seemed to be different than they are now, but maybe not. We were appealing to centrists.

**[00:45:00]** *So it was pretty diverse; it was pretty wide.*

Right. Yes.

*I don't know if you want to call it "agenda" but wide appeal.*

Yes. And it was mainly an educational kind of group. That organization still exists.

*The Colorado Coalition—*

For the Prevention of Nuclear War. It's changed. It's become much more of a typical peace group, with people that are more identified with liberal and progressive politics.

*It's a little bit more of a, I don't want to say "pigeonholed" but definitely [focused].*

Yes. I'm still peripherally involved.

*At this particular time, doing this work and being aware of this buildup, were you ever conscious of things going on at the test site or did you ever think about that?*

My husband [James Ciarlo] was at a conference in Las Vegas in maybe—I'm not sure when, and he participated in one of the large protests they had. The one that Carl Sagan [attended]—or maybe there was more than one.

*Oh, sure, yes.*

That one.

*Well, there were some pretty big ones, but there was one really huge one up there where I think the American Peace Test was there, the Nevada Desert Experience [NDE], Greenpeace, Carl Sagan was there, and so he went up to the test site.*

Yes, and he participated in that. He was there for a public health conference, that was it, and they had a whole large contingent of people from the Public Health Association that participated. So I kind of heard about [it] through the grapevine kind of thing. I didn't do anything more myself. I always had much more awareness of the test site because of this event than I would've had otherwise.

*Definitely. And certainly, there's a connection with Rocky Flats.*

Absolutely.

*Interesting. Now looking back on it, have your thoughts changed about that, that little protest that you were first involved in?*

Well, actually I see it now, as I said, at the time I kind of felt like what effect could this possible have, and I think I was discouraged, even though we got good press. Now I can look back and see those streams of things that go on. Like for example, when I talked about Albert Bigelow who participated, and he was a person who took his little boat out into the Pacific and then led other people to do that protest, which then, I just read, inspired Greenpeace to do their thing.

*Really. So tell that story real quickly, if you don't mind. He took his boat out into the Pacific to protest some of the tests that were going on out there?*

Right, in the Pacific. Yes. I don't know a lot of details but I know that he started talking about it at this—that he got the idea for doing it at this action, I guess you would say. He was a sailor himself, and a man of some means, so he could buy a boat. So he decided—he kind of had a conversion. He felt like he needed to devote his life to protesting atmospheric nuclear testing. So

following this, he prepared the boat and went out with a couple of other peace pacifists. I know he was arrested then, and I don't **[00:50:00]** know the details of everything he did. One could probably find out because I'm sure it's been written up. But then, as I say, it inspired others, and I just recently read that that was the idea for Greenpeace. So anyway, I see some of those things now that I realize that we had more of an impact, although in maybe a different way than I understood at that time.

*Hindsight is always interesting.*

And when you're young, you think you should be able to protest and then everyone will see that that's wrong and they'll stop.

*Yes. You know one thing that you mentioned, but we didn't talk about, is the idea of faith-based protest. Being with the Quakers, and you mentioned there were some Mennonites, I'm wondering—I don't know what faith you are but was that at all an issue?*

It really wasn't. I was raised going to the Methodist Church and I think I was kind of turned off by any kind of organized religion, going to church in a segregated society and not feeling that there was any attention given to—I just have not been a person that turned to any kind of organized religion. I have a lot of respect for the Quakers, and I've always thought, well, maybe someday I'll become a Quaker. But I never get around to it, so there must be some reasons.

*Yes. Because that's a part of their faith.*

Yes. The Quakers, and I don't know that much about their history but it really goes back hundreds of years. They were strong in the abolition movement and it's always been a peace church, and so it's very much in their history. I've always had a lot of respect for what they do. Even in other respects. One summer when I was in college I joined one of their—they had a project in a state mental hospital in Phoenix, as a matter of fact, and the idea being doing some

kind of work, understanding that everyone, even mentally-ill people, have the spirit of God in them. And I could get into that. So I've always had a lot of respect for the Quakers.

*They're still very active, particularly in the peace movement and antinuclear movement. I don't know if you've been back to Las Vegas recently.*

I haven't. I was there maybe eight years ago, just briefly.

*Well, there's a museum, Atomic Testing Museum that just opened this past year.*

I've read about that, yes. Yes. I've been curious as to—now your project isn't affiliated with that at all.

*No. We're through the university and this is completely separate. But it's interesting because there certainly is overlap just in terms of a lot of folks that we work with, I guess, are involved. A lot of them are atomic veterans or former workers at the test site and so there is a link. But it's interesting when you talk about them wanting to do a museum out here for Rocky Flats. I'd be really curious to see where that goes and how that develops.*

They had hired an executive director to try to get it off the ground, and he has just—well, they've used up the money. But he's very discouraged about it because he feels like the **[00:55:00]** politicians have given lip service to the idea but they haven't done the kind of pushing that he says, for example, was done to get that museum [Atomic Testing Museum] off the ground.

*And it took a while, I believe. But the thing that was interesting that made me think when you said Quakers is I went to one of the opening days and there were a handful of protesters out front. I talked to a few of them, and there was a group of Quakers that had come from California for the opening of this museum.*

Were they protesting the museum or the—what was their—?

*I don't know that they were protesting the museum per se, but certainly the idea of a museum existing that celebrates the atomic era. I think that's more along the lines of what it was and that there still needs to be an awareness; people need to be conscious of it still. But that was interesting. I hadn't quite realized how involved, or still involved, that the Quakers were on this issue.*

I think it's kind of interesting to look back and see that the Quakers were at the forefront and then others came and took over.

*Absolutely. Well, that's why it's so interesting hearing about this protest because as far as I can tell there really wasn't much that happened there for a good twenty years or so after this. But in town, local to Las Vegas, there is a group called Nevada Desert Experience. I don't know if you're familiar with them or not.*

No, I'm not.

*They do draw nationally but they were started and I guess headquartered, if you want to call it, in Las Vegas. They officially became a group in the early eighties but probably, beginning in the late seventies, there was a group of folks that eventually became the core members that went out and vigiled at the test site. Just twenty, thirty people camped and then crossed the line. And when you describe how organized it was, I mean this is the model that this particular group follows, down to it's very organized with the folks at the test site. And they very much practice principles of nonviolence. Gandhi is somebody who is always referred to, as well as Martin Luther King. So I just think this is really the prototype that you were involved in.*

It's interesting. I'm glad to have had this opportunity to dig back in here and think about this.

*I really appreciate it. Thank you. We've been going a couple of hours now and I don't want to take up your whole afternoon.*

I'm fine. If there's other things you—I've come to the end of what I had to say.

*Well, I was going to ask if there's something that we didn't talk about that is important. We glossed over sort of the seventies. And I guess that was one of my questions, too, is if you were active at all. You said you weren't so active in the civil rights movement but, you know, at that time there was so much going on leading into the Vietnam era.*

Well, you know, it's funny. I've often thought of that. People in general think of the late sixties and the seventies as this period of real activism. And of course I was raising little children and that's probably the primary reason that I didn't do anything. But I also think that for me, I was sort of pre-sixties. I did this before, and I remember when the late sixties came along and there were so many protests, and people were getting so indignant, and I just felt like, oh, well, this is old hat to me. And I don't think I even then quite understood that having done this at that age, it affected me very deeply. But I had done it. I mean what was the big deal?

*I think that's an interesting point that you bring up. When we think of the sixties or* **[01:00:00]** *the late sixties and the early seventies, we think of this huge protest time. But what I've really learned by talking to people and reading about things is really the fifties was a big time. It's almost like the tip of the iceberg that we see, the visible part is the sixties, but there was a lot going on throughout the fifties that I don't think people realize, and within regards to protests, antinuclear protests and race relations. I could see how your perspective might shift by the time, thinking, it's old hat.*

*Well, I definitely appreciate you taking the time to talk.*

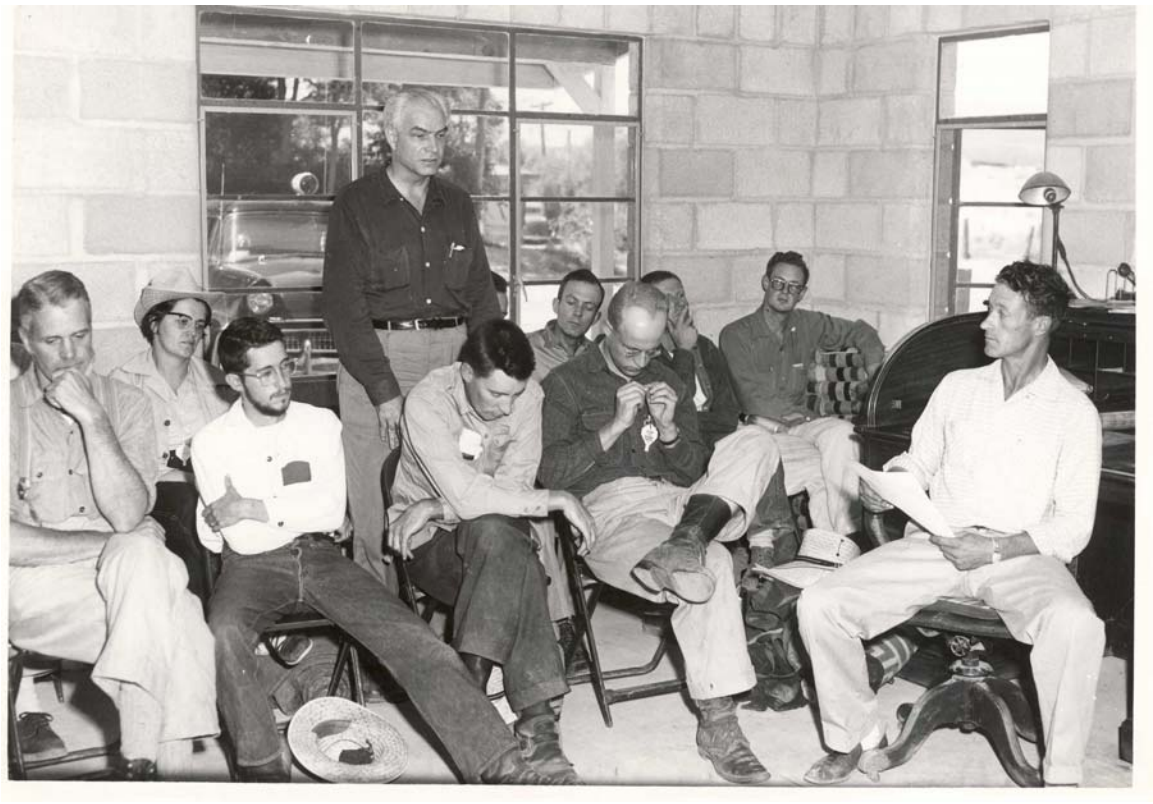
I've enjoyed it.

**[01:02:03]** End Track 2, Disc 2.

[End of interview]

1 Albert Bigelow crossing line


1a Protesters under tent



2 Protesters under arrest