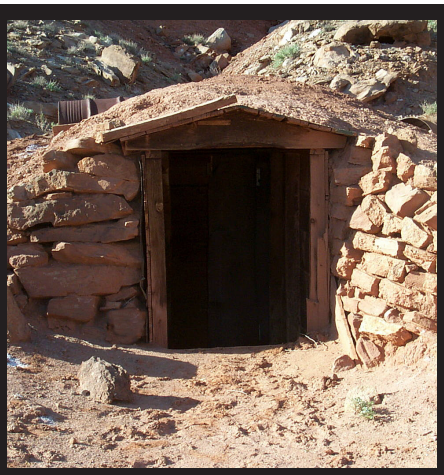
A History of the Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor, and Little Susan Mines within the San Rafael Swell Mining District

Based on Oral Interviews | Emery County, Utah



Brigham Young University
Museum of Peoples and Cultures
TECHNICAL SERIES NO. 11-13

A History of the Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor and Little Susan Mines within the San Rafael Swell Mining District Based on Oral Interviews, Emery County, Utah

by
Michael T. Searcy

Office of Public Archaeology
Museum of Peoples and Cultures
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah 84602

prepared for

URS Corporation
Salt Lake City

March 2012

Federal Antiquities Permit Number 11-UT-54624

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

Project Title: San Rafael Swell Mining Oral History Project

Agencies: Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining; Bureau of Land Management

Report Title: *A History of the Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor and Little Susan Mines within the San Rafael Swell Mining District Based on Oral Interviews, Emery County, Utah*

Project Description: The project consisted of recording the oral histories of six interviewees who were associated with mining in the San Rafael Swell region of central Utah. Four of the interviewees worked as uranium miners or prospectors, one was the wife of a miner, and another was a retired compliance officer for the Bureau of Land Management who was familiar with the area and with the history of Copper Globe mine, in particular. The goal was to record personal accounts and general histories related to five abandoned mine sites on the San Rafael Swell that are considered Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor, and Little Susan.

Locations: Green River, Castledale, Orangeville, Hanksville, Salt Lake City, Utah. Mine sites: Hidden Splendor, Copper Globe - San Rafael Swell, Central Utah

Dates of Fieldwork: May 23-25, July 12-14, and August 5, 2011

Abstract:

The Office of Public Archaeology (OPA), under contract to URS Corporation, Salt Lake City, completed an oral history of mining on the San Rafael Swell located in central Utah. Six people were interviewed about their involvement in and knowledge of the history of mining in the area, two of which also participated in on-site interviews at the mines. The eight interviews yielded a rich, personalized history about mining life and the uranium industry in Utah. This report presents a history of uranium mining in Utah in general, and Emery County and San Rafael Swell in particular. The transcripts of each interview also appear in the appendix.

Project Overview

The following summary report is a companion to the oral history video "Mining on the Swell." That video provides a history of uranium mining in the San Rafael Swell of east-central Utah, as seen through the eyes of six individuals who participated in, or otherwise were familiar with, those mining efforts. The text of this report is intended to provide a brief summary of the efforts leading up to and inclusive on the production of the video, and in particular to provide a written transcript of the interviews that were carried out for the video.

The San Rafael Swell oral history project was carried out by Dr. Michael Searcy and Mr. Scott Ure, both of the Office of Public Archaeology at Brigham Young University (OPA), under contract with URS Corporation, and with the financial and/or technical support of the Bureau of Land Management Salt Lake and Price field offices, and the Utah State Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining. The interviews were conducted on May 23-25 and August 5, 2011. Two on-site interviews were also conducted with John Anderson and Mervin Miles on July 13-14, 2011 at the Hidden Splendor and Copper Globe mines respectively. Each interview was recorded using audio and video equipment, which were used to create the 15 minute documentary. The interviews were video recorded in high definition using a Canon Rebel T1i, and audio was recorded with a separate Zoom H1n digital recorder. In addition, transcripts of the interviews were created and are included in the appendix of this report.

The focus of this oral history project was on five abandoned mines that have been considered Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). These are Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor, and Little Susan (Figure 1). While the Copper Globe mine was a copper mine, the other four were dedicated primarily to uranium extraction/production.

Methods

As stated above, the primary purpose of this project was to collect the oral histories of mining in the San Rafael Swell from several surviving miners. In particular, the project was initially focused on those who worked at the five mines mentioned above, but unfortunately few miners are still alive today. During the search for those who were available to participate, many leads fell cold as news of yet another miner who had passed away in preceding years was quite common. Some stated that this project was ten years too late.

Although this presented a challenge, six informants were successfully located and interviews were conducted in order to record their personal experiences associated with mining on the San Rafael Swell. Except for two on-site interviews, the oral histories were conducted at the homes of the participants. A series of questions were asked concerning mining life, Utah's uranium industry, and specific experiences associated with life on the Swell.

The interviews were recorded using a Canon T1i digital SLR camera, which records high definition video. In addition, a Zoom Hn1 audio recorder was used to capture high resolution audio. The resulting digital video/audio is archived by the Bureau of Land Management. In addition, a short documentary was edited from the full interviews using a non-linear, digital editing suite. This short film entitled "Mining on the Swell" is also on file at the BLM Price Field Office.

Interviewees

Ted Ekker

Ted Ekker is a resident of Green River, Utah, and worked as a uranium miner in various places in the state. He has extensive knowledge of prospecting and mining uranium, and grew up mining with his father in the Henry Mountains south of the Swell. He also worked at the Temple Mountain and Four Corners mines.

Jack Erwin

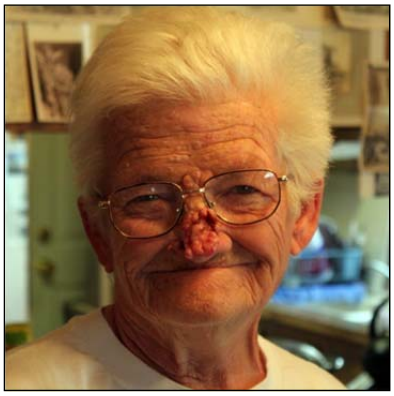
Having begun his mining career in 1947, Jack Erwin spent more than 30 years in the mines. He spent much of his time at the Temple Mountain and Four Corners mines, which are located on the San Rafael Swell. He also worked in various settings among both small and large mining operations.

Mervin Miles

Mervin Miles retired from the Bureau of Land Management in 1989 after 36 years. Much of his time was spent in the San Rafael Swell where he operated heavy machinery and worked as a compliance officer. He often associated with mine workers and claim holders as he conducted compliance work for the BLM.

Mark H Williams

As a local historian, Mark Williams has written extensively about the mining industry in the San Rafael Swell. He also had firsthand experience staking mining claims with his father in the 1950s. His life-long friend, Owen McClanahan, mined extensively in the Swell, and Mr. Williams shared several stories from McClanahan's written history.



Barbara Ekker

Barbara Ekker was married to Jesse Ekker, a uranium miner who spent much time working claims in the Henry Mountains and on the San Rafael Swell. She also spent time out at the mines and worked as a camp cook. She shared fascinating accounts of life in the camp, including those associated with raising a family out in the desert.

John Anderson

Having grown up working with his father at the Hidden Splendor mine, John Anderson has a vast knowledge of the mining history of the San Rafael Swell. He spent many years with his own children staking claims around the Swell and continues to maintain several uranium claims.

Introduction

The San Rafael Swell is an uplifted sedimentary dome in south-central Utah extending approximately 90 miles northeast to southwest across Emery County. The geologically unique landscape of this anticline not only makes it a popular tourist destination as an outdoor playground, but the San Rafael Swell is also a particularly significant area to the history of uranium mining in the United States.

The history of uranium mining in the San Rafael Swell begins with the Native Americans who used the ore to create colored pastes that were applied as war paint. Small-scale mining efforts in the 1870s and 1890s also focused on producing uranium as a dye colorant in manufacturing and for photographic or medical experimentation. The importance of this heavy metallic element was significantly and permanently changed during the World War II period with the development of nuclear weapons for military applications as well as the pioneering of nuclear reactors as a source of energy; however, it was not until the Cold War in the late 1950s and 1960s that the demand for uranium transformed Utah into a major contributor to uranium production in the United States.

In the 20th century the United States was the largest producer of uranium. The uranium industry underwent a major boom during the 1950s, largely in response to government sponsored exploration, milling and acquisitions programs. The Cold War period was dominated by federal government policies that significantly impacted the economics of the industry. At the height of the Cold War uranium boom during the 1950s, Emery County was the second largest producer of uranium in the United States, second only to Grants uranium district located in the northwest part of New Mexico (Finkin 1977:32-35).

By the mid-1960s this boom-cycle was over as the market collapsed in response to the end of government purchasing and the increasing availability of cheaper foreign sources for commercial reactors. Throughout the period of exploration and development of uranium in the state, activity was strongly influenced by both government manipulations of the uranium market, and to a lesser degree by other aspects of the law of supply and demand, and mining activities fluctuated accordingly. A record high production of uranium oxide was reached in 1958 with the production of 6.1 million pounds (Neff 1981:217).

.

Utah consistently ranks in the top four states for the domestic production of uranium. Uranium production is currently focused on fuel for nuclear power plants and is currently mined in southern Utah. As spot prices increase and decrease the exploration of uranium increases and decreases throughout Utah including the San Rafael Swell.

The San Rafael Swell is not only rich in uranium resources, but also in the history of the lives of many uranium miners and their families who eked out a living in its beautiful, but unforgiving desert landscape. In particular, the Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor, and Little Susan mines (Figure 1) were each the site of intensive mining activity. To preserve the history of these mines, six individuals have been interviewed as part of the San Rafael Swell Oral History project to record their experiences of living and mining in the San Rafael Swell. Each of these people holds a piece of the history of this region and its mining past and serves as an invaluable resource of knowledge for generations to come. They are each connected to this region of central Utah in different ways, but they all possess a keen knowledge of the difficulties related to the harsh, yet beautiful desert environment of the San Rafael Swell.

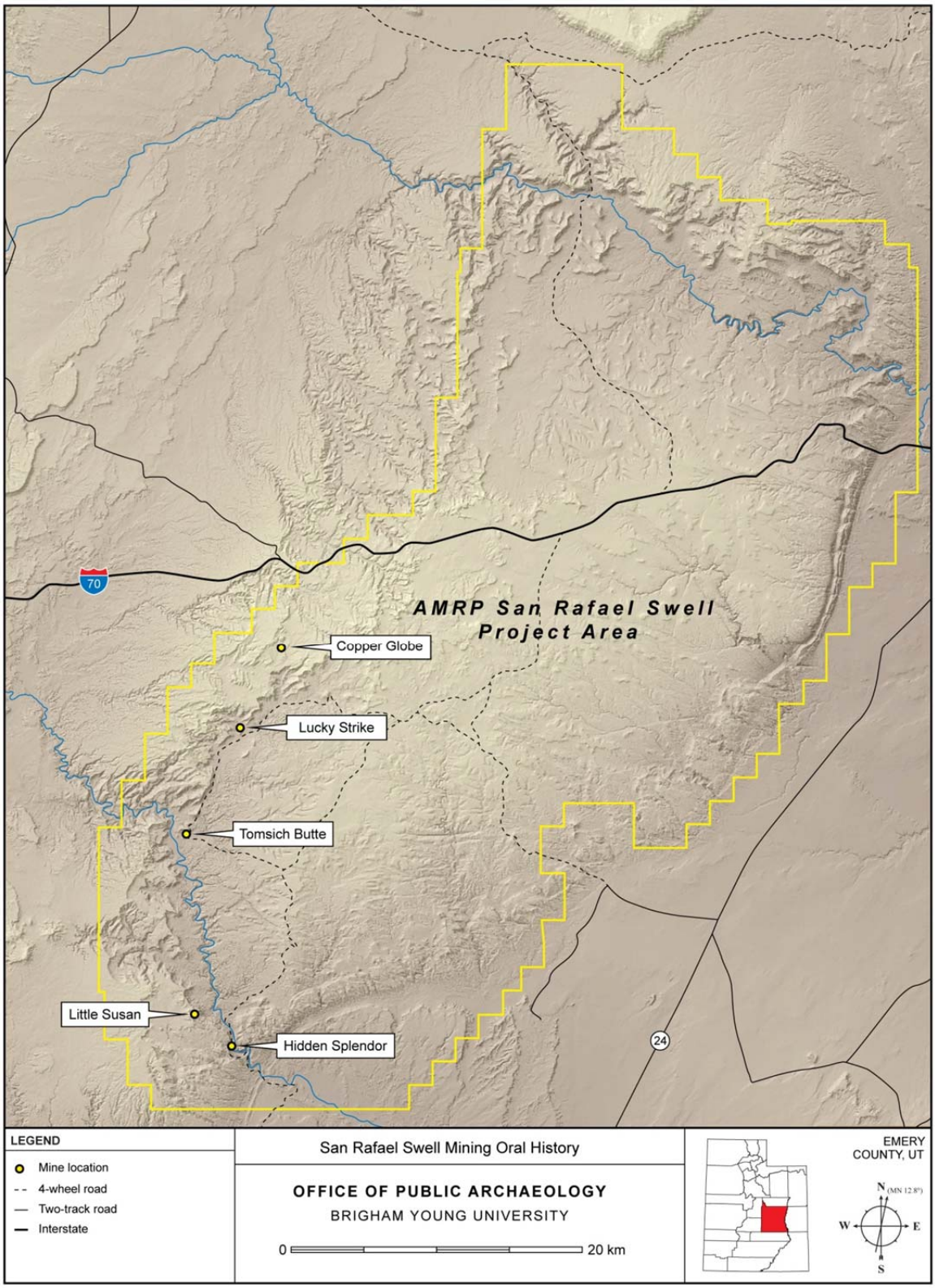
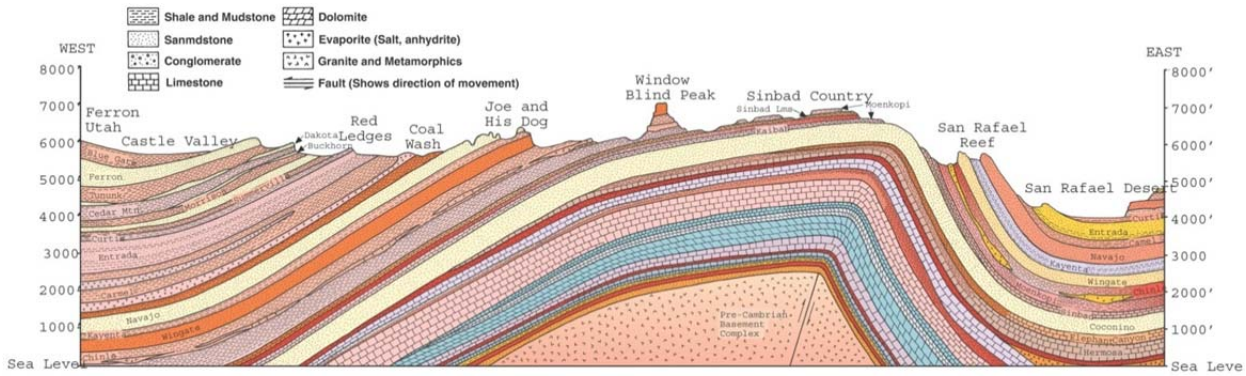


Figure 1. AMRP San Rafael Swell Project Area and related mines.

Geologic Summary of the San Rafael Swell

The geologic history, and thus the landscape of this area, is unique. The sediments that form the San Rafael Swell, and surrounding cliffs, were deposited during the late Paleozoic through Tertiary time periods. Throughout that time, Eastern Utah was covered by oceans, beaches, estuaries, deltas, sand dunes, and toward the end—lakes. During the deposition of several of these layers volcanic ash was added to the deposits either directly from air-fall or by being transported to the area via river systems. The volcanic ash contained uranium and several other important metals. These sediments were buried, compacted, and later uplifted and eroded to become the rocks we see today. The San Rafael Swell was uplifted about the same time as the Rocky Mountains, during the Laramide Orogeny. Inclined, alternating resistant and non-resistant formations called hogbacks or reefs, form a ring around the oldest and deepest formations found in the center of the Swell. Hogbacks on the east side of the Swell are steeper than those on the west side and are spectacular (Stokes, p240, 1986).

From the air or space, the San Rafael Swell looks kidney-shaped extending approximately 90 miles northeast to southwest and exposes several thousand feet of sediment in identifiable layers or formations with each formation exhibiting different characteristics. The mine openings in the Swell are all associated with uranium, thorium, vanadium, and copper mineralization, most of which occur in the Chinle Formation located stratigraphically below the cliff forming Wingate Formation. The cross-section below illustrates the anticlinal structure of the San Rafael Swell and the differing landforms associated with each formation.



Geologic Cross-section of the San Rafael Swell

It is believed that during and/or soon after the deposition of the Chinle and Morrison Formations, uranium, vanadium, copper, and a host of other metals in smaller concentrations, were introduced from the dissolution of volcanic ash. The dissolved minerals were transported through groundwater until a reducing environment was encountered, like dead trees, coal, or dinosaur bones, then the minerals precipitated into the ore that is mined today. In the San Rafael Swell the uranium mineral precipitated most often is uraninite (UO_2), thorium is found as thorianite (ThO_2), vanadium is found as vanadanite (V_2O_5), and copper is found as malachite ($Cu_2CO_3(OH)_2$) and azurite ($Cu_3(CO_3)2(OH)_2$) (Gloyn et. al, p75-76, 2003).

Uranium Mining in Emery County and on the San Rafael Swell

The Native Americans present in the region before European contact were the first people to exploit uranium in Emery County, although they used the mineral-bearing carnotite ores to create bright red and yellow war paints (Sorenson 1963). Indirectly, modern uranium mining in the area probably began as a byproduct of hard-rock mining in the last half of the nineteenth century. "To those early miners, pitchblende was nothing more than a dull black substance, apparently worthless, which clung persistently to mining tools and was thrown unceremoniously on the waste pile" (Sorenson 1963:2). The value of these waste materials was noted by Dr. Richard Pearce in 1871, who recognized uranium ore within the tailings, and for a short period several local mines produced uranium on a small scale. All of the ores recovered from this effort were shipped overseas and used as a dye colorant in the manufacture of glass, pottery, and steel plate, and for photographic experimentation (Sorenson 1963).

Temple Mountain

While uranium claims were staked at Temple Mountain as early as 1898 (Finken 1977), no organized mining district was ever officially formed within the San Rafael survey area. At the turn of the century, most San Rafael surface deposits of uranium ore were discovered by sheep herders as they moved their herds over the Swell. Judge J.W. Warf, from Price, Utah, claimed the earliest identified deposits, eventually recovering approximately 30,000 pounds of ore. Other widespread deposits were also identified in the early 1900s, in areas ranging from west of the La Sal Mountains, around Upper Colorado (former Grand River) north of Moab, at Mill Creek, near Cold Creek, and on Temple Mountain. According to Sorenson (1963), by 1906, approximately 200 tons of ore were mined annually in Colorado and Utah. A large percentage of that material was recovered from the San Rafael Swell and Emery County environs, all of which was shipped to Germany for radium research and used in medical treatments.

The advent of the atomic age resulted in a sharp increase in demand for uranium. In order to meet the requirements of Cold War weapons programs, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) instituted purchase and bonus programs in order to stimulate local exploration and boost domestic supply of the mineral. Within Emery County, the "Temple Mountain and Tidwell Draw areas ... had produced uranium ores during the radium boom in the twentieth century. At that time only the richest ore was worth shipping; lower grade material was simply dumped near the mine entrance" (Geary 1996:330). During the late 1940s this low grade ore was hauled to the AEC processing mill at Monticello, Utah, and in 1949 several old mines in the Temple Mountain district were reopened, most of which were eventually controlled by the Consolidated Mining Company. By 1950, ore shipments from these mines reached 100 tons per day (Geary 1996).

General prospecting in Emery County began in earnest in 1948, reaching a "fever" pitch in 1949, when 910 claims were filed with the county recorder. An additional 410 claims were placed on record during the first quarter of 1950. After Charles Steen's 1954 discovery of the Mi Vida ore body near Moab, claims were recorded at a frenetic pace, with 2,541 claims placed

during the first quarter alone. Eventually more than 50,000 Emery County claims were recorded between 1950 and 1956. Owen McClenahan of Castle Dale, an active prospector within the area, described the uranium rush in these terms:

> Men by the thousands flocked into these erosional wastelands in old jalopy automobiles and army surplus jeeps. Here they would camp, and then proceed by foot in all directions climbing steep slopes until they reached the mineralized sandstones. There the ones without Geiger counters would take samples to be checked later. Those with counters would follow the mineralized areas until they had a reading from their counters which was a loud response of amplified clicking reminding one of a rattlesnake showing its annoyance to man.
>
> As a rule one of the worst things that could happen to a prospector would be to find just enough to raise his hope, his dreams, and encourage his irresponsibility to raise money in any devious way he could. Many men lost everything they owned, including their wife and family. (Geary 1996:331)

Tomsich Butte mine

Most of the uranium ore deposits discovered during this period were small, only containing a few tons of marketable ore. Larger and more profitable finds consisted of deposits along the Muddy Creek drainage in the southern part of the Swell, within Tomsich Butte, at Green Vein Mesa, and in Reds Canyon, where the Lucky Strike mine was developed (Geary 1996). Near Tomsich Butte, the Dirty Devil claims produced moderate to significant amounts of ore, while the Green Dragon and Blue Bird claims remained prospects only (Newsome and Tipps 1993). "Other locations that produced marketable ore during the early uranium rush period included the Dexter claims on Calf Mesa and the nearby Lone Tree claims, the Wickiup claims, the Consolidated claims near Family Butte, and several claims in the Tidwell Draw area" (Geary 1996:332). Perhaps the most celebrated find, with the exception of the Temple Mountain ore body, was Vernon J. Pick's location of the Delta-Hidden Splendor deposit in 1952. After profitably working his claims for two years, Pick sold the workings to the Atlas Corporation for the sum of $9 million. Unfortunately, Atlas only recovered about $2 million worth of ore in the next three years, and eventually closed the mine in 1957 (Geary 1996). In 1956, the AEC announced that the supply of stockpiled uranium had reached the point of "plenty," and producers were advised not to expand (Sorenson 1963). By 1960, virtually all uranium prospecting in the county had ceased (Geary 1996), although minimal exploration continued to be carried out by a select few prospectors.

A growing need for "cheap" energy, beginning during the late 1960s and continuing through the 1980s, re-energized uranium exploration in the county as interest increased in the development of nuclear power throughout the United States. During the late 1970s uranium experienced a significant price spike. New claims for many of the abandoned prospects were relocated during this period, with most new filings being recorded by energy companies or large numbers of investors. However, concerns regarding the dangers inherent in both the production of nuclear energy, and the subsequent safety issues surrounding the storage of spent fuel, quickly eclipsed public perceptions of energy benefits gained, and demand for uranium quickly fell. In 2007-2008 uranium prices soared exponentially and peaked at $135/lb, (see uranium oxide price graph below). While there was a spike in uranium production in 2011, the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March of the same year and consequently damaged the nuclear

reactors at Fukushima has reignited the reluctance for the expansion of nuclear power programs (UxC 2011b). As a result, several reactor projects throughout the world have been delayed or cancelled all together, which in turn has affected the market value of uranium ore (UxC 2011a). As noted above, if the national energy policy is adjusted toward nuclear power production, and public concerns are eased sufficiently that the nation's population supports the construction of new nuclear power facilities, uranium mining within Emery county and Utah could once again become a revitalized industry.

There are one hundred seventy two (172) mine openings documented in the San Rafael Swell (United States Bureau of Land Management, 2011: 9), representing a large portion of the mining efforts in the Swell. Of particular interest to the San Rafael Oral History project were the mining efforts at the Copper Globe because its unique nature, and Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor, and Little Susan mines because they played an important role in the economic development of Emery County during the Cold War uranium boom. A brief history of each is presented here.

Copper Globe. The Copper Globe mine is unique in the area. This mine produced copper ore, some of which was smelted on site. The mine was in operation from about 1900 to 1905, although it never produced much ore of high quality (Massey and Wilson 2006:489). Copper Globe was originally worked by Jesse Fugate, who worked at the mine with his son, Conn, and built a smelter on-site so he could save money in hauling the low-grade ore to a smelting facility.

Wood pile at Copper Globe mine

Evidence of this smelting activity is an existing pile of wood about 75 feet long and up to 10-15 feet high. During the on-site interview with Mervin Miles, he described the wood as being made up of both pinyon pine and juniper. He goes on to state "they hauled it from right around this area, team and wagon. They actually didn't have any saws, just chopped with an axe and hauled it in with a team and wagon" (Appendix, Mervin Miles Copper Globe Mine interview).

According to Massey and Wilson (2006:489), "although this self-contained mining operation seemed like a good idea at first, the miners soon found they had used the wrong bricks. Built of building brick rather than refractory brick, the smelter melted before the ore inside it and soon collapsed." The foundation of this smelter is still visible today, as is a second, smaller smelter where a wooden structure still stands covering it.

There were numerous horizontal and vertical mine openings, several of which still exist today. Mervin Miles (Appendix, Copper Globe interview) described one of these during the on-site interview:

> Now on the side here you can see the little copper vein that goes, and it slopes to the west. But you can see it all the way along as far back as you can go. And this is probably three or four hundred feet deep now, but a lot of it has filled in with the water and the sand coming in…But if you look here, you can still see the pick marks, and then probably some blasting marks, whatever powder they might have used. But for the most part, it was all done by hand. And there was some tracks with a little car that came down here, like a railroad track, they was about an inch wide on top, and had a little car, and they would push the ore out of here on that track.

Miner's cabin on southwest side of Copper Globe mine

Documents on file at the Bureau of Land Management indicate that the Copper Globe mine (also known as the Dome Copper mine) was one of the first hard-rock mines in the county. According to BLM records, the mine was first located on 10 October 1899, but the Copper Globe claims were tied up in court disputes for several years. According to the Emery County Recorder's Office, a Notice of Location for the Copper Globe and Dome Copper claim was filed by D.P. Putnam on 4 September 1954 and recorded on 8 September 1954. Mr. Putnam released his interest in the mine by Quit Claim Deed to Alan S. Pike on 27 December 1955. Annual assessment work continued at the mine until 1982. According to BLM records on file, David A. Putnam filed new claim locations April 23, 1987.

Smelter cabin at Copper Globe mine

Annual Affidavits of Assessment Work (Proofs of Labor) were filed for the claims between 1954 and 1993. Following three years of inactivity, G. Robert and C. Robert Putnam filed Location Notices for the Copper Globe/Dome Copper claims on 6 December 1996 and 10 March 1997, but no further Proofs of Labor are documented.

Lucky Strike. During the uranium rush, prospectors Frank Blackburn, Ervin Olsen, Elden Bryan, and Thomas Worthen located valuable uranium ore deposits at Green Vein mesa and Reds Canyon. "They leased the Green Vein claims but elected to develop the 'Lucky Strike' claims in Reds Canyon themselves" (Geary 1996:331), filing an official Notice of Location on December 8, 1949. In 1950, the mine was described by Owen McClenahan:

> They had a big open pit mine with a compressor and a wheel barrow for machinery. A large truck was backed into a bank, and they loaded the truck with the wheelbarrow. The ledge at that time was 30 feet high with two black bands 24 inches thick running parallel and equally spaced. The very top of the rock formation had a band of yellow uranium and a band of rose-red cobalt bloom…They were able to ship it all, but they had to break it up so there was no rock over five or six inches.
>
> The men were over 60 years of age, and they were all doing their own mining. … Two men were breaking the ore with sledge hammers, one was loading the truck, and the other was doing the drilling and loading the holes. Ervin Olsen's son was trucking the ore to the mill. For a long time their ore ran over 1% at the mill. (Geary 1996:332)

Mine loadout and cabin at Lucky Strike mine

Annual Proof of Labor affidavits were filed on the mine workings until 1965, when it was leased, first to the Atlas Corporation, and then to Ferron Uranium Mining in 1967. Additional claim locations were filed by the Jensen Law offices on June 18, 1968, which allowed for additional mineral exploration. Proof of Labor affidavits continued to be filed annually until 1991.

Mine portals and tailings at Lucky Strike mine

On November 5, 2004, Golden Reef Minerals filed Notices of Location for all claims associated with the Lucky Strike Mine. As of August 2005, BLM records list all Lucky Strike claims as being actively mined and under the ownership of Golden Reef Minerals.

Tomsich Butte. This mining area was first developed by John Tomsich and W. J. Hannert in 1951, who discovered uranium ore and staked claims surrounding the butte. These are also known as the Dirty Devil uranium mines, and it was recorded that Hannert and Tomsich "each staked every other claim as their own" (Emery County Archives 2008:101). According to Owen McClenahan, "They were going it alone each claim – what a hell of a way to do. I felt that partners should trust one another down to the last crying dime." McClenahan also said that after John Tomsich's claims no longer produced ore he committed suicide, although Hannert continued to mine uranium in one of Tomsich's claims after the fact (Emery County Archives 2008:101). One popular legend states that Tomsich and his dog drank water from the poisoned Muddy Creek, which eventually killed his dog (Massey and Wilson 2006:472).

Mine portals and dumps at Tomsich Butte mines

One of the miners interviewed, John Anderson, worked at the Tomsich Butte mining area in the seventies, where he also owned some claims. He described the area as follows:

> The big mine at Tomsich Butte was the Hannert and then I think the next biggest one was the Spanish Trail which belongs to me. But the Hannert**,** they produced ore out of there in the original uranium boom, and they were mining ore there in the second uranium boom. Now just a little to the west of the Hannert are what we call the woodpecker holes. When you go down there you'll see what I mean. There's about six different tunnels along that cliff face. And then there's a larger tunnel just a little east of there, then there's the Hannert mine that had three openings if I remember right. And where we camped, where we lived there's a cottonwood tree all by itself down at the bottom of Tomsich Butte. It's very pronounced. And we usually camped there because it was cool in the shade of the cottonwood… They said at one time about four hundred and fifty people lived there, mostly in trailers. And they had a school house, they had two cabins that were joined together, and then there were two or three other cabins that were a short distance away…The school house even had a blackboard on the wall. (Appendix, John Anderson SLC interview)

As a field director for Century 21 Mining Company and Cimarron Mining, John Anderson worked at Tomsich Butte with Lowell Potter, who was the president of the two companies. Anderson stated that "The only mining they did were on the claims that I had. And what I did, I would usually go down there… to check on the guys, that was the main thing, to see that the work was being done. That was basically what I did at Tomsich Butte" (Appendix, John Anderson SLC interview).

Mine chute Tomsich Butte Mine

Mervin Miles also mentioned that "at Tomsich Butte there was a school house…and the few kids that was there, they did have a school for them. So…some of them would be out there for months at a time. They would come into Green River for supplies, and then go back" (Appendix, Mervin Miles Castle Dale interview).

Hidden Splendor. According to Geary (1996:33) "The most publicized single discovery (of uranium in the county) was Vernon J. Pick's June 1952 location of the Delta-Hidden Splendor deposit near the point where Muddy Creek cuts through the San Rafael reef. Pick, who knew little of the country and had no training as a geologist or miner, reportedly was directed to the site by an employee of the Atomic Energy Commission who had observed a radiation anomaly during a survey flight over the area. After working the claims profitably himself for two years, Pick sold the property to the Atlas Corporation in 1954 for $9 million. Atlas recovered only about $2 million worth of ore before abandoning the workings in 1957" (Geary 1996:332). During the active operating period between 1954 and 1957, structures at the Hidden Splendor consisted of a collection of prefabricated buildings and trailers, and a school large enough to educate 17 children (Geary 1996).

Overview of Hidden Splendor-Delta mines and the Muddy River

The first Notice of Location claim for the Delta-Hidden Splendor mine was filed on March 7, 1959, by Alpha 1 Associates/Ralph J. Hafen. On 30 August 1960, the Delta was deeded by Quit Claim to Central Oil and Mining Co., who issued a stripping contract to Owen Malin on 1 October 1960. Central Oil continued to work the claim until the claims were sold in an Emery County tax sale on 15 December 1966. Between 1966 and 1978, the claims were repeatedly sold by Emery County and repurchased by Central Oil and Mining through the tax sale process.

On 11 April 1978 a Memorandum of Agreement transferred the Delta claims to the control of Energy Fuels Nuclear and Nuclear Resources, Inc. The claims were returned to Alpha 1 Associates by MOA on 1 July 1979. On 13 April 1982, Ralph J. Hafen deeded the claims to Joe A. Foster and Luck Energy by Quit Claim, but then filed a Notice of Intention to Hold Claim on 16 December 1982. As of August 2005, Hafen Uranium Group is listed as owner of these active claims.

Proof of Labor affidavits have been filed annually since 1959, and are current as of August 2011.

Little Susan. The Little Susan mine was located by Torval Albrecht and Sons on 2 April 1976. The Notice of Location was recorded on 8 April 1976. However, no further historic information is available for this mine, except to note that the Albrecht's filed Proof of Labor affidavits on a yearly basis until 1991 for all five of the claims associated with the mine.

At one point, John Anderson staked claims at Little Susan mine under the auspices of Uranium Services. He and his boys also spent some time camping at the previously abandoned Little Susan mine camp:

…the Ryan 101 is just north of the Little Susan. And there were two cabins and cook shack at the Little Susan, and we camped there. And we went up to the Ryan 101; this was Uncle Bob and my sons and I. And it was hot August. No shade anywhere. And well we figured, we'll get in the tunnel, and we'll do a little digging and when we, you know, when we get hot we'll just go back in the tunnel and rest a bit, you know …we dug and dug and dug until finally we got a little dog hole. And we climbed over the rubble pile and got back there in the tunnel and we rested a while …My boys were probably just young teenagers at that time, and Uncle Bob and I were doing all the work. But that was an interesting thing. We went over to the Little Susan, and we cleaned that out. The one portal was filled in, there were, maybe the rubble was about three feet high. And we dug out, believe it or not, 102 wheelbarrow loads of rubble to get back into that mine. That was an awful lot of work. (Appendix, John Anderson SLC interview)

Cabins at Little Susan mine, looking west

Utah's Uranium Mining History[1]

Colorado Plateau

Most of the uranium mining in the San Rafael Swell took place in the context of a much broader effort by the Atomic Energy Commission to develop uranium supplies during the Cold War. During that time, the focus of uranium development in the United States was the Colorado Plateau, located to the west of the Rocky Mountains and east of the Basin and Range region in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. This area contains some of the richest radioactive ore deposits in the United States (Amundson 2002). The radioactive minerals occurred primarily as extensive deposits of an unusual canary-yellow to greenish-yellow compound that initially appeared to have no real marketable value (Proctor et al. 1954). This unidentified radioactive mineral was first isolated in 1898 in ores taken from several mining claims in western Colorado, which assayed only trace quantities of gold, silver and other traditionally important metals. Although the ore was plentiful, it was uneconomical to mine just for these other precious metals (Shumway 1987). However, during the spring of 1898, news spread across the western United States that the riddle of the strange unidentified ore outcroppings had been solved and that there might be a market for the ore in the future (Shumway 1987:47). Some samples from one of the claims in western Colorado were given to Charles Poulot, a graduate of the Paris School of Mines, who was doing technical work at the Cashin Copper Mine. Poulot was puzzled by the strange mineral and was unable to complete the chemical analysis, so he forwarded some of the material to his professor, Charles Freidel, in Paris, who determined that it contained uranium and vanadium in a new mineral combination (Shumway 1987:47-48). In fact, this new ore, which Freidel named 'carnotite,' in honor of Adolph Carnot, French physicist and Inspector General of Mines, also included trace amounts of radium (Amundson 2002; Balsley n.d.). Because carnotite contained radium, as well as uranium and vanadium, the early history of its exploitation is tied to the extraction of radium rather than the uranium in the ore. The history of the mining of radioactive minerals on the Colorado Plateau therefore must consider the unique development of three separate metals – radium, vanadium and uranium – each of which was mined at different times and for distinctly different uses.

During the period beginning in 1940 and continuing onward, much of Utah's uranium industry has been reminiscent of the California gold-rush days of a century before, with both old pros and 'city-fellers' setting out on foot, in jeeps, in airplanes and on burros in search of the modern-day version of the 'Dutchman's Gold' (Sorensen 1963:280).

[1] This section and the one following are excerpts from Richens et al. 2006.

In 1956 the United States Bureau of Mines published a handbook intended for such public use entitled "Facts Concerning Uranium Exploration and Production" (Crawford and Paone 1956). In this pamphlet, Crawford and Paone note that "the uranium deposits of the Colorado Plateau are the major source of uranium in the United States, therefore this area may be logically considered fertile ground for the prospector. Ore bodies containing from a few tons to several million tons of uranium ore have been discovered on the plateau. Exploration programs continue in many sections, including Elk Ridge, San Rafael Swell, Moab-Inter River, Circle Cliffs, Abajo Mountains, Red House Cliffs, White Canyon, Capitol Reefs, and Comb Ridge, in Utah; Lisbon Valley and Sage Plain, in Utah and Colorado" (Crawford and Paone 1956:16). The authors further stated that prospectors should look for uranium using certain established criteria, such as outcrops which are stained bright yellow, heavy veins of black or dark brown material, petrified wood found in sandstone deposits, and particularly in areas where uranium-bearing ores had previously been identified, such as old mine workings where metallic minerals had already been produced (Crawford and Paone 1956; Sorensen 1963). Prospectors were also advised to learn to identify specific geologic formations which tended to have a high probability of containing uranium-bearing ores. These formations, prevalent throughout the Utah region of the Colorado Plateau, are identified as the Moss Back Member of the Chinle, the Salt Wash Member of the Morrison Formation and the Shinarump Conglomerate. All of these formations were considered to be prime prospecting possibilities, although the areas within Utah of highest probability were located in Marysvale (Piute County), the Paradox Basin area, including San Juan County and on the eastern edge of the Henry Mountains (Crawford and Paone 1956; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 1986).

Chinle Formation

As the interest in individual prospecting for uranium grew among Utah's population, the importance of properly filing mining claims became an issue. It was in the gold fields of California that nineteenth century claim rules had their genesis (Bassett 1987:16). As mining efforts expanded into much of the rest of the western United States in subsequent decades, miners carried with them this claim system. Significant reserves of precious metals were located in Utah in the 1860s, which led to the first recorded claims and the formation of the first mining district in the state on 17 September 1863 (Arrington 1963). These claims and action to establish a district followed the processes developed earlier in California. The general system of mining laws in Utah were not officially codified until the General Mining Law of 1872 and the Utah Mining Law of 1899, which defined the requirements for both filing and holding title to mining claims. This process has been summarized by others in regard to the way it worked in the hard rock mining areas of the state:

> When a discovery was located, the prospector had to post a location notice at the discovery opening, indicating the name of the lode, the date of discovery, his (the miner's) name, and the distance and direction of the claim. . . . In addition he was required to mark the boundaries of the claim within thirty days. . . . The claim could be no greater than 1500 feet in length, and could extend no further than 300 feet on each side of the vein. Each corner had to be clearly marked, either with a stake or a tree, and although some states required the centerlines to be staked as well,

> this was not required in Utah. . . . Also within thirty days of posting the location notice, the claimant had to file, for the record, a copy of the notice of location ... with the elected recorder of the mining district (or county after 1880). . . . Within ninety days of filing, the claimant was required to perform fifty dollars of assessment work on the claim and at least one hundred dollars annually thereafter.
>
> Once five hundred dollars in improvements had been made ... the claimant was eligible to purchase it ... provided he had a plat of the property produced and published his intention for sixty days. In addition, there had to be evidence that a 'prudent man' could work the mine profitably. Once approved, the land was patented and transferred to private ownership" (Bassett 1987:16-17).

Prospectors interested in mining uranium-bearing ores had to be aware of a few further legalities specific to their industry and different from general mining law. While federal attempts to withdraw all uranium-bearing lands from the public domain had earlier failed, the fact that uranium (and vanadium) had been declared strategic metals in the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 required that all mined uranium ores had to be sold to the United States Government (Eichstaedt 1994). The Act stated that

> "because uranium and thorium ores can be used as source materials in the production of atomic energy, they are also subject to certain other controls . . . (which) apply for the most part to the sale or transfer of uranium and thorium ores after they have been removed from the ground, and generally will not interfere with normal prospecting and mining operations" (United States Atomic Energy Commission and United States Geological Survey 1951:49).

The sale limitation applied to ore removed from lands controlled by the Native Americans as well (Eichstaedt 1994). This market restriction was 'erased' by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, approved August 30, 1954 which "removed the provision for reservation to the Government of uranium found in public lands" (United States Atomic Energy Commission and United States Geological Survey 1951:48). The only additional requirement placed upon uranium miners was that a "license from the Atomic Energy Commission is needed to sell, transfer, or receive uranium and thorium ores which have been removed from the ground, no matter where or when they were mined" (United States Atomic Energy Commission and United States Geological Society 1951:50).

Although uranium prospecting and mining operations were established throughout southeastern Utah, the most productive area overall within the state was the Lisbon Valley district, San Juan County, along the geologically described Lisbon Valley anticline of the Paradox Basin (Mohammad 1986). The first discovery of uranium-vanadium ores in the valley occurred in 1913 at the southeast end of the anticline, with further discoveries reported within the general area in 1917, 1940, and 1941 (Chenoweth 1990). Uranium mining in the district continued on a fairly small scale, however, until the formation of the Atomic Energy Commission in January 1947 and the subsequent creation of its domestic uranium procurement program (Chenoweth 1990). Once the procurement process was in place, uranium-bearing ores were mined more aggressively, although the ore produced was of a low grade. The amount of ore being generated, however, justified the development of an ore-buying station in Monticello, Utah, which became the most significant buying station within the Utah boundaries. Total uranium-bearing ores removed from the area during the period 1947 to 1951 were recorded as approximately 1,393 tons (Chenoweth 1990).

Small, independent miners in Utah and elsewhere often struggled to find any economic success due to the fact that the uranium ore was often deeply buried below substantial beds of sedimentary rock, and the price paid for the ore was not high enough to allow the independent

miner to make a profit. Miners often complained that the "prices being paid by the AEC through private corporations are inadequate to provide for any development of ore reserves outside of shallow beds" (Knight 2001:31). The AEC responded to the situation by initiating an exploration and research program and through government sponsored exploratory drilling that resulted in the completion of 500,000 feet of test holes in three years (Knight 2001:31). The government also sponsored the construction of hundreds of miles of dirt access roads that opened up huge tracts of previously isolated land in southern Utah. The development of the road system would later facilitate Utah's twentieth century boom in the tourist trade, as the public became enamored with the newly accessible open spaces in southern Utah's backcountry. In spite of the federally financed incentives and government assistance programs, the common complaint was that much of the drilling and other exploration assistance benefited large, established mining companies, and did little to further the interests of the small-time prospector and miner (Knight 2001:31). In March 1951, the government provided an additional stimulus to the industry by raising federally fixed prices on ore. "Prices for the lowest grade ore, 0.1 percent, went from fifty cents to $1.50 per pound ($11.00 per pound in 2005 dollars) – an increase of 300 percent. The highest grade of ore, 0.2 percent and higher, increased from $2.00 to $3.50 ($15 to $26) per pound" (Knight 2001:31). The boost in prices provided additional stimulus to exploration and development efforts throughout the state.

The uranium boom in Utah really began, however, in 1952, with Charlie Steen's discovery of unoxidized uranium minerals in his Mi Vida mine, near Moab, on July 6. While Mr. Steen was drilling a core hole in order to "test the Big Buck ore horizon in the Cutler Formation. . . . at a depth of 70 feet, the coring encountered a dark colored sandstone. This material was cored for a total thickness of 14 feet ... 100 feet above the horizon he planned to test" (Chenoweth 1990:13). Although unrecognized as uranium-bearing at first, when the deposit was analyzed it assayed at an average of 0.23 percent uranium, which was an extremely high-grade ore. Further discoveries would contain as much as 0.47 percent uranium ore (Chenoweth 1990).

"The news of the Steen discovery set off an extensive rush of claim-staking throughout the entire southwestern flank of the Lisbon Valley," thus beginning the boom period for Utah's uranium mining (Chenoweth 1990:14). The presence of such high-grade ores suggested that many could make their fortune quickly, just as Mr. Steen did with the Mi Vida Mine. The presence of such ore bodies, in conjunction with the high national demand for uranium fueled further mineral exploration throughout Utah, and had prospectors laying claim to much of the plateau area within the state.

Mi Vida Mine

The surge in mining claims caused a few unforeseen difficulties, however. "In 1953, many mine operators...discovered that their claims had been staked on lands already covered by federal oil and gas leases. Public Law 250, signed into law by President Truman on August 12, 1953, provided for the creation of valid mining claims on ground staked between July 31, 1939 and January 1, 1953. Claims staked subsequent to January 1, 1953 were invalid" (Chenoweth 1990:17). However, due to the strategic nature of the ore, and government demand for any ores produced, the Atomic Energy Commission issued Domestic Uranium Circular 7, effective January 29, 1954, which allowed interested miners to lease back mining claims already covered by the oil and gas leases. This allowance made it possible for prospectors to protect their claims

until Public Law 585 of August 13, 1954 came into effect. This law opened to mining all lands previously closed due to the federal leases already in place (Chenoweth 1990).

Uranium prospecting continued at a record pace until the early 1960's, when it appeared that the United States Government demand for uranium was diminishing due to oversupply. At that time, the Atomic Energy Commission began allowing miners to sell their ores on the open market, to utility companies interested in producing nuclear-energy power plants. The federal government continued to purchase a portion of the ores produced until 1970, but private sales accounted for most of the ore distribution. With the advent of nuclear power plants, uranium production surged for another decade, until public concern over the dangers of radioactivity curtailed the nuclear power industry.

During the period 1948 to 1970, production records for the Lisbon Valley mining district maintained by the United States Atomic Energy Commission reveal that 7,184,846 tons of uranium-bearing ore were mined, producing 53,636,121 pounds of uranium at an average of 0.37 percent uranium mineralization, a very rich concentration (Chenoweth 1990). Unfortunately, few of Utah's other uranium mining districts could match the ore quality and quantity of the Lisbon Valley district, and overall, "more than 90 percent of Utah's total uranium production has come from (the) San Juan County" (Mohammad 1986:5) portion of the Paradox Basin. Uranium production records for the entire state indicate that by 1962, the state had produced over 9 million tons of ore, which yielded approximately $250 million in uranium and radium. The official government report indicates that this was the result of ore removed from "literally thousands of deposits, many of which were mined as a single enterprise (Hilpert and Dasch 1964:125-126).

The socioeconomic effects on the region of southern Utah were profound. The uranium boom served to transform many of the small communities in the southern region of the state from quiet, homogenous, predominantly Mormon agricultural communities, to more complex, heterogeneous towns with more diversified economies. The example of Moab, Utah, positioned in the heartland of Utah's uranium mining area, although perhaps somewhat extreme, is representative of the changes that came to many parts of the state. The 1940 federal census recorded Moab's population as 1,084. By 1960, only twenty years later, the population had more than tripled to 6,345 persons. Of that total, only 1,102 reported living in the same house as they had occupied in 1954, and only 2,377 reported having been born in Utah (Knight 2001:32). The explosive population growth severely stressed public services and infrastructure, creating serious problems in public school accommodations, medical facilities, water and sewage treatment facilities, communication services, and public safety (Knight 2001). In the four years following Steen's 1952 strike, the city's administrative budget increased 600 percent, and growth demands led to a 1,200 percent increase in allocations for public safety (Amundson 2002:69).

Although the current uranium industry activity in Utah is small, it has been a significant factor in various parts of the state in the past. Thus, if the national energy policy does once again swing toward a reliance on nuclear power, and public acceptance for building new nuclear power plants becomes widespread, there is a possibility that Utah's uranium mining industry will once again expand in the future.

Summary

This report serves to provide an overview of the history of mining on the San Rafael Swell, and in particular at the Copper Globe, Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor, and Little Susan mines. The six interviewees that graciously donated their time provided part of this history through their personal experiences and memories. While this report focuses on general descriptions of the mines and mining history, the rich, vivid stories of each of the participants provide a deeper understanding of the hardships, determination, travails, and successes of those who mined and worked in this extreme desert environment. These stories are recorded verbatim in the appendix of this volume and will stand as an enduring contribution to the recorded history of the San Rafael Swell and mining legacy of Utah.

It is important to remember the role that mining on the San Rafael Swell played in several aspects of life for people in Utah and in America, including providing uranium for the country's growing need during the middle of the twentieth century. It was summed up best by Mark H Williams (Appendix, Orangeville interview) at the close of our interview, who provided an important perspective of the mining efforts on the San Rafael Swell:

> The Swell…was a wilderness, a no-man's-land…very few people had been out there. In the early 20s they drilled for oil out in that country. Then when the uranium boom came, the miners pushed out through the area, built roads and trails and things we still use today….Most people would never be able to see how beautiful the Swell area is without the old uranium miners. We have to give them credit for opening up the Swell and making it what it is today, so visitors could go see it and enjoy it.

References

Amundson, Michael A.
2002 Yellowcake Towns: Uranium Mining Communities in the American West. From Mining the American West Series, Editors Duane A. Smith, Robert A. Trennert, Liping Zhu, University Press of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

Arrington, Leonard J.
1963 Abundance from the Earth: The Beginnings of Commercial Mining in Utah. Utah Historical Quarterly 31(3): 192-219.

Balsley, Howard W.
n.d. Paper presented Utah Chapter of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, Moab, Utah. Undated manuscript copy provided to Eric Redd. Manuscript in collections of Utah State Historical Society, Manuscript number A2312. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Bassett, Everett
1987 Silver Reef Abandoned Mines Cultural Survey. Dames & Moore, Inc., Salt Lake City. Submitted to Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining, Salt Lake City.

Chenoweth, William L.
1990 Lisbon Valley, Utah's Premier Uranium Area, A Summary of Exploration and Ore Production. Utah Department of Natural Resources Division of Geological and Mineral Survey, Open-File Report 188, July 1990, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Crawford, John E. and James Paone
1956 Facts Concerning Uranium Exploration and Production. A Bureau of Mines Handbook, United States Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.

Eichstaedt, Peter H.
1994 If You Poison Us: Uranium and Native Americans. Red Crane Books, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Emery County Archives
2008 *The San Rafael Swell: Images of America*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina.

Fillmore, Robert.
2011 *Geological Evolution of the Colorado Plateau of Eastern Utah and Western Colorado*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011. Print.

Finken, Dee Ann
1977 *A History of the San Rafael Swell*. Bureau of Land Management, Moab District Office, San Rafael Resource Area, Price.

Geary, Edward A.
1996 *A History of Emery County*. Utah State Historical Society, Emery County Commission. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Gloyn, R. W.; Tripp, B.T.; Bishop, E.D.; Morgan, C.D. Gwynn, J.W.; and Blackett, R.E. "Energy, Mineral, and Ground-water Resources of Carbon and Emery Counties, Utah." *Utah Geological Survey Bulletin* 132 (2003): 75-76. Print.

Hilpert, L.S. and M.D. Dasch
1964 Uranium. In Mineral and Water Resources of Utah. Report of the United States Geological Survey. Washington, D.C.

Knight, Amberly
2001 Hot Rocks Make Big Waves: The Impact of the Uranium Boom on Moab, Utah, 1948-57. Utah Historical Quarterly Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 29-45.

Massey, Peter and Jeanne Wilson
2006 Backcountry Adventures Utah: The Ultimate Guide to the Utah Backcountry for Anyone with a Sport Utility Vehicle. Alder Publishing, Castle Rock, Colorado.

Mohammad, Hasan
1986 Geology of Active Uranium Mines During 1962 in Parts of Paradox Basin, Southeastern Utah: A Preliminary Review. Utah Geological and Mineral Survey Open-File Report 89, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Neff, Thomas R.
1981 Uranium. In Atlas of Utah, edited by Wayne L. Wahlquist, pp. 217-218. Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah.

Newsome, Daniel K. and Betsy L. Tipps
1993 Cultural Resource Reconnaissance and Evaluation in the Temple Mountain and Tomsich Butte Mining Areas, Emery County, Utah. Contribution by David A. Kice. Cultural Resources Report 5011-01-9311, submitted to Utah Division of State History and Bureau of Land Management. P-III Associates, Salt Lake City.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
1986 *Uranium: Resources, Production, and Demand.* A Joint Report by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Paris, France.

Proctor, Paul Dean, Edmond P. Hyatt and Kenneth C. Bullock
1954 Uranium: Where It Is and How to Find It. Eagle Rock Publishers, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Richens, Lane D., Deborah C. Harris, and Richard K. Talbot
2006 *San Rafael Abandoned Mine Reclamation Project (AMR/015/917) Cultural Resource Survey Emery County, Utah*. Brigham Young University/Museum of Peoples and Cultures Technical Series No. 05-8. Provo, UT.

Shumway, Gary L.
1987 The Uranium Industry in Utah in Making Money Out of Dirt, Papers of the Utah Mining Symposium, Sponsored by Utah Centennial Foundation, Utah State Historical Society, Utah Mining Association, with a grant from the Utah Endowment For The Humanities, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sorenson, Don
1963 Wonder Mineral: Utah's Uranium. In *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, no. 5. Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

Stokes, William L.
1986 *Geology of Utah*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah and Utah Geological and Mineral Survey, 1986. Print.

United States Atomic Energy Commission and United States Geological Survey
1951 Prospecting for Uranium, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

United States Bureau of Land Management.
2011 *San Rafael Abandoned Mine Closure Project, Environmental Assessment*, BLM Price Field Office, Price, Utah.

Ux Consulting Company, LLC (UxC)
2011a Uranium Suppliers Annual, December 2011 issue, accessed on February 23, 2012, http://www.uxc.com/products/rpt_usa.aspx.
2011b *The Ux Weekly* 25(11):1-12.
2012 UxC Historical Ux Price Charts, http://www.uxc.com/review/uxc_PriceChart.aspx, accessed on February 23, 2012.

ooOoo

APPENDIX

Interview Transcripts

Transcripts

The following are transcripts of the eight oral histories recorded by the author during the summer of 2011. The list below provides the dates, locations, and participants of the oral histories recorded. The order in which they appear in the list is also the order in which they are presented in this section of the report.

Table 1. Participants in the oral history of the San Rafael Swell.

Date	Interviewee	Location
May 23, 2011	**Ted Ekker**	**Green River, UT**
May 23, 2011	**Jack Erwin**	**Green River, UT**
May 24, 2011	**Mervin Miles**	**Orangeville, UT**
May 24, 2011	**Mark H Williams**	**Castledale, UT**
May 25, 2011	**Barbara Ekker**	**Hanksville, UT**
July 13, 2011	**Mervin Miles (on-site interview)**	**Copper Globe Mine**
July 14, 2011	**John Anderson (on-site interview)**	**Delta/Hidden Splendor Mine**
August 5, 2011	**John Anderson**	**Salt Lake City, UT**

INTERVIEW WITH TED EKKER

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: May 23, 2011
LOCATION: Green River, UT

PART 1

MS: The project that we're working on here is the San Rafael Swell Mining Oral History. As you said, your name is Ted Ekker, my name is Mike Searcy, and we are here in Green River. So, what I'm going to have you do is state your full name again, your date of birth and where you now live. So first if you'll give me your name.

TE: Well, my full name is Teddy Cornelius Ekker, alias Ted Ekker, in Green River, Utah.

MS: Okay, and when were you born Mr. Ekker?

TE: 9/27/31

MS: Okay, in '31. Excellent. And that makes you how old today?

TE: 79

MS: 79, a healthy, vibrant 79.

(both laugh)

TE: Doing pretty good. Glad to be here.

MS: Now we spoke a little bit earlier just a little bit about how you got into uranium mining. But first, maybe before you talk about your experience as a miner, tell me what you know, more or less, about the uranium mining in Utah around the time that you got into it.

TE: Alright, I think probably we'll start back with my grandpa, whose picture is right up there on the wall with the horse. Charles Gibbins, in Hanksville, he sold his store to my grandpa Ekker in 1906. And he was involved in the mining and promoting of Temple Mountain. The ore had been discovered there, I don't recall exactly the name of the person who discovered it, maybe, but anyway, around that time, they started mining uranium at Temple Mountain shortly after that and hauled it into Green River in wagons. So it was the old wagon road that went to Hanksville, just went up North Temple because they couldn't get up through where the road goes now. Went up the North Temple then on, around and over to Temple Mountain. Then eventually they built the road up the South Temple Wash. But that's when it first started and probably because of Madame Curie's seeking more uranium. And it was brought into Green River, and probably stacked here. But they had to take it somewhere in order to get it assayed to know exactly how much U308 was in the uranium product, you know. So, that went on for many, many years. And then of course when Madame Curie passed away, then the demand for uranium went down. It's a commodity that is like oil or wheat or soybeans. When they need it the price goes up, which encourages people to go to mining. Then when they overproduce, the price goes down, which, can't make a living at it, so you have to try something else and sit around and wait for the price to go back up again, see? But it's a cycle that is just in the industry, mining industry. And that's the way it fluctuates as the demand and the price fluctuates.

MS: Now you said your father, early on had been involved, especially down in the Hanksville area, you said?

TE: Yeah, in the Henry Mountains, on the south mountain in the Henry Mountains.

MS: On the Henry Mountains. And about what year was that?

TE: He didn't get really involved in it until about 1922. Along that time he was guiding some people into Cataract Canyon and for the Colorado River Compact. They were looking for dam sites on the Colorado River in 1922 when the compact became, and around that time he guided those people around to Bullfrog and on over into the Reef. And I think that was probably in the conversation because they had been over in Colorado and had seen it. And then a gentleman by the name of Hatch came from western Colorado where they were mining for Madame Curie, and told him about it. And Dad was in the cow business at the time, and the cow business was up and down, and so when the cow business was down he had such a large family and lots of help you might say, that was the purpose of the large families, was to help the family to exist! So, to put these boys to work, so that would help the family, but anyway. He started looking around and found something at Trachyte, and he also knew about the mining at Temple Mountain through Grandpa Gibbins who he married Grandpa's daughter, see? Eventually.

PART 2

MS: So we stopped off in talking a little about, you called them the ca…?

TE: Calyx

MS: Calyx holes. Now, of course we were talking about at Temple Mountain, right? Now let's talk about your work in the Henry Mountains as a miner working in these holes. Give me an example, well first give me a little background about the Henry Mountains, then we'll talk about a day in the life.

TE: Like I said before, the gentleman that came from Colorado and talked to my Dad about the uranium over in the Henry Mountains because it was in a formation, the Salt Wash Member of the Morrison Formation, and Dad was very much interested in geology, being a cow man and being in the country and seeing so many different varied places of the different formations, but anyway. There's a possibility, needless he said, that you might be able to make some money at this. So that's when he started was in the late 20s, just kind of prospecting around and locating the claims. And also in the gold industry there also, he loved the gold mining too, but anyway. So how he mined, he never did go underground. He didn't like to go underground because he had asthma so bad, and the dust bothered him. So he mined from the outside. And we would go along and discover where the uranium was, he would discover. There was different things, if you went to an ant bed, and looked in the ant bed for little pieces of yellow uranium, that indicated that there was probably something down below, so you always looked there, and also in the milkvetch plant. The milkvetch plant was very prevalent in where the uranium was, so that's where you look to. And we would just mine by hand. We had picks and shovels and wheelbarrows and bores, and big bores, and then we'd drill the holes by hand, hand drilling the holes. And we had to sharpen the hand tools, and then you would use dynamite to blast it up. And one incident happened one time that might be… we used horses quite a lot to travel back and forth from our camp to where we were mining. And it was my job as a kid of nine years old, or even eight or nine, to keep a little smudge fire going. So we tied the animals up to cedar trees or hobbled them and let them graze while we were working. But we had this old mule that I loved so well. And Dad said,

something is wrong with that old mule tied up to that cedar tree. Go over there and see what's wrong with her. So I went over there and she was pawing, and I looked down where she was pawing and there was a rattlesnake. So I had my old dog with me and I didn't want to, I'd throw rocks at the rattlesnake, but I couldn't get through the cedar trees, so I set the dog on it. Bang! He went in there and got that rattlesnake and killed it. And old Polly, that was the mule's name, was pawing there, and she'd pawed up some yellow dirt. I can't believe it. So I holler to my dad, "Come and look Dad, see what this mule dug up." And sure enough that turned out to be one of the best mines that we had there. That old mule had done that.

MS: And her name was what?

TE: Polly.

MS: That's amazing.

TE: Old Polly. A great old gal. But anyway, there was other people came, different outfits, and mined. But we spent lot of time in the cow business and in the mining the gold. And then the gold only lasted a couple of months at high water time on the Henry's, then we'd go back to uranium mining. But Dad staked the old claims all over there, so that he had them tacked down.

MS: So those are the ones that you mined extensively?

TE: Yes.

MS: Now did any of those ever go down deeper than just a…

TE: Yes, oh yes. After people got in there with equipment that they could, you had a tripod with a drill on it, and you could just poke it right up there and water injected to keep the hole clean. You could just drill right in there like that, and say a place as big as this room, drill it out, shoot it. And then you had buggies to go in, you had loaders to load it in the buggy. That was altogether different than everything ever done by hand. And then in '78, '76 the price came back on uranium, so I bought a bunch of equipment and went out and started with this equipment. I bought me a drill to find it and, what equipment I needed to mine it with. So I was very successful there in doing that.

MS: That's great. So you said, '76, '78 was when it kind of boomed again.

TE: Yep, it certainly did.

MS: So when you started working at that time period, give me kind of an example of what your day would be like in going out to the mine. Did you live here in Green River the whole time, or were you living in Hanksville?

TE: I lived in Green River, but I moved into an old cabin out on the gold mining property which sat just a few miles above. And I camped in there with my boy, had two boys a lot of times. The first boy was in college at Stanford University, and the second boy helped me out quite a lot. But I hired people to help. And one time I bought a drill and went out there and we started drilling, and I, you got to have kind of a sense of geology to know the formation that you're in is the proper one. So you've only got a lens of about 30-40 feet in this formation where the uranium ore occurs. So we were drilling there and I told the boy that was helping me, Richard, I said we'll drill four or five more holes across here and then if we don't find anything there we'll move somewhere else. Prior to that I had leased a hundred of the claims that my dad had staked years and years and years ago, so I knew the property pretty well, so we was drilling along there and we

were getting pretty close to this ledge, and I poked a hole in and, Pow! Here she come. The uranium jumped out of there. I said, lets measure what we've got in the hole with a Geiger counter and a probe. So we sent the probe down the hole and it measured what we had, and we had about four feet of ore that run around 50/100s which is very, very good! And so I said, let's shut her down right now, and let's go home for the weekend and we'll figure out something. I couldn't wait to get back, (laughs) get back there to mine in there. Anyway, we went back on Monday and drilled a few more holes, and figured that we had enough then to start. I had a D-7 Cat dozer, and we cleaned it off and drilled down to where the ore was and then exploded that, and then mucked that out of the way, see, until we got down there and discovered it was an old dinosaur. That uranium had went into the old dinosaur bones. And where the dinosaur was laying was in a trash-bed of just trash of all kinds, sticks and stones and everything, and right in that trash-bed. And we mined there for about a month and a half and took out 22 thousand dollars worth of ore out of that hole, out of that dinosaur.

MS: That is amazing!

TE: Petrified wood!

MS: So you saw all the fossils that resulted from where this dinosaur had fallen, that is amazing.

TE: Yeah, right there, there was a big tree there that was about four feet in diameter, and just beautiful thing. While we were going, mining and drilling that, and shooting that, and separating the waste from the ore, that's what you got to be very, very careful about, not to contaminate the ore because that brings down the grade. And we were drilling a lot, I told Richard, I said, we got to be a little bit careful, I don't like this roof, we call it "the back". That it don't look very stable. And so we were loading the holes getting ready to shoot. And a piece of that fell out and hit Richard right on top of the head. I grabbed him and started back out of there dragging him, he was screaming I'm alright, I'm okay! It wasn't very much that hit him, mostly just sand and dirt that had fell out. But anyway, we were very careful about them things. You got to be very knowledgeable about what you're doing and very, very careful because you're handling explosives and equipment and you got to have some air to breathe, and things like that, that I've been in places. One more thing, I was doing some, out to Four Corners…

PART 3

TE: I was out at Four Corners. They had shut down and I was assistant superintendent out there and they laid me off, so the people that took over from the company that I worked for said would you come out and do some long hauling down underground to, you went in this way, horizontal across this way for a distance of about 40 feet and you just hooked up your, your machine with water pressure and drilling. And I was doing that, and there was a pump pumping water. And when I shut the machine off, this pump had stopped. So I walked down to maybe get the pump started again, it was an air pressure pump, and when I turned around, the guys that were mining had a dog. And this dog come up and he put his head in my hand, down there where it is as black as black can be, and there I am all alone, not knowing anybody was around (laughs) and that dog come up and licked my hand. (laughs) Wow! I about went crazy. And I finally grabbed a hold of the dog, and, woah what am I doing hurting that dog, he was yapping, but those things happen you know. But it is so dark down there, I wondered how in the world that dog ever run up and down the, anyway.

MS: He must have known something that humans didn't. That's amazing.

TE: But the uranium business, years ago my dad would bring uranium a lot of times out at what's called Shootaring Mine now, south of the Henry Mountains down towards Bullfrog, Ticaboo. Maybe you've heard of that. That's where the place is. But, my dad discovered that years ago in about 1936. And they hauled the uranium out of there on horses and mules, pack animals. To Trachyte where there was a road, then they brought it to Green River. And there was a gentleman here that would kind of assay it by himself, and then he would pay you so much. Then when he got a carload from the different miners around, it was all in sacks, and your name on it see, and when that happened then he would ship that to Vitriol back in Pittsburg, and then you'd get a settlement check afterwards. And that's kind of the way the mining business's done. When you leased from the owner of a mine, like shipping it to Vitriol in railroad cars and a lot of times out to Four Corners, right out here just 15 miles. We shipped maybe one or two cars a day out of here. But we would load up three or four cars then ship them all, but they took 75 ton and 50 ton cars and we loaded it in them and shipped them to Vitriol.

MS: And after they assayed it?

TE: Assayed, then your money come back to you.

MS: That's amazing. Well my next question had something to do with, you had lived in a cabin out there. Now did you have family with you out there or did you stay out there for weeks at a time? Tell me a little bit about that.

TE: No, I'd stay there for the week, and we'd leave here Monday morning bright and early and go out to the mine and mine there. If we didn't have to, we had no refrigeration or anything like that, so we had to keep our meats and things in a cooler as best we could. And then we would go to the cabin that night because the cabin was a little further from the mine. And I'm a pretty good cook, my dad was a good cook, and all my brothers were good cooks. But we was raised in a situation where we spend a good part of our lives out on the, underneath the cedar tree I say, or out on the desert, or punching cows or mining or whatever, you know. So we were all, and we would stay in the cabin. And in the morning I would get up and start a fire and light the light. We had some Coleman lights, and then I'd prepare the coffee and start the breakfast. And by that time the guys had got up. One time I had maybe four or five people there working for me. And I had two of them drilling and two of us mining, see? And, so, yeah. Four or five people there all the time, and cook for them. And then when I would get breakfast over with, and the people that was working for me made sure we had water for drilling. And the water was right there in the creek, and they put it in barrels, bucket it up into the barrels and we'd haul water for our drilling, and it was pretty nice. And we'd take a lunch with us and then come back in the evening and start another fire in the stove and cook supper. Sometimes if I were cooking a roast or a pot of beans or something like that for a while, I would, at the fire in the morning, I would start the roast or a pot of beans on top of the stove, start the roast in the oven, and then let the fire die down, then by the time the oven cooled off, then I'd come back in the evening, start the fire. In about an hour you'd have the roast done, see? And that's the same way with a pot of beans. You could fill up the stove with wood when you left, let that burn down. Then as you come home in the evening, and start to build your fire and boil the beans for another hour maybe, or 30 minutes or something and then they'd be done, though. It was a way to, and we ate pretty good too, good wholesome food. We had a lot of deer meat and elk meat that we could, we were there in the winter time, all we needed to do was just hang it outside, and then take it down in the morning and wrap it up in your bed. And so that's the way we lived.

MS: That sounds like delicious. You're making me hungry for lunch now.

(both laugh)

MS: You did do a lot of cooking out there!

TE: Oh yeah!

MS: Every morning, every night, take your lunch out, wow, that's amazing.

TE: Every night.

MS: Let's see. You answered a lot of the questions I was going to ask just by what you just said there. Did you guys have any kind of superstitions or folklore associated with uranium mining or mining in general that you can remember?

TE: A lot of people didn't like to go in the dark. If that was a superstition or not I don't know. But years ago you used to use a carbide light. We didn't have battery packs or an electric lights or anything, see? So there was a carbide light. And the mining in those days were pretty primitive. But nowadays it is just so easy and you've got all the convenience of the big equipment and everything to mine with. In fact, just you don't need to do nothing but sit there and run it with your fingers practically. Where we had to pound an old drill into the rock, and we had a spoon on the end of a rod to go in there and get the cuttings and bring them out, and then if you got too deep, you'd have to pour water in the hole if it was down like that, then, until it got dry then go in and spoon out the, then drill some more. So hand drilling was not for the kids today. The amazing thing was, we very seldom ever wore gloves. That was a luxury, a glove. So our hands got just calloused and cracked and sore. Bleeding probably most of the time, just horrific! Hands would be so cracked and sore and bleeding. But you had to do'er in order to make a living, you know.

MS: Definitely. Wow. So about how long was your work day?

TE: Oh, lots of times we'd, in one instance we had to travel horseback, so we didn't take a lunch with us. We would go in the morning, get up at daylight, get breakfast over with. And while Dad was cooking the breakfast then we would get the horses ready to go. And we would hobble the horses out so they could go out and graze on their own just out in the desert, or in the canyon, or wherever we was at. And then bring the horses in and saddle those up and get them grained, always kept a supplement food for the horses, the grain, and oats. And then we would go up to the mine. That was before we got a pick up or even a road up there. We had to go up with the horses. Then we would pack the ore off of there in sacks down to where the road was, where a guy could get to it truck to haul it away. And so we would do that, a lot of times we would come in about, oh, we never had a watch, we just went by the sun. And when the sun started down over the other side of the mountain in the summer time we figured it was time to go home. And try to get everything taken care of, your supper over with and things done before it got dark so that we wouldn't have to, we didn't very seldom ever had an old coal oil light or something, or a candle was about all the light you had.

MS: So you tried to get down before sun down?

TE: Yeah.

PART 4

MS: Now let's talk a little bit about your involvement at Temple Mountain.

TE: Well, my involvement at Temple Mountain started in 1940 because my dad and granddad owned the claims that was there. They, when the uranium business went down, to where nobody wanted it, then they picked it up and re-staked it. But in those days we had to do a minimum of $100 assessment work on each claim in order to hold them. And that had to be recorded at the county clerk's office. So that's what we were doing in 1940. There was no price on uranium in 1940 except the very minimal amount. And so we were out to Temple Mountain doing the assessment work in 1940. And the old rock house that sits there, we lived in that old rock house at that time. And we were there for probably a month or so in the fall, up to September 1st because that was the deadline for that year that had to be recorded, your assessment work and your intentions to hold the property. Then in '47 or '48 the price came on uranium. And I might add, when we were mining in the vanadium and uranium in 1940, '41, and '42 then the government came to us at, now this is the same thing that would also correspond to Temple Mountain at Trachyte in the Henry Mountains, and said we're no longer going to pay you for the vanadium, we'll just pay you for the vanadium content, no longer for the uranium, but the vanadium. So they jumped up the price of vanadium which made it lucrative for us to just mine, but when you mine the vanadium, you take the uranium with it because it's combined in the same rock. Now we chipped a lot of the good uranium ore off the rock in order to boost the grade of vanadium, that same thing happened at Temple Mountain. Then after the war, of course in '44 when my father got sick then we didn't do any more mining, and we still had the property at Temple Mountain and we still had it at Trachyte in the Henry Mountains. But my father got to the point of where he couldn't work anymore. So the Temple Mountain properties, he couldn't do the assessment work on them so they defaulted, and we no longer had, supposedly until some people come in and staked 'em again when the price came on uranium in '47, and, but we were still involved there and my granddad Gibbins also was involved there. But it took lawsuits after lawsuits to finally get it straightened out. And in that time my father passed away in '52 and I didn't have much to do with Temple Mountain at that time, until I got back from the army over in Korea in 1954, then I started hauling uranium out of Temple Mountain.

MS: So did you, did your family lose those claims?

TE: They lost them, but when other people come in and re-staked them, there was something there that the lawyers picked up that there was some prior right there, see? Also at Temple Mountain and at Flat Tops, which is just to the west of there, there was a mine up there, my granddad owned that parcel there. But when it was surveyed they found out that, up at the Flat Top right up there, just a couple of miles away, that that was in a school section. So people went in and leased the school section, so we lost that altogether. But we still retained some right in the Temple Mountain, and after my father died, my mother started getting a meager check for royalties paid by the company to the owners, and that never was completely settled, oh in '54 somewhere in there, '55. And then that was that.

MS: That makes a little more sense. But that was great that the lawyers were able to figure something out there.

TE: Yeah, they did. That was Jensen and Fransen in Price were the lawyers.

MS: You know, somebody had mentioned Fransen as one who's worked a lot with these claims. So the name sounds familiar.

TE: But they were the big recipients of all the mining that was done there. They took the lions share for their work. Which I don't know, we wouldn't have got nothing if it hadn't been that way, see? So we felt indebted to them.

MS: That's good that you had that as a resource. Tell me a little bit about, because you said earlier that you moved from hauling ore from Temple Mountain to actually mining the ore near the Hanksville, Henry Mountains.

TE: At the Henry Mountains. I never did mine at Temple Mountain. That was about the time that we were married, and there were other… I drove truck mostly and hauled out of there for McFarland and Hollinger, and also Frank Hat. But there was Jack Erwin, which you will interview, later in the day, he mined there pretty good, extensively as a miner. And that ore, years ago, had some oil properties in it so that it was hard to re-manufacture and take the uranium out of it. But Vitro Corporation in Salt Lake figured out a process that they could take that ore, so that ore was shipped from Green River by rail to the old Vitro Plant on 33rd South in Salt Lake at the time.

MS: That's amazing.

TE: Yes it is. And they went in there, that formation was kind of tipped a little bit to the west, upwards, and so you could go in with your adits on the floor, and then you had to mine up or down, so they went up on top in order to get more ventilation and to, they drilled some Calyx holes which were 36 inches in diameter down to the uranium and made a bucket the same size to bring the ore out and to let the people down in order to mine it. Now, I haven't been out there in some time, but they've got some closures down on the bottom where their adits went in, but I don't know if they, they've certainly taken care of those calyx holes on top. And there was about, at the time it was in high gear, there was, let me see, one, two, three, four, five calyx holes up on the bench that were down there mining, yes.

MS: I've seen pictures of those. It's fascinating that not only did they bring the ore up, but they took the men down in there. So when the men went down, did the mine underneath the ground open up so that….

TE: Yes, but they opened it up themselves. You must understand that when that guy when down in the bucket, the bucket was dropped below where he wanted to make his adit in. So he sat in that bucket with a drill machine and drilled small holes of maybe 3 feet, or maybe 2 and a half feet in to that, and then pull the bucket up, and then explode it, and then it would fall down, and then he'd have to go down and muck it out, see? And into the bucket! Then when he finally got him a place big enough in there that he could lower the bucket below that and then blast and catch the ore in the bucket, and then what went around, you could just pick up and put in the bucket, but it was kind of a slow process until such time that he got a station built there by mining out this place where the station was supposed to be. Then he had to go down in and muck out the sump we called it, where the bucket went down below where the station was. So that when they come with their wheelbarrows, they dumped the ore into that bucket. But some would fall, so they'd have to go periodically down in the hole and muck it into a…

PART 5

MS: So a little about the wages.

TE: When I was a kid, and up until, oh, after the war, say in '46 '47 or something like that, there was no wages, we didn't pay no wages, even people that come and lived with us. It was just after the depression and during the depression people would come just for a meal. They would stay with us for two or three months and work their fingers to the bone just for a meal and some place to eat and some place to sleep. There was so many people traveling the country. The people off

the railroad, the hobos, anybody that got out in the boondocks a little ways or rode a horse across the desert and needed to shade up for a while would come and work, just for something to eat. And in the family we, if it was just the family and a good couple of friends of my father's, whenever he got a settlement check he'd always give them something, what they needed. Mother always made sure that we were fed good and that we had clothes. Lots of times there was an old guy come who was a tailor at one time, and he made, he would take the backs of the overalls that were wore out in the front, and cut off the denim backs and make little overalls for the little kids. If he had an old coat or something just cut that off and make something out of it. We just had to do everything just to survive. But we always had something to eat. And we always had good relations with everybody. But wages, no there wasn't no wages. I never got any wages until I went in the army. (laughs) And that was 50 bucks a month! Was really high!

MS: Compared to the no wage you were making. And then you would start making your settlement checks when you started working the claims yourself right?

TE: Yeah. Now, I don't want to brag or anything, but this last episode, that was in '76, I went and got the lease on the property in '76 and worked '77, '78, '79. But very little, it was November '76, so it was actually '77. And I worked there for two years and a piece. And I took out, I checked it the other day, I had my old settlement sheets: $367,000 worth of ore in those two and a half years. Yeah, so I paid for all my equipment and everything and walked away from there when the price went, went down I had to quit, see? And the mill shut down and everything.

MS: And was that the end of your uranium mining?

TE: That was the end of my uranium mining.

MS: And it hasn't gone up since I understand.

TE: No. It went up awhile back to about a hundred, and I was getting $47.50 a pound for uranium content. Now, one percent uranium is 20 pounds, and say, fifty/hundred is ten pounds and twenty/hundred is five pounds, see? So that's what you get paid for. And you get a little bit for uranium and vanadium, and a lot of times they haul it for free, the mills do. So you didn't have any transportation, but I paid 15% royalty to the company that I leased from.

MS: So that was required, that lease payment, yeah. A lot of work over a lot of years, huh?

TE: I think of all the things that I've done that mining is the most interesting, most enjoyable thing there is because it's up to you, the person, that either go makes it or don't make it.

MS: That was my next question, what you enjoyed most about it.

TE: It is, it is, geology and mining, drilling is fascinating because you go look at a formation or even if you can't see the formation it's underground, and you start drilling down there and you see the different colors and textures and how hard it is or how soft it is coming out of that, it's amazing. And then if you happen to hit some uranium, oh boy! (whistles) Bang! It's like hitting the jackpot in Vegas! (laughs)

MS: I bet that's exciting.

TE: Yeah.

MS: Catching a big one right? Catching a big fish.

TE: Yeah.

PART 6

TE: A guy by the name of Vernon Pick came into the country prospecting for uranium, he was from Minnesota or somewhere, I don't know. But the AEC, Atomic Energy Commission was flying up the canyons and the formations looking for, they dragged a Geiger counter behind them to see if they could pick up some radiation, you know, and they did pick up some down there on the Muddy. And some way he finagled one of the AEC people to divulge the information about where it was. Well, I don't know the particulars, but anyway so he hired my brother to take him horseback down to the Muddy, and my brother never been there but my dad says, "Yes, I know where it's at." So you go out to Temple Mountain and go out to the Muddy that way. So he went down there and just put up a discovery notice. And when you stake a claim, you can put up a discovery notice and then you have 90 days in order to get that recorded or to stake the claim and record it with the county seat. And so, he just put up discovery. Well he knew how to get down there by my brother taking him, so he said I don't need you anymore, and goodbye. But he got some people out of Hanksville to work for him and they developed a mine, and it turned in to be a great mine. And Mr. Vernon Pick sold it to the Atlas Corporation and went back to Minnesota.

MS: And pig as in P-I-G?

TE: No, Pick. P-I-C-K.

MS: How appropriate for mining. Vernon Pick. Well, I can't think of anything else unless you have anything else that you can think of?

TE: No, that's fine.

MS: This has just been wonderful. I've learned a lot about the whole system of mining, especially uranium mining. That's one question I did want to see. Did you ever have, I know that one point in time there was this, modern medicine had stated that high amounts of uranium or exposure to uranium, radioactive uranium could be hazardous to your health. Was that ever a problem when you were mining? Or was that something you ever even thought about? Or, when did that maybe come about, if you can remember.

TE: That came about when people died of cancer, that, oh, they mined. Two of my best friends both died of cancer at young ages, like 45 or 50 years old. And they were both, must have been susceptible to cancer. Then the government come out and said, well, we're going to pay you for this, or whatever, you know, for your costs. But the uranium that we mined with the vanadium in the 40s for the war effort, and when they exploded the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it came out in the paper that 90% of the uranium that went into the atomic bombs in Japan came from eastern Utah and western Colorado. But they didn't tell us and they didn't pay us for the uranium. So when we got this uranium compensation money, I figured they must have, well, that's what my dad gave to me when he died. So, but there's people that died, but I've been exposed all my life. Even I got a, well I shouldn't tell you, but I got a rock outside here that's got uranium in it, so. And people think, oh it's kind of silly to think that if you've got good air to breath, and I have no idea what causes people to die or why I got cancer of the vocal cords, or anything. I don't know why, but it just come there.

MS: That's one thing that I've heard about people who were exposed to really high levels of that radiation, that maybe that was the case, but…

TE: In the uranium business, high levels of radiation. The radon daughters, if you get into a drift, or a place that has not been mined for a long while, the radon kind of collects in there and there's no air forced down in that to dissipate it, that might be bad. So that was what the inspectors done years ago. They came in, took samples of your mine. And we had some marvelous, marvelous inspectors. They were dedicated and they wanted to help in every way they could to make sure that we didn't get over radiated and they took tests on us and everything. Like I say, the two people that died with cancer at a younger age, I just don't have any reason. One of them was a loader operator, and he spent so much time in the dust so, what news, here I am 80 years old.

MS: There you go.

TE: Cancer of the vocal cords. It might have come from smoking, you know.

(both laugh)

TE: So I don't blame it on nobody but myself.

MS: There you go, it could have been just the same, right? Well this has been wonderful.

(End of interview)

INTERVIEW WITH JACK ERWIN

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: May 23, 2011
LOCATION: Green River, UT

PART 1
MS: So here we are, we're … Mr. Jack Erwin. We're doing the San Rafael Swell Mining Oral History project, and today is … forgot the date.

JE: Twenty-third.

MS: That's why I messed up on coming over here didn't I?

JE: Yeah, (laughs)

MS: 23rd of May, and so what I want to do first is have you give me your name, your full name, and your date of birth.

JE: January the fourth, Jack Erwin, January the fourth, nineteen twenty six.

MS: And we are in Green River.

JE: Green River, Utah.

MS: And why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself, your early history, where you were born and raised.

JE: I was born in Cascade, Montana. And I was raised in Dupuyer, Montana. And I migrated to Green River in nineteen forty-six.

MS: What brought you here?

JE: I come here with seismograph crew. And met my wife and raised her, and we've been together sixty-two years. In the mean time I went to work in the uranium industry at the start of the cold war.

MS: And that was what year?

JE: In the winter of nineteen forty-seven and forty-eight.

MS: And the uranium boom at that time, it was booming right at that time?

JE: You know, it was the start of the boom.

MS: Start of the boom, alright.

JE: The start of the cold war. The Atomic Energy had a procurement program, that's what they call, to buy uranium. And they named the procurement program Circular 5. That was the buying program. They bought uranium but not vanadium at that time. And it moved back and forth, but they were buying the uranium not the vanadium. And they were told, don't in old mines, anything to stock pile uranium.

MS: And now the mine that you started working at, can you tell me a little about that place?

JE: It was the Old Cowboy Claims. It had been operated for years, way back, Madame Curie days, Madame Curie and Pierre. And (laughs) they say that he died with lung cancer, they, from uranium, that's what I understand.

MS: They were handling quite a bit of it, huh?

JE: Well, it was high grade, and by hand. They had, at that time, I think they had sorting tables. And the ore come over the tables and they'd pick it with their hands to get the good stuff and then they sacked it and shipped it back to France it guess it was.

MS: Absolutely. So that leads into one of my first questions. You were talking a little bit about the uranium industry here. Do you have any more that you know about, when it comes to the history of the uranium boom, or the uranium industry here in San Rafael, on the Swell.

JE: On the swell? Well Temple Mountain was probably the first, and then the Camp Venura. Camp Venura was here at four corners. And that was one of the main camps. Temple Mountain, Camp Venura**.** They're both on the reef, on the Swell.

MS: And then, and like you said, you came in the late nineteen forties.

JE: That's right.

MS: Working at the Cowboy… you called it the… what did you call the place you started working at?

JE: At the Old Cowboy Claims. And that's right up South Temple. At that time there was no camp there, there was a bunk house or a little cabin. But in later years they built a bunk house, and you got… I think the picture's there. No that's …

MS: Is that the cabin?

JE: No, no. There's another one.

MS: Oh, okay.

JE: That shows the cook shack and all the men lined up there. Have you saw that?

MS: No, I haven't seen it yet. But, she'll probably bring it out here in a little bit, or we can look at it afterwards.

Mrs. Erwin: It's right there on the counter.

MS: Oh, it's on the counter.

Mrs. Erwin: It's folded up like paper.

MS: There it is! This one right here right? Oh, but this has the people on it. Oh is this the people in the cook shack?

JE: Yeah, that was the miners.

MS: Yeah, I've seen this one.

JE: Oh, okay. That was taken. And that cook shack, I helped build it.

MS: Oh, okay. Are you in this picture?

JE: I might have been, but I can't pick myself out. I looked different at that time.

MS: Gotcha. And this is Temple Mountain?

JE: Temple Mountain. And that's the crew.

MS: Yeah.

JE: And I recognize a few of them.

MS: Well, maybe I'll have you point them out to me.

JE: Alright, this one right here, I couldn't miss this one, with the big jaw, and he was always first in line to get to the table. That's Bob Adams. The Adams's were quite, they were into this mining industry quite a bit. And this is Clarence Adams, and I'm sure that's an Adams there, but I'm not, I don't know which one. And some of these other ones, they look familiar, but I'm not sure.

MS: Wonderful. Great! I think I'm going to be able to use that picture. I've… Dottie Grimes, Emery County Archives? She's in Castledale. She has access to that picture. She has it scanned. So that's the cook shack you built?

JE: I helped built it, I helped build it. I and Gilbert McDougal helped build that for Consolidated Uranium mines, that was Frolley. Frolley, out of Salt Lake.

MS: Okay, so that was out of Salt Lake. I recognize the name.

JE: Continental Mining and Milling.

MS: Okay, okay.

JE: How he got in out there I'll never know, but he did, he got in on the ground floor, and started them old mines to producing.

MS: Excellent. So what I'd like to ask you about now is kind of a typical day in mining. So you probably did a number of different things including construction of mine workings and buildings and structures like that, but did you also work within the mines?

JE: I did.

MS: Why don't you tell me about a day working in the mines? What time did you get up, how you'd make it to the mines, going down into the mines, all, maybe just kind of an overview of your day as a miner.

PART 2

JE: They fed you damn good. No shortage of groceries. But they expect plenty of work out of you. A lot of this work, the mucking in these old mines was done with wheelbarrow, transporting, and carbide lights. And there was a lot of ventilation coming through them old diggings. You

couldn't keep your carbide lights going, so every once in a while you'd be the dark. Now a days they've got Wheat lights, electric … electric … what do you call them?

MS: Batteries?

JE: Batteries, Batteries. Yes. So that was the start of it, and most of it was hand mucking. And at that time they weren't developing any new ore. They was just trying to clean up what was there to get a shipping record of the uranium. That was at… I started out there in '48 after we built the cook shack and stuff. I went in the mines as a hand mucker. That's …

MS: Now was the muck the result of previous mining? Or, because I understand that sometimes they would just pick out the vanadium, right, and leave the uranium, or?

JE: They'd, it was vice versa.

MS: Oh, okay.

JE: At one time they wanted vanadium, and other times uranium. But at the cold war they wanted uranium. So we used them counters there, you had to use them pretty religiously or you shipped stuff that wasn't, you didn't get paid for. If it didn't get paid for, you got stuck for the trucking too. See, there was a trucking bonus on this.

MS: Gotcha, so if… (laughs)

JE: You'd better know what the hell you were doing.

MS: Or you're not going to get paid.

JE: Well, (laughs) yeah, that's true.

MS: That's wonderful. So after you go down into the mine, explain how you even get down there, into the mine, it's like down there.

JE: At the Old Cowboy Claims, it was pretty much level. You just come right out from the cook shack, walk right across the creek there, the dry bed, and into the, there. And it was up a little, and you pushed out of the mines with the wheelbarrows and they had dumps. And you dumped it off into an old steel bin, which trucks could pull under. It wasn't too good a set up. It took forever to load one. But that was it. And a lot of it was dry drilling, no water. And I've, it'd be so dusty that you couldn't hardly see, and then them old carbide lights (laughs) it wasn't good.

MS: It sounds like you breathed in a lot of that dust, huh?

JE: Where could it go? The only thing you could do, was get a lot of men. Get a lot of men in there, so they could get it all breathed up.

MS: The more men, the less you breathed in, huh?

JE: That's right! You utilize it. (laughs)

MS: Right. Let's say… how late would your work day go before you'd head home?

JE: Well, head home? We lived there!

MS: That was part of my question. Wh…

JE: We … that rock, that there? (points to photo) There was a rock house there. About six or eight of us lived in that rock house. It was pretty crude.

MS: And you lived out there for a week at a time?

JE: Oh, probably five days. We'd come home Friday.

MS: And so that would be your house for the majority of the week.

JE: We had a bunkhouse until later we got a wooden bunkhouse. And they built it out of wood, lumber that come from over in Wayne County. And they brought it over there, and you go to cutting it with a hand saw and the water'd run out of it. And a 12 inch board would shrink an inch a month for 14 months.

MS: (laughs) Well, was it Consolidated? They actually built it for you?

JE: Consolidated built the camp.

MS: And you were there from forty…?

JE: I was there from '47 to about '49. Then I left there. And I went to doing something else for a while, but then I went back there later on. When they put the calyx holes in up on the mesa, and that was quite a deal. That was new ore. That wasn't this old stuff. And I get to thinking about that. They sunk, nowadays you've got to have an escape way. So now you sink a two compartment shaft. You've always got one compartment with ladders to climb out in case something goes wrong. At that time they had that calyx hole with a bucket. That'd go down there, but there was no escape way. Now, I got to thinking in there, what the hell if that bucket hung up, and you're down in the bottom? How do you get out? You can't get, there is no way out. What they did, they'd mine off of the calyx hole over a ways and then raise out, from the mine, raise up straight, mine up straight, which is a nasty son of a buck. But that's how it operated, them calyx holes were great! They were just like a gun barrel. In fact you'd drop that bucket so fast that, I believe, it made a hydro static pressure, it was so tight! (laughs) It wouldn't go any faster.

MS: Too much friction from the air from below, oh man. Mr. Ekker was telling me about those, they're called calyx holes?

JE: Calyx. C-A-L-Y-X.

MS: Okay, okay. And he told me they were 36 inches and that's it.

JE: That's right.

MS: That's tiny! That's small! And you would go, and if I'm correct he said they would not only pull the ore out with it, but they would also lower men down in it.

JE: That's right, that was a man trip. But that's what I'm saying! You get down in the bottom there and you're mucking, and you hang that cage up without an escape way, how the hell do you get out? And they had a state plan, safety plan, but they let them go. Everybody operated like that. You'd go out there a couple hundred feet and have to then raise out. But in the meantime, while you're working on all that, there is no way out of there except that.

MS: That's phenomenal. Those stories just floor me, you know.

JE: Well, I got to thinking about that. Now, you no more could do that today than nothing. You gotta at least have an escape way. There wasn't no way to get out really, but through them slick calyx holes.

MS: And I realized just how small it was when we were talking about it, and you mentioned this too. If you think about the Chilean miners that got out…

JE: The what?

MS: The miners in Chile, remember they got stuck?

JE: Yeah.

MS: And that's the size hole they came out of, 36 inches. And you worked in that everyday going down!

JE: Well, there was one calyx hole out there that was two hundred and something feet deep.

MS: That's phenomenal.

(both laugh)

MS: Scary too.

JE: Well, like I say, I can't remember any accidents to speak of. How we ever got by, I don't know.

MS: Maybe miracle!

JE: Just lucky.

MS: A wing and a prayer.

JE: Just luck. Fool's luck.

PART 3

JE: Okay, they had a round cylinder, not in the middle, just round, so it cut the outside circumference, that was on a drill that turned. And that cut the core, cut the outside circumference. Then they'd go down there either with a little charge of dynamite, or a wedge, and break that loose and put a sling around it and pull it out. Have you saw any of them calyx cores?

MS: No.

JE: There are some of them that high, and they're solid rock. And that's how they sunk it. But in this can that cut the outside circumference, there were little tubes and they'd pour BBs in them tubes, and that can would run on them BBs to cut that outside surface. And what was it? Cameron Drilling out of San Diego was the one that drilled them holes.

MS: And so the BBs would be set in the crevice?

JE: They'd be set on the outside, the can would run on them, it was a hard surface, I don't know that much about it. But it would run on them, it would cut that outside. Then they'd go down there and either wedge it to break it loose or put a pop on it and put a sling around it, bring it out.

MS: I bet that took a lot of time.

JE: No it didn't. It went pretty darn fast. It was pretty much a solid sandstone formation that cut good, it held together good. That's when they got in trouble, when they couldn't pull it all. It would break, then they'd have to get down there and hand muck it, and clean it out and stuff like that.

MS: Gotcha, gotcha. Man, those are really fascinating.

JE: That beats the hell out of sinking a shaft! You know, I've done a bunch of that! It's way better than that in my opinion.

MS: Sinking a shaft involves hand drills, am I right?

JE: Well, no, you use air drills, sinkers. But then you gotta muck it, and do a skip, and ship it, and yeah, there's a lot that goes with it.

MS: Well, tell me a little bit about that mine site itself. Who was out there with you typically throughout this…?

JE: Who was out there with me?

MS: Were there any families, or was it just mine workers?

JE: Later on, after this got going good I think there was some families there. But mostly it was just men out there trying to make a living for their family. The families were off some other place, in town or… were all trying to make a living. That's all the hell we were out there for.

MS: So five days a week you were living out there…

JE: Well we would have worked seven-twelve hours if it would have made us any more money. There wasn't contract, it was day's pay. But later, most of the mines went contract. That way if you got more tonnage or better grade you made more money.

MS: So tell me, what was a day's wage back in those days?

JE: I think it was about two and a half an hour.

MS: Which is probably not so bad back then, huh?

JE: We thought it was great! Anything, you know.

MS: Absolutely. Well, Mr. Ekker was telling me a little bit about how they were mining right after the Great Depression and how people were working for food in some situations but…

JE: Yeah, that's exactly right. They were scratching.

MS: Yeah, so that's … I think anything back then would have been good.

JE: Oh yes, yes.

MS: Well, let me see. There's a couple items here… Did you have any training before you started working the mines?

JE: (laughs) Training? No. None period. I'd been around dynamite, done a lot of blasting for the seismograph, that's what I was, a shooter. But as far as working in the mines, no. This was plum new to me. Plum new.

MS: So everything you learned, you learned on the job it sounds like.

JE: I started as a mucker at Temple Mountain, I ended up as the superintendent at Four Corners. So, there's pretty much a history. And I've been all over here, the Colorado Plateau, Yellow Cat, I mined a lot in Yellow Cat. So I… that's about the history of it.

MS: That's great. Now, did you ever own any of your own claims?

JE: I owned some, I leased for years, that's for myself. I know about how broke you can get. (laughs)

MS: (laughs) Well, yeah, that's something that I understand. There's a boom and bust, right?

JE: I won't go into what I….The way I would explain it. But it was. It was a chicken one day, feathers the next. (laughs)

MS: That's a great metaphor. That's a good way to describe it.

JE: I got some other ones, but I won't tell you.

MS: (laughs) Maybe something you won't want me to put on the video.

JE: No, I don't think I, we should.

MS: (laughs) Do you know of any superstitions or folklore that people had in mining culture. Like, as you mined, was there anything that you weren't supposed to do that if you did it would be superstitious or taboo or something? I don't know if you remember anything like that.

JE: It seems like I've heard some. Not so much in this uranium, but in the gold, when the rats start heading for the surface, you'd better go with them! (laughs)

MS: They knew what was happening.

JE: Yeah, something was going bad! (laughs)

MS: Well, how about… let's see. Oh, another thing I wanted to know about, is when you were out there, of course you were living out there for a week, what about food? Where would you get food from?

JE: The cook shack, we had a cook shack after we built the cook shack. Previous to that, the first year I went out there, there was three of us lived in a tent all winter. And we cooked in a Dutch oven, and all ate out of the Dutch oven. So, it wasn't good. It was tough. And for (something) and dries… no, no.

MS: So I guess when the cook shack was built, then you hired a cook?

JE: Oh yeah, oh yeah. The cook and great groceries. This ol' feller right here, (pointing to photo) he was always first in line. First in line, first in time. Right here, Bob Adams. He liked them groceries.

MS: (laughs) That's wonderful. And then you said just the men were out there working, but what about when you went back to town, did you guys socialize as friends?

JE: At the bar.

MS: At the bar, that was the place, huh?

JE: (laughs) That was the bar. That's where you done most of the mining.

MS: At the bar, huh?

JE: At the bar.

MS: (laughs) You come back in after the week's over and go to the bar, huh?

JE: Well, a lot of them did. I …

MS: That's wonderful. Well, I'd really like you to tell me about some of this equipment…

PART 4

JE: Okay. There's an on and off switch on it. Then you turn it over to X100. That's prospect. That will show you any minute little show of uranium. That, and usually this light there was a red light on this when it was working, it'd flash. It'd show you where you were in close. Then, when you got your ore broke, or when you had holes to probe, then you turn it over on X10. That's what you call ship, that's what you would ship to the mill. Okay?

MS: And that's if it read a certain amount, that's what you'd ship?

JE: Yeah, and this here, way over this is X10, and way over, I haven't got it there, way over would be when you got over percentage ore. When you got "umgawa", the real good stuff.

MS: Umgawa, huh?

JE: Umgawa. (laughs) And that there's pretty much the same thing. That's a Uranco, it's a little different.

MS: Is that a different brand?

JE: Uranco is a brand. And it's… no this is an Eberline. This is a good, good machine. It was a little bit more sophisticated than that. That one there, you take it in a wet mine and it'd draw moisture and it wouldn't work. This one here would handle it pretty good. And these here, this here is fixed for probes that you'd put in there and screw down, then you got a long probe on a cable to where you can probe drill holes oh, six foot, or whatever. And that was a pretty good little instrument. But they were pricey.

MS: And so this gave you the capability of actually probing.

JE: Oh, yeah. It would probe holes.

MS: So this would only measure things that were on the surface?

JE: Oh, I don't think there was a place on there for a probe, is there?

MS: Nah, I don't think there is, no.

JE: No, no.

MS: Now this.

JE: That there is a scintillator**.** That there is what the rim runners used. You could pick up, if you got good knowledge of it, you could pick up ore three or four feet underground, or more. It wasn't much good in a mine, because you had too much background. But out in the open, if you just take off walking, if you come to a hot spot, this will go tell you where to look. Kind of like a metal detector. Somewhat like, but it was a pretty pricey outfit.

MS: Okay. When you say a rim runner, these guys would run around the cliff walls more than anything?

JE: The AEC had camps out here. They had, oh, I don't know, maybe three or four camps, and they had several people employed. And some of them were walking them rims with this type of machine, maybe better, maybe not quite as good, looking for hot spots, and it was all mapped and everything, to show the where the miners to go, and all such as that.

MS: So where they hit the hot spots they would…

JE: It would read on there, on that. You could adjust it. Right here.

MS: Oh, right on this adjuster there. Okay.

JE: Zero, then you get over here, then you got, when it got way hot just cut it back to where you could really define what you were looking for.

MS: Okay, okay. That's neat, that's neat. I didn't expect to see some of these today, this is great! I'm excited.

JE: (laughs) I've got all kinds of stuff, and I'm going to keep it.

MS: Good, good.

PART 5

MS: We're good to go, so ok.

JE: At Temple Mountain, the last year I was there, the AEC come in and oiled that road. Previously to that, it was, you could lose a car in some of those pot holes. As quick as they oiled it, I quit and moved to Four Corners (laughs).

MS: And then at Four Corners, what did you start doing there?

JE: Okay, I wanna, I went on contract mining for … I'm trying to think of what you call the name of that. I was at six mine anyhow at Four Corners, on contract, making money, and I like that.

MS: Better than your day's wage.

JE: Way the hell better. And I never was satisfied with day's pay after that.

MS: And so, in Four Corners, you were there from when to when?

JE: I was there about five years consistently. I would say, starting about fifty-two, until fifty-six, fifty-seven, something like that.

MS: Okay, okay. Fifty-two to fifty-six. And then after that, you said you went somewhere else, or is that the end?

JE: Okay, and then after that, I went to Yellow Cat. But in the meantime, I went to the Henry Mountains.

MS: Is there any chance you worked with the Ekkers?

JE: No, but I worked adjoining them. Not that one, but other ones. There are lots of Ekkers.

MS: And now, tell me about Henry Mountains. What kind of stuff did you do in there? Is that where you were doing your own?

JE: I was a leaser. A leaser trying to make a buck.

MS: So you lease out your claims to other people, tell me how that works?

JE: No, leased them to me, and I paid them a royalty to work their property.

MS: Then you would also make a cut of whatever you pulled out.

JE: They'd get about five percent of it.

MS: Now did you have people working for you at that time?

JE: I did sometimes, yes.

MS: Tell me about how many people and how that worked.

JE: Just off and on, I never did work many at that time. Probably two or three maybe. Mostly they come from King Mike, up on the other side of Blanding, there was a Navajo recruiter for the miners. You just call King Mike and say I need a miner, he'd say, "I'll get him up there to you, but you got to pay his bus fare." Well, don't send the bus fare to the miner, 'cause he won't show up! (laughs)

MS: He'd take the bus fare and run, huh?

JE: He'd take the bus fare and run. (laughs)

MS: Okay, so you had a couple guys working for you there.

JE: Oh, off and on, yes.

MS: So, around fifty-six, I understand, or at least at the late fifties, that's when the uranium boom kind of slumped.

JE: It really got to going, the cold war was really into it, they wanted it, but they never did pay much money. They were always tight with the money, the AEC. That was one of our problems. So the only way you could really do any good was to get into a vanadium property, where you could ship uranium and vanadium and the vanadium would pay your mining expenses or somewhere close. So that's how come I went to Yellow Cat. It was a good vanadium property and some of it was good uranium. Vanadium would run about ten to one to the uranium.

MS: And when you say ten to one, that ratio is…

JE: Okay, if you run ten hundreds, then your vanadium would probably run one percent. Okay?

MS: Gotcha. That helps me understand a little better now. Okay. Now, um, when would you say that more or less, because I know it hit an end point. Was it in the end of the seventies when it kind of?

JE: It went to pot with Three Mile Island. Went down the tubes. It was forty two dollars. I was running these mines out here for Atlas, as quick as that happened, they started pulling in their horns.

MS: So people were in fear of…

JE: Well the price, the economics, that's what it all boiled down to.

MS: So, yeah, yeah, interesting. Well, now I'd like to know, maybe, just one or two stories that you can remember that happened in the mines. That may have been one of the most frightening moments that you'd ever experienced as a miner.

(long pause)

JE: I'm thinking…

MS: Maybe you were never frightened! You guys are tough!

JE: Actually, it was a pretty safe operation. Really, you know, you kinda had to look after yourself, don't do something stupid, but it was pretty safe, I can't really… I never was in a cave in. Never. I've had slabs fall, out of the rims that, during the night, the tommy knockers were working, but I never have been in a cave in or anything like that. And I've been in all kinds of diggings. So, I can't remember.

MS: You, the operations were relatively safe then.

JE: I would say they were.

MS: No close calls?

JE: This here, most of them were sandstone Morrison Formation. Good back, there was some bad situations, but most of it was man created.

MS: Gotcha, dumb mistakes maybe.

JE: Dumb mistakes, yes.

MS: Well, how about, what's one of your fondest memories of mining the mines, mining uranium out in these mines?

JE: Well, it was at Yellow Cat. The AEC come in and drilled. They spent a bunch of money drilling, and they drilled holes, and when they'd drill them, then they'd put a pipe in them and put a marker on top of them with the number of hole. Well, I found some holes, some pipes like that and they had numbers, so I went to the AEC in Grand Junction and got the logs on them holes. And some of them were pretty damn good! But they were way back off under a ledge. So I finally got up the nerve and I drove to some of them holes. And I drove about four hundred feet of drift. I didn't have the money, I done it on a wing and a prayer. And I got out there, and got close to where the hole was, and see that wall there? I had hit a wall like that, brilliant yellow. It was just as yellow, I come out of there, my clothes would just be covered after drilling that day. I wouldn't have took a million dollars for it. I really thought I had her made. I set up the next day and went to drilling it, drilling directly into it, and I went that far (indicated with fingers about an inch) and I was out of it. I had one of them counters with a probe on it, but I didn't have nothing! I lost it all that quick, after driving all that drift. But I turned directly right out of that stope and I got into a tree that, I mean it was good, it was good. High vanadium, high uranium, and I thought I'd really had her made, never see another poor day. I was broke two months later.

(Both laugh)

JE: So I've been around the horn.

MS: Definitely, you've had your experiences.

JE: I have!

MS: I find that it's probably, uh, more common for people to say that they, to not say that they struck it rich, but to say that they had their days but that's about it.

JE: I had a partner that was a promoter. He was known all over this area, all over. He was a promoter, he was great, but he would bounce a check. And he bounced a bunch of them. Ted knows him. And he was my partner, and he worried me to death. He says, whenever we get a settlement, that's from the mill, he says we'll pay ourselves first, we won't let them other guys worry.

(both laugh)

MS: That's how he worked, huh?

JE: That's how he worked. He ended up well fixed. He went bankrupt three times. He ended up on silk stocking row in Salt Lake.

MS: Go figure. After three bankruptcies, huh?

JE: He left a lot of tracks, but he, I don't know, he sure worried me.

MS: That's neat. That's, uh, that in and of itself is a gamble to go in with somebody, huh?

JE: Well, there was advantage to it, he could get stuff that I never could. 'Cause he could talk his way in it. He could talk his way out of jams that I, I'd be in bad trouble.

MS: Well, tell me about some of the machinery that you used out there. You told me about the Calyx holes, and the …

JE: The Calyx holes, we had a little old hoist on them, run on probably a … we had one, had with a Ford industrial engine on it, a little hoist for a hundred and some foot shaft, that it was great. It

was one of the better ones out there. There was another in my outfit that had a Plymouth engine on it, with a hydromatic transmission. They let them operate with it, it done pretty good. That's the kind what we used to pull the ore. We used a dump sheet to dump it. Did you know about a dump sheet?

MS: I didn't.

PART 6

MS: Okay, so tell me about the dump sheet.

JE: Okay, on them buckets, or on them cans, there's a can right out there on the back of that dump truck. The cans, they had a chain on them about that long, with a round piece of iron, heavy iron on that chain. It'd pull up through that head frame, then you had a lever in your hoist house**.** You'd tip that, there's a sheet there on a hinge, big heavy sheet of iron, tip it over, and it had a notch in the middle of it. You'd tip it over, let the bucket down to where that chain would catch in that dump sheet, and then the whole damn thing would tip over and dump it. Then you'd lift it back up, throw the dump sheet out of the way and back you go on the gravel. And you got so you could do it pretty fast. That's how you dump the ore.

MS: And that's where it would go into, um, an actual truck that would take it out, or is that?

JE: You'd dump it in a pile or in a truck, and then to the mill or whatever.

MS: Gotcha, then it goes to the mill or whatever from there.

JE: And that was a dump sheet. And it was, for a poor boy set up, it was pretty darn good! I don't know how you could do any better, you could get all this fancy equipment and everything, and I don't know whether it'd be a bit better.

MS: There you go. Well, how about some of the drilling that you did ….

JE: Okay, at the time, we're talking about the Cowboy Claims, they used a Ingersoll, uh, Gardner Denver 65. That didn't have a water end on it. It was dry drill. It didn't have what it wasn't set up to do, for dry drill. Then when it got more sophisticated up on the mesa, then they come out with a JR38. That was Ingersoll Rand, that was a water machine built right into it, had they called them a New York head. Fancy! You'd turn on the throttle and the water, okay. And that's how we drilled. And that was the popular machine at that time.

MS: And whatever fell you would muck, right? That's what you would…

JE: Then you, yes. But they got slushers. Did you hear of them?

MS: Never heard.

JE: Okay, they had two drillings on them, operated on air, with two hands and a cable off each, three inch cable, running through blocks, way down there, and they'd pull the muck up there and you'd have a ramp with a hole it, and the shuttle car would drive in under that ramp. Then you'd pull that muck ahead and it'd fall down into that shuttle car. That's a slusher.

MS: A slusher. Okay. And the shuttle car would take it out.

JE: The shuttle car would take it out to where the bucket come back down and set in a pocket. They called it a pocket. Then they go up there and dump into that skip or that bucket, and ring that bell and away she'd go!

MS: So the bell would indicate to the hoist man…

JE: To the hoist man when to pull it.

MS: That's great, that's amazing. Can you remember any other equipment that you used that was…

JE: Oh, I got all kinds of…

MS: Did you ever drive any of the tractors for moving the ore?

JE: Oh, all kinds. Everything.

MS: Like what kind of tractors did you drive?

JE: We had, uh, terra tracks, uh, Allis Chalmers, all kinds. We used every piece of junk you could get a hold of.

MS: And did you learn to work all those different pieces of machinery?

JE: I had to.

MS: Yeah? As a supervisor, or as …

JE: No, I wasn't a supervisor at that time, I was just one of the peons. I was on the contract, and I had to do what had to be done to make the contract pay, if you didn't produce no muck, you didn't make no money. We had a contract where we split, we split it up amongst all the guys who were on the contract. At one time I think it was six out there. And we took some pretty good paydays. But all the hands could do everything, you know.

MS: Everybody was trained to do everything?

JE: Well, they wanted to make money, that's what we were there for. And insurance, I think the company held the insurance, I can't remember, out of our settlement checks. I think they were smart enough to do that. But I do know that they paid in, they held out our social security and all that, I know that. I found that out in later years, for us! If they hadn't we would never paid it.

MS: Right, right.

JE: We'd have brought it up here to Ray's.

MS: Ray's, is that the local bar?

JE: Yes!

(both laugh)

PART 7

MS: Okay, I'm ready.

JE: In 1982 I think it was, or along in that area, Three Mile Island. The price of ore went down to the point they were shutting down. They shut down. They kept me around to look after things for quite some time. Then I went down on the Big Indian for a while, and it just gradually faded out. Then I didn't, let's see, I didn't do no more mining. Not after that.

MS: What did you end up doing?

JE: Well, I farmed a little, I done everything, I've done everything at one time or another.

MS: And so that was your exit from uranium mining.

JE: Right.

MS: It really hasn't gone up since then has it?

JE: It took a jump to get quite a bit higher, then it dropped down again. Now, what it is today, I can't tell you.

MS: Well, is there anything else that I haven't asked, that maybe I left out in my questions that you can think of about the mining industry here on the San Rafael Swell that might be different from the other places you've worked here or off of the Swell?

JE: Oh, okay. I will tell you this. This is one of the better places to work. I've been told this by, did you ever hear of Geno Sacramento? His wife just died. He was one of the main men on this long capture. He told me I was very fortunate that I worked in damp mines, that there wasn't dust. Not a great amount. But I did go over on the Colorado Plateau for Sun Oil Company or Corderro Mining as a boss for a while and it was dusty as hell. And you put calcium chloride on it to keep the dust down, and you just fight it all the time. But out here there is always little seeps, seeps of water that would keep it kind of damp. And you could keep good roads, and you wouldn't notice the dust so bad, there was some I'm sure. But that's what got the uranium miners in trouble. That and other stuff.

MS: So you have health problems right now.

JE: My lung, I've lost my lungs, but I'm not no kid, you know. And I smoked for quite some time. I've been quit a long time.

MS: But they suspect that it had something to do with the ventilation dust.

JE: That's how come the AEC, all this (points to oxygen tank), they're supplying.

MS: I understand that at least some people have a good one on the AEC, or the AEC has been taking care of folks pretty well.

JE: The Labor Department. I feel like they're doing, uh, just about everything they can for us. And, uh, probably a lot of this was self-inflicted. You know, if you don't take care of yourself right.

MS: Right. Well do you, um, do you know of many other folks around here that did mining or have they all passed on?

JE: They're all over here, and my friends are all over here in the graveyard. There are very few of them around at my age that mined with me. Very few. In fact, I don't know of any! The Ekkers, they're younger, you know.

MS: Yeah, as a matter of fact that's been my experience too. I can't find anybody else who's still around.

JE: (laughs)

MS: Which makes me really happy to have found you!

JE: I don't know how come I've survived so long. I've had everything in the world go wrong with me and I'm still doing pretty good for, considering.

MS: Absolutely. Do you know much about any other folks that have had health problems because of their exposure to the radiation?

JE: Lots of them.

PART 8

JE: Okay, Frolley for some reason or other got this offer from some Canadian outfit. So he forced his leasers out of there. And American Leduc, did you ever hear that name? Come in there and bought the mine that I was on. American Leduc, and it was a Canadian outfit, they bought it.

MS: And they were the ones that were running Four Corners?

JE: No, they did Temple Mountain. None of them were involved in Four Corners.

MS: So who was it that was involved in Four Corners?

JE: Okay, Brandy Bottle Bronson from Monticello, uh, Alt West, John Post, Frank Hovus**,** all them.

MS: And so they were independent claim holders?

JE: They had the lease, and then they subleased it. And that's where I fit in, I had a sublease, and that's where we had it. We called it a split-check. They took the big portion and we split the rest.

MS: You got the small portion, right?

JE: (laughs)

MS: And did all the work.

JE: We split it.

MS: Now does that mean you owned a lot of your own equipment?

JE: We had to own it all! They didn't furnish nothing except the ground to work on, or the mines. They didn't furnish no equipment. So we had to make sure we kept it running.

MS: So what all equipment did you own? Or did you guys own it as a group?

JE: As a conglomerate, we all owned it together. We got a few bucks we might upgrade a little. We had a Terra Track loader and two or three old cleaving machines and some young buggies that were built in Monticello, two of them, and that's what we had, and some big sledge hammers.

MS: Those are important too, huh?

JE: Damn important. And we produced a lot of muck. And there aren't a one of them guys alive today. They must have worked themselves to death.

MS: Except for you!

JE: I don't, I've never got it figured, I don't know how come, how come, how come.

MS: (laughs) Well, I'm glad you're here and I'm glad you're taking the time to share this with me. I really appreciate it.

JE: Well, I hope that it's, it makes it interesting.

MS: Oh, I think it will. You know all of this is just going to be so valuable for the future.

JE: Well, I'm glad.

MS: And it has yet to be recorded, so we're lucky to have you here to be able to help us out.

PART 9 (Visit to the equipment shed)

JE: This here is what went on the machine, for, that's a jackleg.

MS: And you said that would go on the machine, what would it do?

JE: That'd force the machine in the hole so you could drill, put the pressure on it. That's what you call a jackleg. … Now these two went together, so you had to pack them both.

MS: This is the actual air hammer?

JE: This is an air hammer to Swede Lion, built in Sweden.

MS: And so where would you get the power to actually power it?

JE: Air

MS: But how would you pump…?

JE: Compressor.

MS: Compressor, so you have generators?

JE: Probably diesel driven.

MS: Gotcha. About how heavy do you think that is?

JE: Pick it up.

MS: All right.

JE: The two of them together. They go together.

MS: Woah! Holy Cow! How did you pick that up? (laughs)

JE: Well you have to pack them.

MS: Well you did, huh?

JE: Put them on your shoulders.

MS: Wow! That's amazing. You want me to put it back in there for you, or you got it?

JE: No, I'm going to leave it out.

MS: Okay. I'll move back so you can… you got it?

JE: Oh, yeah. (something) like hell to pack it all day. … so I ain't got no can. I can't do nothing for you there.

MS: That's all right.

JE: Let's see, what else have I got? …. Got the hard hats.

MS: And that's where you'd attach the lights to them, right?

JE: Yeah, wheat lamp. I got a charger. I haven't got a wheat lamp.

MS: Is that it right there?

JE: These are the little chargers. Each miner had one of them at the house, you come in and there's a place on your head piece that fit right on in here and turn, and charge it overnight and then the next day you'd have a light all day.

MS: That's for your wheat lamp right? And why's it called a wheat lamp?

JE: I think.

MS: Okay.

JE: But they work real good.

MS: Well…

JE: That there's a long old probe up there. Probing hundred foot holes.

MS: The tubing up there?

JE: In that black plastic.

MS: So it's made out of plastic.

JE: Well, the cable is in that plastic hose so it don't get damaged.

MS: And about how far can you probe with that bit up there?

JE: I could probe a hundred and twenty foot hole.

MS: Oh, wow. So you had a diesel engine running the compressor, that would…

JE: To run that, it would have to have a hundred and ten pounds all the time.

MS: And that's your air hammer that would connect to that end up there. And it would run this bottom, this is the bit, right? The head?

JE: That's what?

MS: That's the bit on the end there?

JE: No.

MS: What would you call the end of that down there on the orange shaft?

JE: That's the foot.

MS: That's called the foot.

JE: That hooked in the ground to where you could, it's got a control on it to where you could put pressure on that to force your drill in to hold it up so you weren't holding it, after you got it there.

MS: So that's kind of a stand for the drill, called the foot. And that's your drill.

JE: That's a Swede Lion.

MS: Swede Lion. And then, what did the end of the drill bit look like?

JE: They had different ones. They had a chiseled bit and they had a star bit, and we used them both.

MS: About how long were they?

JE: How long was the bit? The bit was just a little short, and they'd knock off, then you'd put them back on the steel. The steel would, you could get them in different lengths, and it was called Fargistoll, that was a Swede steel. The very best. And you put these bits on, and if you got them too small, you'd have trouble loading your hole. So you ought to kinda watch what you were doing, keep a pretty good sized bit in, cut a pretty good hole. At least an inch and three eighths.

MS: And after you get the hole in there, what would you do?

JE: Then when you got it all drilled out, your face or whatever, then you'd load it, and shoot it.

MS: And then the explosion would cause …?

JE: Cause fragmentation of the rock, to where you could muck it.

MS: And then you muck it out.

JE: Muck it out. Then go at it again. Just as hard as you can go.

(End of interview)

INTERVIEW WITH MERVIN MILES

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: May 24, 2011
LOCATION: Orangeville, UT

PART 1

MS: We're here doing the San Rafael Mining Oral History. My name is Michael Searcy, and I'm here with Mr. Mervin Miles. And today is the 24th of May, 2011, and we're here in Orangeville, Utah. If you will first state your full name.

MM: Mervin S. Miles.

MS: And your date of birth?

MM: (laughs) Month and all?

MS: Month and all. Day, month, and year.

MM: March 22nd 1931.

MS: Okay. Now we'll start with a little bit about yourself, and where you grew up.

MM: I was born right here in Orangeville, on the corner of 1st East and 5th South in a two room log house. And I've lived here most of my life. I went to school here, grade school and went to Ferron through high school, graduated in 1949. Worked in the timber business here for Cox brothers' saw mill for a few years. Went to Utah State University for a year, attended Carbon College, that is what it was known by then, for a year. From there in 1952, I got the opportunity to serve my country in the Korean War, and I spent about a year and a half in Korea. What an opportunity it was for me to serve my country. In 1954, I came back, and there's things about the war that I just don't talk about. And in 1954 I came back to Orangeville, in the same log house. While I was there, my father and I went to the saw mill and got out timber, and in 1956, about the time I started for the BLM, I built them a home. I built them a nice modern home, and so they lived there. And in 1957 I met my eternal companion, Sharon Gale Defreeze, and we were married on May 25th, 1957 in the Manti Temple. From there I started for BLM, working in various jobs. The first job I had was operating heavy equipment and hauling cedar posts to build allotment fences so they could control the range management in the BLM. From there I worked for BLM for about 36 years. I retired from BLM in 1989, June, about June 30th 1989. And then the next Monday I started for the, to work for the LDS Church. Worked for the Church for 5 and a half years. Worked for my brother-in-law for a while in Huntington, and then we were called to serve a mission in Salt Lake City. My wife and I served this mission in 1997 and 1998. While there the doctors found a problem, a heart problem, and so I had open heart surgery, and that has now been 13 years ago. So that's a brief sketch of my life. (laughs)

MS: And you're healthy and vibrant now right? (laughs)

MM: And so all the time we lived in Salt Lake, working for BLM for a couple years, I worked on the west desert, Calleo and Ibapah country, then moved back here and worked for BLM, and the Department of Interior for about 36 years. So that's a quick sketch of my life.

MS: Sounds like we served our missions at the same time.

(both laugh)

MS: That was my first mission, I hope to serve more.

MM: When was it?

MS: ’97 and ’98.

MM: We served a mission in the Family History Center in Salt Lake City. And we came back home after the surgery, and we’ve lived here ever since. So, my life, from where I was born, I moved a block north, and that’s where I still live.

(both laugh)

MS: And many places in between. Korea, Salt Lake, and elsewhere.

MM: Many places in between….Yeah. I’ve been to DC several times, trained with BLM.

MS: It sounds very exciting. That was a great introduction. That helps me know a little more about you and where you come from. What can you tell us about your work with the BLM, in particular in and around the San Rafael Swell? Kind of some of your job duties, things like that?

MM: Well, for the most part, all these 36 years probably 30 of them were spent in and around the San Rafael Swell, or in the Price area, Range Creek and that area. But for the most part, I spent my time in the San Rafael Swell. And as I mentioned before I started to drive truck hauling cedar posts to make allotment fences to control the livestock and grazing patterns. From there then I went back to operating heavy equipment for them. For the first ten years we roamed around through the San Rafael Swell, building reservoirs, making roads, just pushing fence line, making fences, allotment fences and this type of stuff. And in 1964, I hope I get these dates close (laughs), I transferred from BLM to the Job Corps which was Castle Valley Job Corps, and supervised crews then. Well, I got them dates wrong, it was 1969 when I transferred back to BLM from Job Corps and moved to Salt Lake City. And we lived there two years. In 1971 I transferred back to the BLM in Price. And during this time I…

PART 2

MM: As I recall the time 1957 or ’58, we started to build a road from Justensen Flats down across Eagle Canyon, Secret Mesa, to Ghost Rock into the head of Sinbad. And we did accomplish that. And this road was later used as a trail through for the survey to come, for the people to get access to it to survey and eventually build I-70, both lanes of traffic of I-70. While we were building in the Justensen Flat area, it was the first time that I ever went to Copper Globe, and that was either in 1957 or 8 or there about. And we had a little military Jeep in the camp, about a 1942, or ’45 jeep. And we did drive that down across to Justensen Flat, into Devils Canyon and up to Globe Flat. Between Devils Canyon and Globe Flat, the ledge hung out until the sides of the jeep rubbed lightly on the rock to get around. But we did go into Copper Globe, and what a marvelous area of history this is.

MS: Were you able to go when the mine was in operation?

MM: No, what they did when I was there and thereafter, was mainly their assessment work to hold their claims. I didn't check this out, but I believe at one time that was patented land. Now I'm not totally sure of that. But many, many times I went to Copper Globe and it was just, the history there is just outstanding. I did see people working there, spent a lot of time around there later. Now any questions you might have.

MS: You described for me earlier, but maybe you can describe for me again what you mean by patented lands.

MM: Well, after so many years of a claim, now this is the way I understand it and it may not be right, after so many years that they have a claim and keep it active and do the assessment work it can go to patented land. Now that may or may not be so, I don't know. But I understood through talk of the BLM that that was patented land. But I do believe now that it reverted back to public land.

MS: Okay, that's helpful. You also worked with the BLM in different capacities, and one of those that was associated with some of the mines, some of the uranium mines, had to do with safety.

MM: Yeah, and I don't know the years.

MS: That's fine.

MM: I've forgotten all the dates, and I didn't have sense enough to write them all down or take pictures. I was involved in protection, environmental protection. And after '76 I was greatly involved in land use, did a lot of compliance work with BLM at that time. In the early years, you know, prior to '76 anybody could just about do whatever they wanted. But we had good working relations with most of those people, knew a lot of them by name, that type of thing.

MS: So tell us a little bit about that compliance work. What did the BLM require? And like you said, after '76 it changed a little bit. What were some of the changes that were made?

MM: Prior to '76 anybody could go out and make a road here, drill a hole there, or open a mine, but after '76 then it was a permit process, that you had to have a permit. The permit and the stipulations were issued then they had a surface protection specialist and I worked in that capacity for a lot of years making sure that they complied with the stipulations that was presented there. And most people were really good to work with. You know, they cooperated fairly good. There was always exceptions, but most of the time they was super good to work with.

MS: That was going to be my next question….if you ever ran into somebody who ran when they saw you?

(both laugh)

MM: Yes, they did, but we … you know, you can go out there and you can hinder a person, or you can work with people and get so much more accomplished than if you go out there and say, this is the way it's going to be. So, I enjoyed working with the people and got along real well with them. The knowledge that I gained in construction while I was running heavy equipment helped a great deal in this because I could go out and talk to them and we were talking on the same level. I could operate equipment, you know, if they didn't understand what I wanted I could get on a piece of equipment and show them what I wanted. It was interesting.

MS: So as someone working with compliance, give us a specific example, if you could, of something they would build or do that they had to abide by BLM rules after '76.

MM: For a road instance, you know, it would have to be at certain specs, and anything they did out there, such as an oil well or anything, they would build a road into it. And we tried to keep the drainage in the drainages that they were in, when they were complete, unless it was a productive well, then they would have to dry up the pit that they had for the settlings, and they would have to rehab it back to as near normal as possible. So in the protection, we tried to put everything as back to normal as possible. But a road is one thing you never put back. It always shows. You can put a well site back and the only thing that will show is the stand pipe with information on it. But a road for some reason is hard to rehab back. But in later years we had them take a backhoe and bring all those berms back up to the original contour. So it helped, but you can still see the scars out there.

MS: Now you also said that you had associated with a lot of these miners and got to be friends with some of them. Do you remember some of their names? And where they were working?

MM: Unfortunately I don't remember where they was working, but I talked to them, some of the claims people at Copper Globe, and knew personally the guy that was at Lucky Strike. That was Bill Hannert, he worked here, he lived here in Orangeville, married an Orangeville girl. And I knew him personally and worked with him. As far as a lot of the miners, I didn't meet them. Some of the guys that had the leases, I met with and talked to, this type thing. But a lot of the miners, I never did talk to them.

MS: Now, could you describe the process, say for example someone wanted to get a lease on BLM land, what would the process be for them to do that and to keep that? Because I understand, and some of these rules still stand today that you have to do so much work assessment. So could you give us an overview of how that worked? Say, if somebody came to you and said, I want a lease this area on BLM land for mining.

MM: If somebody wanted, and I don't know exactly how they stake a claim now days, but if somebody wanted to do something out there on public land, the first thing they had to do was come to the office and tell us primarily what they wanted to do, or show us a map. And then we went from there whether it was an EA that had to be prepared. The permit eventually might be issued. And then the surface protection and that kind of stuff come in. If the permit was issued and they had the right to go out there and do whatever project they wanted, then we would supervise as much as we could be there. We was spread pretty thin. But we would supervise what they were doing until the job was complete to our satisfaction. As far as staking a claim, I don't know too much, I never got into that end of it.

MS: But they would definitely for anything they were building or doing on the land, they had to be, they had to get permitted by your office.

MM: After 1976 it had to be permitted.

MS: Now, from my understanding of the uranium mining industry in particular, there were booms and busts and things like that. So you've been in this area for quite a while, so what have you seen that have been trends with people coming in and leaving and things like that when it comes to that trend?

MM: Back in the early 50s, the big trend was right around 1950 some time, '51, '2. That was the big boom years as I remember it. And then up into the 60s it kind of tapered off because the uranium wasn't as good a grade in some areas as it was others. Now Temple Mountain was a real hot spot, and also Lucky Strike and Tomsich Butte, Hidden Splendor. In this area were probably the big mines of the area. Although there was hundreds and hundreds of prospectors that went out

and dug just a little rat hole in the hill, and a lot of those still show today of where they went in and prospected.

MS: I had a gentleman yesterday, Jack Erwin was showing me some of his equipment that he used. While you were out there did you see a lot of these probe holes where they would actually probe for uranium?

MM: I didn't. I seen them doing a lot of drilling. And this was all prior to '76. I seen them do some drilling and some three foot core holes drills, and some of those cores that they took out are still out there such as Temple Mountain, and they're still there. But as far as the working materials in the mine, I didn't get underground hardly at all. And we were advised in later years not to go to the mines on account of the radon gases.

MS: What do you know in relation to the history of the medical issues associated not only with the radon, but radioactive…

MM: I really don't, that's not in my field. I don't know anything about it other than it could be harmful to your health and we were advised not to go into those old workings by our supervisors.

MS: You mentioned earlier too that you got to see some of these folks drilling, and I've been fascinated with both Jack Erwin and Ted Ekker describing to me how they would actually go about drilling these calyx holes, the three foot holes. Could you describe what you saw when you saw them doing these and what it was like?

MM: Well, it wasn't like today's modern drilling rigs, but it was a rig similar, and it would go down so far, and never seen the bit, but it would cut a rim around as it drilled and then they would lift that core maybe three feet or something out or even maybe more than that. But it would break up in pieces as it came out. And I did see that they're still some laying out there.

MS: Some of the big cores, the three foot cores?

MM: They're mainly at Temple Mountain. Or I should say, the last I was there they was there.

(both laugh)

MS: Yeah, I hear they're just massive cores just laying around.

MM: Oh they are. At the end of MK Tunnel they did the same thing. When they did that defense, that was all a matter of defense. And the cores, some of those cores are out there and they're solid sandstone. There's no minerals other than sand in them.

MS: I was told that's why it's pretty easy to cut because it's that…

MM: The sandstone is easy to cut.

MS: Well, tell me a little bit about what you've seen, because you've visited these places for quite a long time, not only as an employee of the BLM but also as a member of this community, and you go out there a lot. Have you seen any degradation in terms of the preservation of some of these mine sites? Or do you see any dangers involved with letting the public go visit them?

MM: There are some dangers out there because there's the tailing piles and they're all over. Tailing piles are all over in the San Rafael Swell. Of course there are some health dangers whenever you get around the tailings or get around the portals of the radon gas. And a lot of that in the drainages, and it's draining into the systems, ends up in the big rivers. And a lot of that has

been rehabilitated and controlled. And BLM's done a lot to, or Oil, Gas and Mining has did a lot to control that. But there's still a hazard when a thunderhead comes across and a gully washer, and a lot of those tailings materials get in the waterways.

PART 3

MS: Some of the questions I ask the miners were, what is it like to be out there on the Swell? And especially what was it like out there mining? Some of these folks would say that they would go out for, you know, a week at a time. So they'd stay out during the week and then come in on the weekends. Do you remember who you would see out there? Were there ever women or children or was it generally just the men, the miners out there working?

MM: For the most part, it was a lot just the miners. But, for instance, at Tomsich Butte there was a school house at that site, and the few kids that was there, they did have a school for them. So, they would some of them would be out there for months at a time. They would come into Green River for supplies, and then go back.

MS: So there was a small community right there at the mine?

MM: Well there was just a tent house here, an old trailer there, and whatever all over right there by the Hondoo Arch, next to the Muddy Creek. People just camped wherever they could camp. If it happened to be a family where the kids had the opportunity to go to school at that particular site.

MS: Do you remember in regards to the people being out there, was there kind of a season that they would be out there? In the winter time would they come back into town?

MM: Mostly it was a year round thing, cause they was inside mining, you know, and so the weather didn't bother them much. And what they had, they just put it on truck and haul it out. At Hidden Splendor, as I recall there wasn't a school house at that point. However there was an airport there, and they flew a lot of people in and out of there. Now whether it was with the company, or who it was, I don't know.

MS: So Hidden Splendor actually had an airstrip?

MM: Yeah, it's still there today. The mine is under the big butte and the air strip is right there today.

MS: Well, maybe I can ask you about, because obviously you know more about these places than a lot of people I'll be interviewing, because I had a hard time actually finding folks who worked at these places, they've all passed on. But obviously you know about some of what was going on at these specific areas. So you've told me a little bit already about Tomsich Butte, and Hidden Splendor. Tell me a little about Lucky Strike. You said that you've been out there a number of times.

MM: I've been out there a number of times. There was an extensive drilling program that took place up on Link Flat which is right up on top of the big high ledge above Lucky Strike. And the guy I mentioned before, Bill Hannert, he was the one that was involved, and he had a couple of trucks hauling out of the Lucky Strike. But he did an extensive drilling program up on Link Flat to try to determine what kind of ore beds they had there. He did not do any core drilling. Now,

this was all prior to ’76. But, Lucky Strike, I was never there to meet a lot of the people, I was there and met a few, but to talk with the miners, I never did talk with them to any extent.

MS: Mostly with the leases, the ones that were leasing…

MM: Yes, I met them most of the time.

MS: Now how about Little Susan, are you familiar with Little Susan?

MM: I’m not familiar with the name Little Susan. I think I’d probably be familiar with the mine itself. We probably called it something else. But Little Susan Mine, I don’t know exactly where they call Little Susan Mine. Because I think it was called something else when I might have been there.

MS: Right, right. You’ve told me a lot about Copper Globe, what do you know about Copper Globe and its history, and some of what was going on out there and maybe how they processed the ore, because I hear that they actually processed it on site, they did some smelting?

MM: I was never out there when they was processing the ore, but they did have a smelter there, and it’s since been torn down and all gone. But in ’57 or ’58 you could go out there and pick out some of the clinkers where they had fired up this smelter. Now even today, and well I should say, the last time I was there, there was still the little tiny small smelter in a little shed there, still there intact the last time that I was there. And the big wood pile, which was much larger than it is now, not because they used a lot of wood there, because the public was going there and hauling it off. And so, BLM had to put a stop to that. But there was a larger smelter there at the time. There was three portals there at the time plus the big shaft that’s been dug. But some of the portals are completely covered over. And the other, the water runs down in it now and it’s almost full. So it will take care of itself. The thing that I think we want to see and especially for Emery County is to have Copper Globe restored and keep it exactly the same way it is now. I think that’s very essential just for the history of Emery County.

MS: Now I’m trying to think of the other, any of the other ones that we haven’t talked about.

MM: When I’ve talked to you, you’ve never mentioned the Blue Vein Line.

MS: No, I haven’t.

MM: And that could be where the Little Susan Mine is, I’m not sure though. But there’s the Blue Vein mine in much the same area as in the Red Canyon, it was actually around Tan Seep and Rod Valley and the head of Sinbad, not far from Lucky Strike and those mines. And there was a lot of mining done there. Now how much ore was actually hauled out of Blue Vein, I don’t know. Now whether that’s Little Susan Mine, or Little Susan could be up near Lucky Strike. There’s a canyon that leads off to the left of Lucky Strike and it may be there, I’m just not familiar with the name Little Susan.

MS: Okay. How about Temple Mountain? You’ve said you’ve been out there a few times?

MM: First time I come by there was in 1956, there was quite a village there and there’s one little place where there’s just a little rat hole, prospect holes all over the place. And the thing that amazed me when we drove by, and this was with the BLM, we drove by and everybody had a rifle or a sidearm or something of that sort. And I don’t know whether they was claim jumping or whatever. But for some reason most of the people were carrying some kind of a weapon. I don’t know why.

MS: Trying to keep people from getting their claims, maybe intimidate them, don't come on to….

MM: I guess.

(both laugh)

MM: A lot of these little rat holes now have been covered over because they are dangerous.

MS: Did you spend much time on the southern part of the Swell? Ted Ekker was telling me that he and his father prospected out down in the Henry Mountains. I don't know if that's BLM land, probably is, I'm assuming.

MM: At the time, our district, which was Price District at the time, took in a little corner of Wayne County. Now Temple Mountain is in Emery County. So I didn't have anything to do with Henry Mountains. I've been out on the East Desert that part of the northeast corner of Wayne County because we did a lot of projects out there with BLM. We put in some big watering tanks, and the road was then built, the Flint Trail was built, and the road across Horseshoe Canyon was built and there are still signs of that today. The guy that got his arm, had to cut his arm off, I knew where that was. And his vehicle was parked at the parking lot at what we call the Mail Box. It's all in the Canyonlands National Park now.

MS: Great! You know the area well it sounds like.

MM: I've been over it a little bit.

MS: You worked through a time in which, I've told was kind of the last kind of bust of the uranium boom, the uranium industry at least here in central Utah and on the Swell. Did you notice that? Did you see a difference in the number of people that were around, you know, from the early 70s to the late 80s?

MM: Yes, there was a very big decrease in the amount. The last big uranium mines was down in the Green River area, westerly of the Green River. And they was the last uranium mines that was there. I have some pictures that you have to…. There was a definite decrease like in the 70s, late 60s, 70s, real decrease in the amount of activity that was in the San Rafael Swell in relation to uranium stuff. The grazing and all that stuff went on as it was. But as far as the uranium mining and that kind of activity, it did really decrease.

MS: Okay, excellent. Well maybe what you can do, and this will help me as well, as I show some of these pictures that we have here. Maybe I can show you the picture and you can describe what we're looking at in the picture. And then when I actually edit together the video, I can put that audio of you describing the picture as it's up. And that would be very helpful for me if you could do that. Alright here's one, I don't know exactly where it is, but can you tell me about that a little bit?

MM: This particular picture is of Temple Mountain. It's since been rehabilitated and is in protection so it's not such a hazard to the people.

PART 4

MS: If you'll describe those for us.

MM: Okay, the one picture here is a typical picture of the Tomsich Butte area and the tailings pile that come out of the mine. And you can still see the portal plus the chute plus the tailings pile and the other picture is of Temple Mountain area, it's just where the roads and the little rat holes were dug into the side of the mountain. This first picture is one around the Temple Mountain area, and it was a three foot core hole that was drilled and there's some kind of a metal thing put down in the hole. And the other picture here is an open shaft where they drilled a three foot hole and they've attempted to cut down the hazard by putting some timbers and stuff over it.

MS: Is that another shaft?

MM: This here, this one picture here, it looks very familiar and I'm not sure that it's Copper Globe. I'm not really sure, just over the years I've forgotten where that was. This other picture's of me taking a picture of a drill hole that was drilled and left open. It was about an 18 inch diameter hole where dogs, or any pets or even the wildlife out there could fall down. In later years we did make them come back and plug all these holes, so we reduced that hazard there. This next picture is just one of the holes that was drilled there and this was all in the head of Sinbad area. And there was a big uranium mine in that area, and those tailing piles are still there.

MS: Okay, there's two more.

MM: This one picture's in Crack Canyon, I don't have too much knowledge of the Crack Canyon Mine. I was there, there's still a little cabin in that area. Whether they were connected or not, I'm not sure. This other picture below is just a typical mine of where a person probably went out there and staked a claim and dug a hole back to see what he had.

MS: I think I've got a couple more here. Okay, this is the MK Tunnel.

MM: These two pictures of MK tunnel, as they were before BLM went in and rehabbed them and completely destroyed them. This should have been preserved in some way to preserve our history of Emery County.

MS: And the last one. I think that's just part of where the MK Tunnel was.

MM: Yes, this last picture is just a picture of the area around the MK Tunnel. That's about all I can say about that.

PART 5

MS: So we've talked quite a bit about your involvement with the area and the mines. Is there anything that I might have forgotten to ask you that you can think of that you would want to add or emphasize?

MM: (laughs) I want to emphasize that we need to keep the history of our county intact as it is, but reduce the hazards to the public to an extent that it's not as hazardous as it is now. But we need to preserve this history in much the same condition that it is now.

MS: Tell me why you feel that that is important?

MM: Well, I feel like, that the public needs to get out in the Swell and see what a marvelous area it is. There is no other area in the whole world that's like it. And if it's ever shut off to the public,

that'd be a big mistake. I understand too, and I worked in it for many years, that there should be protection, but I don't think it should be shut off to people, especially the aged or the handicapped or who may not be able to get into a lot of places that can no longer walk, to see some of the most beautiful country in the whole world. But again, we need to preserve it so the public can have access to it and enjoy the beautiful country.

MS: Wonderful. Well is there anything else? We've gone now for about 45 minutes, which is great! That went by fast, didn't it? Is there anything else you can think of, and that was wonderful, I appreciate you letting us know because I think that is something that we're doing this we can easily lose sight of why we're doing it, and that's precisely it. We want other people to be able to enjoy it and learn from it.

MM: Well there's so much to learn. There's such a variety of different formations and different minerals out there. There's just no place else anywhere that I know of that's got the opportunity and the variety of, and the access that we have to this in this area. Just as soon as this is over I'll think of a lot of stuff!

(both laugh)

MS: Well you've provided plenty of stuff and it's really wonderful. Just let me look at my questions here.

MM: If you have any other questions, I'll try to address them.

MS: Do you remember any stories that you've heard from any of these places that you can relate? Maybe about somebody who was prospecting and hit a big find or anything that's related with the Swell?

MM: Well not in this particular Swell. There are stories in the Moab area and that kind of stuff. The one thing that I didn't mention about in the Copper Globe area, was the sheep herder was there herding his sheep for Whitbeck's, that the Robbers Roost gang told that was killed. And there is a head stone out there with that history on it, and it is out there on site. He was not buried there, he was shot there but he was taken to town and buried. So I forgot to mention that a minute ago.

MS: Yeah, yeah. Could you tell that story though again about this gang, how that all had come to pass?

MM: That's all I knew, that this sheep herder was caught in this area herding sheep. And for some reason the Roost Gang killed him. I don't have any information of why, why they killed him. That's all I know about.

MS: And who were, just for…

MS: The Whitbeck's had the sheep company, and the head stone, I tried to find a picture of it.

Mrs. MM: It's in one of my books, and I only have about 40.

(both laugh)

MM: But the history is out there on the head stone.

MS: Excellent.

MM: Well, unless you've got some more questions, I don't know what else to tell you.

MS: No, this has been wonderful, absolutely wonderful. Especially when it comes to the different places, not many people have been or knew of these other places, so this is great that you know about them.

MM: One other place that I might describe a little bit is Calf Mesa. And it's just south of the San Rafael River where the old swinging bridge that CCCs built back in the '30s. The swinging bridge is a well-known landmark, and the county has taken it over, and preserving it as it is in its original shape. But south of here is called Calf Mesa. And there was a lot of uranium exploration around that area. There was some ore shipped that way and they had to haul the ore out to Temple Mountain road, and down by Temple Mountain because they couldn't get the heavy trucks across this old swinging bridge. And so there's still some mine portals in that area that's wide open and that's just another area. Horse Shoe Canyon was explored, that's in the eastern part.

MS: And when you say it was a swinging bridge, what kind of bridge was it that the trucks couldn't go across? How was it built?

MM: It was built strictly out of timber and it had two big cables on cement pillars on each end and the swinging bridge swung on those cables. And it was a narrow bridge, maybe 10 feet wide. And it just didn't accommodate heavy equipment or heavy trucks.

MS: It was literally a suspension bridge of sorts.

MM: It was a suspension bridge.

MS: Made out of timber.

MM: Yes, made out of timber. And the three Cs back in the early 30s put it up. They made the bridge.

MS: Excellent. Wonderful.

MM: Trying to think of anywhere else I can tell you.

MS: Yes. Is there anything else that you guys can think of that could spur his memory about what he hasn't said already?

Mrs. MM: How far have you gone? I only go with him.

MS: He's taken us on a journey all around. Tell me, just to review again, as an employee of BLM, how often were you out there on these sites as opposed to the office? I'm sure that fluctuated over the years.

MM: It did fluctuate a lot. The first few years we'd go out in the Swell and we'd stay out there for five days. And if we saw two cars out there we thought there was some kind of emergency. (laughs) And today that has totally changed because this Swell is just loaded with people. And sheep herds would come in during the winter, and we were working out there, you know, with lots of sheep in the area at the time, and now there's no sheep at all out there except the bighorn and those. Like I say, as soon as it's over, I'll remember a lot of things to tell you.

MS: Well, this has been wonderful.

(End of interview)

INTERVIEW WITH MARK H WILLIAMS

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: May 24, 2011
LOCATION: Castledale, UT

PART 1

MS: So we're doing the San Rafael Mining Oral History Project. My name is Michael Searcy and I'm here with …

MW: Mark H Williams of Castledale, Utah.

MS: People refer to you as Mark H Williams. They always put the 'H' in there.

MW: That's what my mother named me, 'cause my dad's name was Mark and she didn't, the 'H' is not an initial, it's Mark H.

MS: Oh really? So it's just 'H', Mark H Williams. Doesn't stand for anything at all?

MW: No, doesn't stand for anything. My wife says it stands for "Handy".

(both laugh)

MS: That's great. And today is May 24th, 2011. So what I'd like to start with is if you'll state your, well you've already stated your full name, you're from Castledale, and your date of birth?

MW: 7/8/40

MS: And why don't we start with just a short history, where you're from, where you were born, and how you came to live here in Castledale eventually.

MW: Well, I was born here in Castledale, up there on Main Street, in my folk's house. When I grew up, I grew up down in this area here where we're at where I built my house now, along the river bottoms. I enjoyed the San Rafael Swell. I had an old '42 Ford jeep that I spent, when I was a teenager, spent a lot of time out on the Swell exploring all the old mine sites and different places on the swell, hunting and things like that. I've done a little rock hounding and things like that. I really enjoyed myself. I'm a heavy equipment operator, I built roads and dams and power plants all over the state of Utah. Lived in different places. And then I come back here in 1976 to live, and built a house here and stayed here the rest of my time. My first wife passed away from cancer, then I married Terri Lynn, my present wife. And her and I've been real active in the out of doors. We've put together a book called Utah's Scenic San Rafael, we done that as a joint project. I took all the photography and she done all the transcript work, making sure all the sentences was right and everything. And we put that together in 2001. It was a great time doing that. Then we also, in 2000, we wrote for the local paper, Emery County Progress. We put a weekly article in called Williams' wanderings. So every week we told people where to go out in the San Rafael Swell, what to see along the way as you drove, how far to drive and stop and see, and a short history of all the area out there. We enjoyed that.

MS: So you're our resident local historian, right?

MW: I guess that's who you'd call me that.

MS: That's wonderful. Well, you've been here quite a while, so you have a history here for sure.

MW: I have.

MS: That's excellent. That's why we came here today, to talk to you a little bit about the history of San Rafael Swell, and in particular its association, or the uranium mining association with the Swell. And so, we'll talk a little bit later about your friend Owen McClenahan that you did some work with as well.

MW: Yeah, him and I put a book together quite a while ago, and so, and we got to know each other quite well, doing a little rock hounding and things like that. We enjoyed each other.

MS: Well why don't we start with talking a little bit about what you know about the uranium industry in the 20th century , and kind of the cycle it would go through, the boom and bust, and just what you know generally about the uranium industry associated with the San Rafael Swell.

MW: I've done a lot of research to put this book together, and William's Wanderings and things like that, so I went back in to the old newspapers and done a lot of research. And also I was on a couple, when the boom was on great in the 50s, I went with my dad and another guy and we went out and staked some uranium claims, so I've had first-hand experience at just staking the claims and everything, but I was young at that time and so I never done any mining or anything like that, but I did enjoy going out with them and staking their claims and being out in the Swell.

MS: Did your father ever do any mining?

ME: No, he was a school teacher. And we just done that in the summer time and go out and stake a few claims.

MS: Great. When it comes to the uranium industry around this area, what do you know about when it started and when it kind of tapered off and things like that?

MW: Well, it boomed in the 50s, and got quite high. I know at one time the mining claims that was going for $100 dollars a claim selling to the diggers. I guess the ones that do the mining and everything was buying them for a hundred dollars a claim. So that's why my dad and me went out and staked some claims. And so, he sold a few, not an awful lot. And then after it boomed for a while and lots of the old coal miners would go out and work in the uranium mines and mine. And then in the wintertime they'd come back and work in the coal mines. Because they usually mined coal more, in them older, past years in the wintertime rather than the summer time, and so they'd do a lot of, all the coal miners would do a lot of hard rock mining in the uranium mines.

MS: One thing that I haven't heard about yet is how you actually go out and stake a claim. Nobody's really been able to describe that to me. Could you go through typically what you would do…the procedure for going out and finding and staking a claim?

MW: We'd go out and had an area. I borrowed a Geiger counter and we'd get along the front of the face of a cliff or something where you could pick up the uranium and then we would go up on top of the bench and start staking claims. You'd have to put a center post, and then they're 300, I think they're 250 by 600 feet. And you have to stake in each corner and one in the middle and then the next claim over you'd put a stake in the center, but you'd only have to put the outside edge on each one. So you'd get a whole block of claims and go along staking that. And you'd have to figure out which township and range you was in, which quarter section and everything,

and a description of it, and leave it out on the papers on a claim, and then you'd have to file it with the court house. You want to pause it a minute, I can show you a claim?

MS: That'd be great, yeah. Maybe I can scan it too.

PART 2

MS: ok, so you said that you would actually place the claims.

MW: Yeah, you make the claim, and in the center marker you had to leave your claim. And this one (holds up bottle with claim slip inside) is the old claim bottle. This one happens to be maybe an old baby food bottle. But I've seen lots of them in old tobacco cans and things like that. And I picked this one up not too long ago out there at an old claim, and so it's kind of interesting. This one is pretty well preserved in here. It's only got one little rusted hole here. And so very interesting out there.

MS: That's great. So let's see. You file at the court house and then, maybe you can tell us now how you actually went about selling the claims. Like, who would, so what would be the process after you stake the claim and then you would sell it? What would you do there?

MW: You'd sell the claims usually by a person who worked for the mining company would come through and be buying a bunch of claims. They would buy up more of them if the uranium was better in one area, I think they'd give a little more for their claims than they did for another area. That the uranium one wasn't quite as, what was I going to say? Rich, I guess, in what they needed. So that's the way it happened. And then they'd come in and do the mining.

MS: So then the money that would come for the claim would come to you as a check?

MW: Yeah, in a check, yes.

MS: Great.

MW: And, I don't know whether they ever told you or not, but uranium was put in the rock in solution. It wasn't like gold in the rock and it's a whole seam, it was in solution so it would run like a river. And after a company bought the claims or done anything like that, the government would come in and core drill the area and find out where the uranium was so they could, when they was mining into it they could kind of follow it around. There's one claim down here by the swinging bridge. It's by the Dexter Mine just a little ways over. It was part of Owen and Russell Palmer and Theo Ungerman and I think there was one other person, was part of the claim, was out there and they claimed it, and then they sold it to a Canadian company. And the Canadian company bought it and hired them to come in and mine it. So instead of developing the mine they hired them and they built a load out bin. And after they got it all built they started to mine back into the ledge, and the mine went back 20 feet and run out of ore. And so there sits, today you can see the bin on the side of the hill down there. And so that's the way uranium is.

MS: It can go for a little bit or go forever. Interesting. So they ran out only how far in?

MW: About 20 feet. Real rich right out on the surface. Started back and it disappeared.

MS: You've visited a lot of these that we've talked about. Did you ever get to go out there while they were working the mines?

MW: No, not very much, I was, I would have been about, in the 50s I would have been about 10, 12 years, 15 years old. And that was about the time I got old enough to drive, and could visit some of these the uranium boom was over. Some of the other mines, like the Lucky Strike and Tomsich Butte and Hidden Splendor that was further out mined a little bit longer. But some of these closer to town that I would have been able to visit they was all, they never was mining when I was young enough to do it, old enough to do it.

MS: Okay, well, have you ever heard any stories associated with the mines, any of the ones in particular like Lucky Strike, Tomsich Butte?

MW: Yeah. Down at Lucky Strike, Bill Hannert owned it and another from Orangeville, and there was another guy, Bill Jessopsen that was part of it, and it was all from underneath Link Flats, Copper Globe area. And Bill Jessopsen was into TV. He helped get the county TV. They went on top of Horn Mountain here and put up a TV tower and got us TV. While he was out there mining with Bill Hannert and everything, and they was down under a big ol' ledge, so they run a TV cable from on top of the ledge where they could get the signal from the Horn Mountain out there and run the cable down to the mine, and they had one channel of TV to watch while the men was down there, and I guess that was quite an entertainment to at least have that. I've been out to other mines, old mines and things. There's one that's on an ATV trail called Behind the Reef and it's between Temple Mountain and Hidden Splendor mine on the back side of the Reef. And you pull up to this old tar paper shack, and I like to ask people, what do you think happened here, how many people lived here and everything, and they really don't know but, being curious and everything, I've snooped around there at this old house. It's one room, got some old bed springs in it, and stuff like that. Now the tar paper's about all gone on the outside, but there's a tricycle, part of a tricycle, a little kid's tricycle, and then a while back the old outdoor toilet was still sitting there, and it had, you looked at part of it and it had a big hole and a little hole, you know, for the little kids hole, and a big hole. So, it was a family that lived there. And then you'd walk over a little ways and they must of had a party or something went on there at the place. There's an old car or pick up there that they'd used for a winch. Just a frame and the front of it they'd used for a winch because you can see where the transmission was, and they had, so you could hook a cable up to winch things. And the reason I think they must have had a party there, the engine's all blew apart. It looks like they got mad at it or something and filled the engine full of dynamite and blew it up. And half of the engine's sitting over here and half of its over here and the transmission blew apart, and the hood's got the holes going up through so the hood was down when it blew, radiator's pushed out. So that is just at one place and you can wander around there and just see, just wonder what happened there that long ago. But it's kind of interesting to pull up to something like that, and look around at the old outhouse and things like that. Down there at Tomsich Butte, I don't know much about that. There used to be a couple old tar paper shacks and they got burned down, whether the BLM did so, burned them at the time or what. But at one place there, there was an old outhouse that had four holes in it. It was a four-holer. Kind of interesting, why you would have a four-holer or something like that. But that's another thing that I, different things that I've seen out there, this and old mine claims, like that.

MS: That's great. Maybe big populations out there, who knows.

MW: Yeah, big population.

PART 3

MW: Now do you want me to tell you about what I know about Temple Mountain?

MS: I'd love that.

MW: You ready?

MS: We're rolling.

MW: Temple Mountain's got quite a big history there. The Swayze's first come in there and discovered uranium. The Swayze boys, you know, everything's named down on the Swell about the Swayze's, they was in there. And then the uranium got a little more going on. And Madame Curie and her husband Pierre come in there and she come in there to have the miners, she had them dig it out with a little spoon, the real rich plutonium, that had everything to do with her x-ray. She's the one that discovered portable x-rays to be used in World War One, her and her husband. So they was there and stayed at Temple Mountain for a while. Then they moved up. Temple Mountain has got the mountain, then it's got a flat plateau that runs out on it, and the mines are all underneath there, but up on top they drilled down with a big drill that drilled a 36 inch round hole and then they lifted the core drill out, and then they built a building or a shaft over the top of it, and they'd lower the miners down the 3 by 3 foot diameter hole and then they'd start mining out. And then they'd finally get mined out and then they'd bring all the ore up through that shaft. And you can go down there today and see the old core drills, the big, sandstone cores laying all over where they drilled down in a couple places, and things. They're really interesting to see. Right now, there's one, well, one active claim, put active claim on the north side of that. They haven't closed it. It's barred and it's got a gate with a lock on it and a key. And the owners of the mine there have a key, they can go in and mine and everything, but it's not an active mining claim until uranium gets more expensive I don't think they'll go back in there and mine anymore until then. And most of their old houses over there around this mine are about deteriorated and falling apart there.

MS: The holes you're talking about, the Calyx holes? Is that what they're called? That's what the men have told me. Two of the miners called them Calyx holes.

MW: That's because it was a calyx, I didn't know what it was called, but I've read somebody, that was a drill, a calyx drilled the holes.

MS: Oh, that's the name of the drill, and that's why it's called a calyx hole.

MW: Yeah, I think that's the drill that, and they explained a little bit about that, huh?

MS: Yeah they did. They talked about how the drill would actually sit on bearings and then it would turn and cut the cores out. And they'd take, they'd strap those cores to a strap and a pulley and somehow they'd tweak it or wedge it or something to break it off from the bottom, lift them up and dump them and go back down and do another one until they hit the seam.

MW: The uranium, yeah. And then they'd start mining out.

MS: That was one of the most fascinating things, is that they would be in a 36 inch wide hole, drilling, sitting in a bucket.

MW: Yeah, they made a head frame. The word I was supposed to use was they made a head frame over the top of it so they could lower them down in and back them out. And there's two still left down there in Temple Mountain.

MS: Two head frames? Oh, wow. I've seen pictures of a guy with a winch that lowered the bucket up and down. Interesting.

MW: That's kind of an interesting place there, there at Temple Mountain. I think a lot of investors invested a lot of money at Temple Mountain. They really mined it out. They got lots of real rich uranium. One of their troubles, problems around here was the dirt roads. It was far from the Swell to the refinery. They had to take the richest ore that they could when they took a load to the refinery.

MS: Make it cost effective, I guess?

MW: Make it cost effective.

MS: Ok, great. Can you tell me a little bit more about, do you know much more about Copper Globe at all?

MW: Lets go, … okay…Copper Globe. I had another thought that…

MS: Okay, if you want to finish your other thought, then we'll come back to Copper Globe.

MW: What were we talking about? We were talking about getting the ore out, now I can't remember now.

MS: And calyx holes. Oh, and they had the heads on the…

MW: Yeah the head frames. I lost my thought, let's go on.

MS: Okay. So, Copper Globe. Do you have any stories or history of Copper Globe that you know of?

MW: I don't have much history about that. I've just, about what's left out there. They went in there and discovered the copper, you can go out there and see the copper vein and everything. And they was, it was out there in the middle of nowhere. And so what they was going to do was refine it right there. So they must have hired a crew to cut wood to fire their refinery. And they stacked it up two ricks wide, 7 feet high for about 40 or 50 feet long, and one is still left there intact pretty much. It's been slowly packed off and everything. Well the cupola could melt the copper, they had it built and took it out there and put it together, and they had some big bellows to heat it all up and everything. And they started it all up and was really heating it all up and the cupola melted. What they'd done instead of using fire brick, they used regular bricks you build your house with, and so the cupola turned to glass and melted. So they didn't ever, that's as far as I know, they just tried that and done it. Now the shaft went down where they had the cupola and everything, the shaft went down and around and back out , and on it. And then the other one around where there's two buildings, around on the other side, they took and built a shaft straight down. It goes down I've heard between 1,000 and 1,600 feet, straight down. Its square, and done with chisel and everything straight down square. And what they was planning on doing there was going down, and thought they could go down and hit the mother lode where all this stuff was coming up in solution and stuff. But nothings ever, they must not got much. You don't see on that side of Copper Globe where the shaft goes down you don't see the copper as you do around where the adit goes in.

MS: So do you have to enter the adit to be able to see the seam there?

MW: Just the edge of it. You can see it around in the sand stone, some of it. Its green, there's some green and blue copper there. One is azurite and the other is malachite you can see in the sand stone. Not real thick coppery like. I winter in Arizona and I've been to a lot of copper mines

around Quartzite and the copper's really green and thick and stuff like, the more you can get more copper out of it than here.

PART 4

MW: Temple Mountain is on the east side of the Swell round along the Reef. It was easy access by the old dirt road, Highway 24 that went up to Hanksville. The rest of these mines in the Swell, wasn't any roads there, so they came from the north end, out across the swinging bridge and up, and got to a certain point out around Tan Seeps and then the roads all ended, and they walked. Prospectors took their pack on their back and their Geiger counter and hiked down into all these canyons and places they found all the uranium, and then staked their claims and then hired a guy with a bulldozer to build the roads into them. The roads were, none of the roads was there. They had to, they walked and packed all their groceries for 3 or 4 days while they walked in and got their mines. Especially along the Muddy River, all that country and Tomsich Butte, and Lucky Strike mine and everything. All they had to walk a long ways down in to find them and everything, and then they took a dozer and built the roads.

MS: Now I understand that it wasn't until later that the big companies came in and started building the roads. Is that right?

MW: Started to build more, widen them out, get the stuff out, but to get the people in there, so.

MS: Maybe I can ask you a little bit about your relationship with Owen McClenahan and what he used to do and his familiarity with the Swell and how you guys came about to collaborate on the book that talks about the history of the Swell.

MW: Owen's wife and my mother, Joy, were in a club together. They played cards once a week or once a month, they played cards with a whole bunch of the women at that time, and Owen had a daughter a couple years younger than me, but we was always good friends because he was an old rock hound, and done cut rocks and polished them, done a lot of stuff like that and they would always interest me. So I'd go up to his place to see all the rocks and things. And then, to collaborate on this book, I'm a photographer too, I've taken lots of pictures and everything, and he approached me one time and he said, if you'll take all the pictures, I'll write the book and we'll split all the proceeds. And so I said OK. So we would get in my, I had a Blazer, an old Chevrolet Blazer, him and his wife, me and my wife would get in the Blazer and go out to all these places that he had all the information on and I'd take all the black and white pictures and put them together and things like that. So we got a lot better friends after that when we was going out and doing all these things. One time we went out from Green River, toward Hanksville, and we was going out there to take pictures of Temple Mountain and everything, and we was going along the road there and it was about dinner, lunch time and it was out in the middle of the desert and they's wondering where we could find some shade to each lunch, and I had been an old construction worker working on the roads, we knew you go underneath a bridge or something to get some shade. So I pulled off and down there under the bridge and they'd never ate lunch under a bridge before, and so that was one of the highlights of a couple trips, eating lunch under an old bridge and everything. But we went out and done that. And then we'd drive out along the road, Owen would tell all these stories that he knew about different things, about this mine and this mine, and who it was and things like that. So, I learned a lot just by going with him and listening.

MS: Where did he get his experience and his knowledge of the mines?

MW: Well, he was part of it all, doing the prospecting and everything, and selling claims, and doing all that, he had lots of knowledge. He had been to, I think to BYU, I don't know if he ever graduated, but he'd took a lot of Geology classes and things and knew about the uranium and the mining and so he, that's how come he got interested in it and done all that. And he taught me a bit**,** he said he was an old, he called himself an old desert rat, and go out there. And finally he, he'd been out so much in the desert and everything that he got skin cancer. He had to, every time we went he had one of them old straw, hard straw hats, like the old Darwin…

MS: Pith helmet. Was it a Pith Helmet, safari hat?

MW: Yeah safari hat that he'd wear all the time. And when he couldn't go out any more when he was, before he met me he, well I knew him and everything, he bought a bar here in town so he could stay in out of the sun because the sun really got to him, cancer and stuff.

MS: Do you remember any of the stories that he told about the miners out there and the mining?

MW: Well, I told you about the one mine, about the bin and everything, and he'd hike down past… another one he told me out there, at one time all the miners was out there, and he was part of it. And boy, every place they went out there it was really, the Geiger counters really ticked and everything, and they was staking claims and everything and they got back to town and read in the newspaper that they'd set off another atomic blast in Nevada and all that dust from Nevada had settled down out there, so it was all hot. And they went back out there to check where they'd staked their claims a month later when they could get back out there and there wasn't any.

(both laugh)

MW: It'd all dissipated, but they'd thought they'd really made a killing.

MS: That's a great story!

MW: And so he, they had to laugh about that. He said, we staked lots of claims, and when we went back out there we couldn't find a single thing that clicked on the Geiger counter.

MS: That's really interesting. Isn't it funny though that the bomb that they exploded was from the uranium that was found there.

MW: It could have been.

MS: It tricked them! Man, that's a great story.

MW: Yeah, and then another story says he just didn't go down the river far enough. He hiked into, between Tomsich Butte and Hidden Splendor, he hiked in there and staked a couple claims. And he showed me one there where they mined a little bit on these claims. And he said if he'd been down just a little bit further he'd have discovered the Hidden Splendor mine, where old Peck made all his money and everything. So he was a little disturbed that he hadn't walked that way instead of the way he did.

MS: Just a little bit further, huh? Made it big.

MW: Just a little bit further. Made it big.

MS: Yeah, I think one of the Ekkers told me a little bit about Peck. So yeah, it's interesting that guy made a killing on his claim down there, didn't he?

MW: Yeah, he did. Hiked up there and supposed to have about died and drank the water and everything.

MS: Well any other stories that you can remember? That he told or that you've heard from other people?

MW: Can't remember any others he told me. Not sure. Can't think of any right now.

MS: That's alright. Before we started recording you were talking a little bit about the importance of these sites. Maybe you can elaborate on that, and why we need to preserve them.

MW: Okay. I believe that we've got such a great history out here, that we need to really preserve all these sites. You can take pictures and go to different places and, but to get the feeling you've got to see it in hand. When I read about something in history or a mine or something like that, when I can go visit I have a greater feeling of what was there, than if I just read in a book. I enjoy, in Arizona they haven't started closing the mines yet and you can go to them and really get the feel of some of the old mines. Those that they've had, they have not closed the mine, but they've built fences and stuff around them that you can't climb over. It's metal and the slats are about this wide (indicates with fingers), and a little metal thing and about eight foot high. You can take pictures you can see it, they've even fenced around their, some of their old dwellings so that you can't get in there and tear them apart or pick at them and stuff like that. And I appreciate that 'cause I can see the history, and they have signs that says this was the mill, and this was the workers cottage and these kind, little kiosk there tells you all that goes on at the place they have restored. And one of the places is the old Swayze town, was an old copper and gold mine, area down there. But I think here we could really do that. Copper Globe needs to really be protected. It's, there's a lot of history there, and a lot more information could be put out there so that when people come they could read about it. I think when there's information there and kiosks and things people don't destroy it. I think they have more of a feeling that this part of it… so that's one of the things that, like Copper Globe. Down there to Tomsich Butte, the mine shaft there goes in and turns and goes over 100 feet and comes back out where they dumped the ore out down the shaft. If you're going to close anything up or go back and close her you can't go any further back in the mine. And the people walk up there and go over and look out the mine shaft and put some kiosks there with the information, how the miners done it, mined, and more pictures of the area and stuff on it. It could be real interesting. I think people would more protect the area themselves.

PART 5

MS: Answering another question about the history, why do you feel that it's important that other people get the chance to learn about this? What's the importance of the Swell and what it holds?

MW: There's many things that went on out in the Swell, the whole Swell area besides mining. We had the old Spanish Trail that came through here, went from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Los Angeles. That was there. We had the old Star Mail Route that come around the north side of the Swell. Come here, I'll tell you another story, you don't need to record it, you can put it out. About Mormons and the Utah uprising, the Mormons, and Johnston was trying to get in the Salt Lake Valley, and they held him out. Well the army called up Captain Loring from Fort Union, New Mexico and sent a cavalry troop to, his troop up the east side of the Rockies, to Fort Laramie, then across to California, Mormon Trail to help Johnston get into Salt Lake Valley, but by then the Mormons had let Johnston in the Valley and put him at there at Camp Floyd. So Captain Loring came out there and stayed a couple months, then the army ordered him back to Fort

Union. And instead of going back across Wyoming, they sent him the southern route, so he come down through Nephi, Ephraim, Manti to Salina, then over Salina Canyon over into this country and up along here past Castledale, then off through here to Green River, then on to Gunnison, Colorado and on, over the mountain. So that's some great history that needs to be recorded and taken care of. So, that was another thing about the Swell, besides the uranium. And a lot of oil exploration went on in the early 20s, and they built roads. That's why the prospectors get out as far as the top of the Swell, cause the oil people been out there drilling, and so that was some good history. But this was part of our history here, where the locals mined it and prospered from it, and the whole works.

MS: That's wonderful, great! Well, since you've lived in this area more or less, can you tell me, and you've answered this just a little bit before, but can you tell me the difference of what it was like here in Castledale when there was a boom, when there was a bust. I mean, did it really grow in population? Not that it has ever been huge in population, but you know, could you tell the difference in the time period when people were living out here then maybe moved away?

MW: There was quite a few… the miners had lots of work at that time. They was working in the coal mines, and then they were working the uranium mines. Then the uranium went kaput and the mines really went down almost, coal mines almost went down to nothing, and people was moving away and none of the young people was ever staying around and it was really kind of bad. They consolidated two high schools in the county, and the grade schools and everything, then we had the next boom with the power plant and the coal mines and so I've lived through two booms and busts in Emery County.

MS: The nature of the central Utah desert wilderness right?

MW: Yeah.

PART 6

MS: Why don't you share with us what you're reading from.

MW: I'm reading from Owen McClenahan. He wrote a history of the uranium mines and everything, and give it to me. I own the copyright to it and everything, so, let me read you a little bit about how Lucky Strike was found here. It says:

"On December 8th, 1949, Frank Blackburn, Eldon Bryan, Ervin Olsen and Thomas Worthlin trucked two horses out to the Family Buttes, on the rim of Reds Canyon. The two men rode horses and the other two walked, taking turns when they become tired, following the horse trail into Reds Canyon and south towards the Muddy River. Frank Blackburn said that it was a canyon he was herding sheep in, and he found a rock that looked like uranium. They staked three claims, and named them Lucky Strike 1, 2 and 3. They were able to bring samples out, which assayed over 1% uranium. They almost died from exhaustion before they made it back to the truck. They were riding the horses double. One day Frank told me about it, and he said, 'I didn't know if they could load the horses or if the horses could have loaded them, they was so tired.' By the summer of 1950, they had a road down into their claims. I drove down to see them. They had a big open pit mine with a compressor, a wheelbarrow for machinery. A large truck was backed into a bank and they loaded the truck with the wheelbarrow. The ledge at that time was 30 feet high with two black bands of 24 inch thick running parallel and equally spaced uranium. The very top had a band of yellow uranium and a band of a rose red cobalt bloom. In all my years of prospecting I never did see a prettier face of ore. They were able to ship it all. They had to break it up so that

there was no rock over 5 or six inches. The men were over 60 years of age and they were all doing their own mining. It was interesting in the efficiency with which they were going about their work. They were, was drilling and shooting the holes they'd done and each one was loading it with a wheelbarrow and they used sledge hammers to break up the ore. At the time 1% of ore was a real good ore to take to the mill."

MW: So, it was just some of the things that happened.

MS: And that was Lucky Strike, right?

MW: Ah huh. "I never heard how much they made, but it wasn't long until they were riding a long in Buicks and Lincolns there was no 'go broke' story for these guys. It was all four roses," so.

MS: That's great.

MW: So it was a pretty good mine they had.

MS: Definitely. That's wonderful. You know what I'd like to do, you mentioned that its copyrighted, so we can make sure that, of course, that is all proprietary, but I'd love to put on the video, you reading that and maybe have a scan of the text to show where it is, and that will also reinforce the fact that it is copyrighted and owned by you. But I can maybe show the text as you're reading portions of it. That'd be really neat.

PART 7

MS: Why don't you go ahead and read this one. I'm recording.

MW: You're recording? Here's another excerpt from Owen's, it says:

"Two men went along with Eldon Bryan and Thomas Worthlin, all of them from Ferron, Utah area, went into the Swell in the fall of 1949 searching for signs they had seen before. They camped in the Family Butte area and then went down in to Reds Canyon by horseback. In the process they discovered and staked the Lucky Strike claims in there. Their enthusiasm and excitement picked up. In the spring of 1950, they were praying for another trip when in they approached us. My brother Lyman who did go down with them last time and again camped at the Family Butte area. The Blackburn-Olsen group prospected on a mesa a mile or so north of Family Butte and staked what was known as the Green Vein claim. The area was later named Green Vein Mesa by the Atomic Energy Commission. Lyman prospected the area right near Family Butte and staked what become known as the Dolly Claims just west and south of those that were later called the Elliott group of claims. Lyman also went down into Reds Canyon with them and staked some claims a mile or so south of Lucky Strike, and they were known as the Conrad Claims."

MW: So, all these old prospectors just kept moving along the uranium until they got further down.

MS: That's great.

PART 8

MS: Alright, if you just want to start again. You're reading from Owen McClenahan.

MW: I'm reading from Owen McClenahan's papers:

"On March 8th 1950, Russell Snow, John Petitt, Ben Nickelson, and Bryan Nelson and Charles Petitt, prospected the area south of the Wikiup and staked 19 claims. They named them the Wikiup Claims. They shipped a few loads of uranium ore, and a man, and then it was released, leased to a Texas company. They did a lot of drilling and shipping of some ore. A man was killed when they were building the road up the face of the ledge. A rock rolled off the uphill side of the road and hit one of the workers. He was killed instantly. One of the interesting things about this area was that they found thick bands of iron pyrite in their drilling. Some of their ore contained copper. I knew some of these fellows and stayed overnight with them. The next day I walked up to see their operation. They were a fun bunch, joking about what they was going to do when they millionaires, as did most prospectors."

MW: So that's a good one, the last sentence is probably the best.

MS: Absolutely. That's great. Everybody thought they were going to strike it rich, right?

MW: Yeah, everybody thought they were going to strike it rich.

MS: That's great. Well wonderful. Well just in closing, do you have anything else that I might not have asked you, that you can think of that you might want to mention about the Swell and uranium mining that you think would be important to include in the history?

(long pause)

MW: Let me think.

MS: You've told some great stories.

(long pause)

MW: I think it was just part of the livelihood of this area. The Swell has always, was a wilderness, a no-man's-land, very few people had been out there. In the early 20s they drilled for oil out in that country. Then when the uranium boom came, the miners pushed out through the area, built roads and trails and things we still use today. We'd never be able to see, most people would never be able to see how beautiful the Swell area is without the old uranium miners. We have to give them credit for opening up the Swell and making it what it is today, so visitors could go see it and enjoy it.

MS: That's my closing statement right there. That's wonderful, perfect. Well, great! I really appreciate your time today.

PART 9

MS: Alright, you're good to go.

MW: "Men by the thousands flocked into the wastelands of the old San Rafael Swell in their old jalopy automobiles and army surplus jeeps. Here they would make camp and then proceed by foot in all directions, climbing steep slopes until they reached the mineralized sandstone. They were the ones without the Geiger counters would take samples to be checked later. Those with

counters would follow the mineralized areas until they had a reading with their counters, which was a loud response of amplified clicking and clacking reminding one of a rattlesnake showing its annoyance with man. As a rule, one of the worst things that could happen to a prospector would be to find just enough to raise his hopes, his dreams, and encourage his irresponsibility to raise money in any devious way he could. Most men lost everything they owned, including their wife and family. This is a history of my endeavors and the endeavors of my fellow men in the Colorado Plateau."

MS: That's great. This needs to be put into a book! He's a good writer.

MW: Yeah, he was.

MS: That's wonderful.

MW: Oh, I see. "Few of us could make any money, few of us made any money in our exhaustive search, but it may be said that though there was great effort by the many, uranium was found in great enough supply to make our bombs, power submarines and to stop the great Soviet Union from greater conquest. At this time they are on their knees."

MS: That's great. Wonderful.

MW: You can use what you want.

MS: Thank you, I appreciate you sharing that.

(End of interview)

INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA EKKER

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: May 25, 2011
LOCATION: Hanksville, UT

PART 1

MS: Well we'll go ahead and start. I don't want to take up too much of your time today. But that's what I came for was to ask you a little about the time that you spent out in the Swell mining. That's what they want to know about.

BE: And Temple Mountain had a lot of people. And I said you know when what's-his-name bought the Hidden Splendor, you know that whole story.

MS: Mr. Pick, right?

BE: Yeah

MS: Pick. Yes, I've heard that story.

BE: Vernon Pick sold it to Odlum [Floyd Odlum of Atlas Corporation]. And then his pilot was his wife who was like Amelia Earhart. Jacqueline Cochran was a fantastic pilot. And they built an air strip out there so she could land his big whatever plane. And so down the road, probably ten years ago, a drug plane landed out there.

MS: Wow.

BE: And they didn't even know that there was an air strip out there. And I said, it, I mean, they kept it in good shape so he could land out there. But he gave up the mine, and he got screwed by Vernon Pick, and I had a kid from Massachusetts come here and want all that story. And I said Lamar Wells had landed on that strip out there, and that's what they said. And we were out…oh a fellow got killed out there and happened at the Moore ranch out there. We were out EMT-in'. We couldn't even find an officer to come and declare him dead, so we could move him because they were out huntin' all these illegal immigrants that came in on the plane and they landed the plane out there and they all ran, but there was a car for the pilot. And they had a hell of a time getting it off the strip out there, and these guys didn't know why, …Oh! Nobody thinks about history.

MS: Right, right. That's what we're doing. We're recording history right now. (Laughs)

BE: Yeah. Who's going to read it? (Laughs)

MS: Well, hopefully somebody. And hopefully… well the great thing is that, this film, you know, we can actually put it somewhere.

BE: I said, I lived in Emery county clear through graduation. And I said my dad and his brothers, had a freighting business, but he built a boat. They were drilling on the shores of the Colorado River for oil. And they couldn't get in; there was no roads. He did this paddle wheel boat. And made trips up and down the river all the time, and he took as many pictures as I do and they're better than… I mean mine are just as good his, black and whites and stuff. And I said, he was in World War One. They … inducted him. His dad was dead, his brothers had already left home. He

had a mother, a grandmother and a sister to take care of, but they wouldn't defer him, and so he wrote letters to his mother practically every week. She saved 'em. When she was dying, she gave 'em to her daughter. When her daughter was dying, she gave 'em to me.

MS: That's great.

BE: Fantastic stuff.

MS: Yeah.

BE: And so he came back from France, and his brothers were out West. And so he decided to come out west, and he brought the mother and the grandmother and the sister. Grandma Baldwin went and opened up a boarding house because there were so many people coming in that area because of the oil.

MS: I'm turning it off. I'm turning it off so nobody does call me, so I can listen to you.

BE: And so anyway she gave 'em bed and board for three dollars a day. And then these big wigs with the money refused to pay her said they weren't in the Moab area. Well, she's like me and my dad, keep a diary! And she went to court and now they're in Moab and proved that all of them had signed their name, checked in you know. And I said, my dad kept diaries all of his life that's what I do these river stories for the Moab museum. But I said, you settle an argument very easily. My son will say, no that didn't happen. And I'm (makes motion of licking thumb to find a page in a book and laughs) to prove I'm usually right.

MS: Wanna bet? (laughs) That's great.

BE: And then my mother died when I was two years old of pneumonia September, 1936, and I would have been three December 28th, and that would have been '36. And so, my mother's sister, Helen Falconer from Nebraska, who wasn't over 25 years old, came out and took care of us. But she was afraid the town would talk, with my dad livin' in the house. So he lived in the back part of the house, and he had a den, and he had National Geographics and all that. And I said, I can remember taking the kids from school down to look up something in National Geographic so we found all these naked Africans and we thought, oh my God, talk about porno!

(Both laugh)

BE: Helen had a brother, Bob, that got an arm took off in a railroad accident, so she went back to take care of him when I was in the eighth grade. And my sister went to Wasatch Academy in Mount Pleasant, and my dad was on the school board and he just said they didn't have a good enough bunch of teachers, and he wanted a better education, so she went to Wasatch, and then she went over to University of Colorado. And so, I stayed in Green River. I worked for my dad. I worked at the Arbor Cafe. I said, I can remember deliverin' the Tribune even. (laughs)

MS: (laughs) That's great.

BE: And then, working at the gas station, people look at you when you come to put gas in their car, a woman, I mean a girl, I wasn't even a woman. And they didn't want you lifting up that hood, checking the oil.

MS: They'd be like, I can handle it, I can handle it. But no, I think these histories are so vital, and, you know, to tell even who we are. And I'm an archaeologist by trade, you know, I look at deep history. I look way back when there wasn't a written record, so to know what a luxury it is

to have written records and to have what we have now with our digital media, you know, we can do a lot more. So that's why I'm excited about this.

BE: When I was reading National Geographic I think. But anyway, it's a hundred years since the Indy 500, and the cars and the, they couldn't keep track of these guys who were, I mean their cable system and all that kind of stuff. And it's funnier than anything. And so my Dad's sister who lived on, right next to where they built the thing. And they had to sell their house, oh probably in the 50s because of the noise was so bad that they couldn't stand it, and they couldn't sell the house either. But I said, I remember my dad talking about the Indy 500, and I thought we see it on television, and you think, how could people watch, all that time, these cars? I mean that's like watching paint dry. (laughs)

MS: I hear you.

BE: And our kids go to the NASCAR deal down in Vegas with my daughter's husband (telephone rings) and guess they… excuse me.

PART 2

MS: You're probably going to want some lunch here pretty soon. So, we'll get the cameras rolling again. And first I'll just state the project name. So this is the San Rafael Swell Mining Oral History. My name's Mike Searcy, I'm here with Barbara Ekker, and today is the 25th of May, 2011. So maybe we'll just start with you stating your name and your date of birth.

BE: Well I had known Jess all my life because my dad supplied them with gasoline here when you had a dirt road in Hanksville. And we were married in '54, and we had a bar in Green River, in Elgin**.** And Ray Hatch was a good friend and he had rheumatism, and so he wanted Jess to run it, and Hank sold liquor to the Indians, which was illegal. But if Jess came over here to deer hunt or something, and Hatch wasn't there in his trailer, the Indians would come to the bar, want to get beer and I wouldn't sell it to them. So they tried to get in the door one night and I got Jess's shot gun, and I threatened them, and I pulled the trigger. Well I forgot I had laundry on the line, (laughs) I didn't kill an Indian but I sure tattered my sheets. But they were scared to death of me. But, back in those days, they'd drink vanilla extract, or anything. And so Ray had been selling beer, he'd buy beer from us then take it to the Indians, and he wasn't home and I was the only one there. And they were scared of me, they really were. (Laughs)

MS: Well tell me how your husband, Jesse Ekker, how he got started into mining, and how you guys worked together.

BE: Well we went out to Temple Mt. and Jess's step father, Harry Philips had drilled all the calyx holes, you know so they could get air. And they left their trailer out there, and the mining was so good. And the road was only paved from the intersection. The road was still dirt over here. So they left the trailer when he got through drilling those calyx holes. And I was really interested in the mine. And so Jack Baker, who was Pearl Bakers' son, and his wife was a good friend of mine, so we went out there one day and decided we wanted to go down in the bucket. Talk about scared. Jack can't get these cables to work, and oh... I said, I was ready to kill him, I have never been so scared in my life. I don't know how people ever work underground…claustrophobia or something. But I said, we mined out there for quite a while. Gary Ekker from Green River mined out there, and I said, they had a shop out there to repair anything, and Gary was in there one day and they had these big barrels full of rags to use. And Gary went to get a rag and here was a mom and a bunch of kittens. So he went and got a battery, rubbed the thing on top a battery and dabbed

those ol' cats on the rear end and they never came back to camp. (laughs) I said there was a lot of social stuff out there, I mean the women stayed home and stayed in their trailers, and hot! Oh, God. We did have… it doesn't seem like we had electricity, I mean, I can remember when we moved into Hanksville, and Grandma and Mart had built this place over here. And Daris, Jess's brother had a trailer park, so they bought a light plant, but that bangin' thing, I mean you were so glad when they shut it off at night, I said we didn't have really power out there. We came in… I think we went to Green River to shop. And going into Green River to do anything, we didn't come back over here very much. But Jess was mining and everybody was mining, and getting good wages and all that kind of stuff. But anyway, he…Ray talked him into taking that bar, so that's what we had after the minin'. But he was mining out there when we got married.

MS: Okay, is this at Temple Mt.

BE: And then we came over to Hanksville, and it was mining down at Shootaring, North Wash and all that kind of stuff, Jess and I. And then it was Jess and I and the three girls, and the girls would go over to the dump and high grade, they bought their bicycles, they bought, they played baseball all their lives, so they all had a new mitt. And I said, "they were always talking about going over". Jess would send us over to the dump, you know. Do you want this or that? You know, so they would, they'd high grade over the dump.

MS: So when you say "high grade" they would pick out…

BE: The high grade pieces. You can tell, I mean they're green and really have a count on a Geiger counter, and they could get the Geiger counter and tell what they were doing, you know. And after the kids started school, I stayed home and our son-in-law…our oldest girl had gotten married and so he, Ben Pace, moved down here and he worked for Jess and then a friend of his came down and they worked out there mining. And…but I said… I remember Harold was down their first, Jess's oldest brother. And he was the partner of … I keep thinking Robert Shaw. They're the ones that make the little things on your oven doors, to you know (makes twisting motion). Harold had gotten a certificate that said he shipped the highest grade ore to Grand Junction Mill than anybody. And he did! I mean, it really wasn't worth it to haul junk. It was high grade. And so, he had most of his brothers down there working for him. And I cooked for the crew down there for a while. And then we moved up to Star Springs to another place that was being mined. And there was another guy, who was the cook over to another camp, and he had me saving all the juice off of the canned fruit and stuff, and he'd make him a burgundy that'd knock your head off! (Laughs) And we were all down there, and I said…I cooked down there for, I think I had eighteen people. And this fellow that had the big money deal, he wanted his coffee hot. Hot, you know. And so he'd sit it there and then he had a cigar about this way (indicates with fingers) and he'd lay it across that cup of coffee until it cooled down. "I said he wanted it hot!" I told him, I say … you know, but I cooked over there before the kids came along, down at Shootaring, as well as Star Springs.

MS: So when you say down there before, you mean Temple Mountain?

BE: You know how to get to Ticaboo?

MS: No, no I don't.

BE: Alright, as you're going down there, Ray May…

MS: Is this on the Henry Mountains?

BE: No.

MS: Okay, okay. That's what I thought. I just didn't know the names of it.

BE: And I said, Harold had that mine down there, but you had to go through the mountain to get there then. But now you go past Ticaboo, that's the town of Ticaboo. And Jess's sister and her husband developed that property. There's a café and a motel and all that stuff down there. And we had the Ekker reunion down there in '87, we had the Dutch people making a film. And we had, I don't know how many, hundreds…and so, I made a quilt and then everybody signed it for the Dutch Andries Ekker because he was the delegate from Holland, and he was in New York and he's out and tour the parks and stuff for vacation. And he kept asking, is there any Ekkers out here. And he finally got into Bryce Canyon one night and he said, I'll ask the same ol' question, do you have any Ekkers that live here, and this guy says, well there's a lot of 'em but I know one's got a café and motel in Bicknell. And he just cancelled his reservation and Glen and Cuna had the one up there in Bicknell. And so anyway, he said I need somebody with some information, and Glen said, my mother's alive and she lives down here, and they came down and they stayed, oh my god, how long did they stay? And then Eric their son, he got so fascinated, he's a doctor…no, his daughter Barbara married a surgeon, but Dirk is a lawyer, and so he came over and he stayed here with the Ekkers, they went out the Robbers and went out to California, and just had a ball, wanted to live here. But, uh, Nico and Ceese Cramd, they were the ones that made the film. And they call, as Jess's birthday was on the 29th of December, mine on the 28th, so he'd call us at midnight there. And he still does it since Jess passed away. You know, I stay up because I said, maybe they screwed up the time, but they don't! They call me on my birthday every year.

MS: That's great.

BE: He was here doing that *Dutch Connection* film, and they wanted to see Lake Powell and all that kind of stuff and his wife doesn't drive. You don't learn to drive in Europe. I guess you have to go take classes. And so they went down there and he was taking pictures and fell and broke his ankle. And so she called up here, because they'd rented a car, and here they're sitting down there with nobody to drive her out, and they flew him out to Utah Valley Hospital. And so Justin, I don't think he had had his driver's license more than a week. But he got in that car and drove her up there and turned the car in, and got them on the plane, and she still just thinks Justin is number one…he just took care of us. And I said, I can remember Drivers Ed. He would drive Drivers' Ed? Teacher says, "Where do you want to go tonight Justin?" He said, "Well let's go over to Richfield and have hamburgers." And you know they had to drive so long because he's driven…like kids around here, they learn how to drive before they're, (laughs) legal twelve years old. And so anyway, I went and got a copy of *The Dutch Connection*, and so many people said, they didn't know they made a movie of it. I said it sounded like a drug film. (laughs) But I said, it's amazing because all the Ekkers were converts to the Mormon Church and came over here. But this line, Jess's great grandfather said, they worked like indentured slaves to pay that money back. They lived in a damn barn, and so when they got out half of them didn't even stay with the church. And so they got some cattle, but they had menial jobs up there in Salt Lake, but they got some cattle, and they came down through the Hart Net over here, and down into Wayne, and that country before they came down here. And the mother didn't even speak English. And when they were here and grandma said a car came across the desert, I don't know when. It was nineteen eight or nine, and they had a boarding house up there, and so, she wanted to ride in that car. And she said…I can still hear the grandma screaming at me in Dutch, you're gonna get killed! You're gonna get killed! (laughs) And she had Harold with her, she put the baby in there and they took her for a ride and she said that grandma just kept screamin' at her. (laughs)

PART 3

MS: So what can you tell me, what was it like when you, because you were cooking for the crew, when you woke up in the morning what would you do? And how would your day end?

BE: Well, you really had to start the night before, and get a lot of stuff done, but, it was, I mean, they had groceries, I mean it wasn't like you were going out and shooting a deer and like that. I mean the company did have groceries. And that's why we were saving all this canned juice (laughs). But I said, it was it was a routine deal and everybody got fed. And we were laughing at one guy, he said he worked in the camp where they gave you a pie tin and a nail and you nailed your plate to the table. And you cleaned it out because you came back to that same plate, because the cook refused to do the dishes. And that was a problem at any camp is the water situation because you don't have a water pipe. Harold did, Harold had water piped in down there. And all the conveniences…not a wood stove, a gas stove. And it wasn't like you were cooking over a fire outside in a kettle. It wasn't that bad. And I said, the food was hauled in, all you had to do was cook it. I mean…you made a lot of bread and you made a lot of pies, and all that kind of stuff. And as far as needing vegetables and stuff, I mean Mr**.** Kreel made sure that they had enough to eat. They weren't starved or anything. And Harold did the same thing for his crew down there. They might go out and bring a beef in and butcher it out down there, you know, and stuff like that. They started leaching the mined ore; an outfit from Colorado came in and had leach ponds down there. And I remember in my stocking feet laying that lining in that thing because they said the guys couldn't lay it because it weighed too much and the shoes… so I was in there in my sock feet laying this liner in there so they could leach the ore. But we weren't out to Temple Mountain that much. But Grandma and her husband were out there a lot because they were drilling the calyx holes so miners could get some air down there. And she liked it out there, she really did. But, Lavar Wells, out here, he's the ex-bishop, and he's flown out there a lot and took people back and forth. But I don't think there was many from here or Hanksville or Wayne County that mined out there except us. And because, I mean there was mines, you know shitty ones around, oh I think they found something in Capitol Reef one time. I know um, uh, Tappan, Jack Tappan found something up in the reef then they found out it was in the park and they couldn't do anything with it. But I said, I don't think very many people from Wayne County worked out there, but Ted did. But Ted, no not Ted then, think he did work later. But Randy did, I think both him and his dad both worked out there. And I thought about that just now. He'd be a good source.

MS: That's Randy Mecham?

BE: I can call him if you want me to.

MS: Maybe we can do that afterwards, that would be great.

BE: And because…I was down there at the café working one day and Randy come and get the slop for his pigs. But he had a hip dislocation or something, so I'd pack the slop out and put it in his truck. And I could see this notebook up on the dash and I said, "What are you doing?" He says, "I'm writin' a book." And I said, "Let me read it," and he's, "oh god, you can't read it." And I thought, if Randy wrote a book, it's going to be good. So I told his sister Melody, you got to get that notebook off that dash and see what it is. And so she said, oh my god, I'm glad you told us about it because, he drank a lot, I mean, he's one of these that goes around home teaching and tells what I've been through, and I thought, I know what you've been through, Randy. (coughs) But he talks about, his mother wouldn't marry his dad, Lloyd Mecham, until he could play a musical instrument so he sent to Sears & Roebuck and he got him a saxophone. And then she wouldn't marry him until he learned how to fly an airplane. So he sent to Sears & Roebuck and he got an airplane (laughs) I mean that's how it was all the way through it. And so anyway,

they gave me a copy, Melody did when they got them printed up, and well, his aunt lived across the street here and she's real religious. And she came over here to use the phone. We didn't have phones in every place, but I did with the weather. And she came over and she saw that book laying there. And she said, can I read it and I said, sure! And she read some, Why! I wouldn't have this filth in my house. And I said, I don't care, I think it's funny. (laughs) But she just thought it was terrible, too, that he would write about his family that way.

MS: Oh wow.

BE: I mean he tells about putting uranium in their boots when they'd take somebody out to promote and the Geiger counter'd pick it up. And he tells all these crappy things, and all the times he was in jail. And it's funny. Then all of the sudden he goes straight. (laughs)

MS: That's great. I'd love to talk to him. That sounds like a fascinating person. Do you have any more stories like that, that you remember from being out there? Maybe just things you would do around camp to keep things lively?

BE: Gary, Gary and his cats.

MS: Tell me about Gary and his cats. This is Gary, your nephew.

BE: Gary is Jess's brother's son.

MS: Okay, so he's your nephew. Okay. So tell me about Gary and his cats.

BE: He's always, I mean, he's funnier than anything, he still is, and we all went to school together. And I said, Iona and I, and Maedell all married Ekkers. And we were always in school trying to figure out how we could be related, and it just came out that way, you know. And Phyllis, Tom Burr, and I just went to her funeral, Iona called and said, I forgot to get word to you that Phyllis passed away and the funeral's this afternoon. And I said, I'm going to go, cause she lived next door to me and everything. And I walk in the church and here's this big picture of her and I going to kindergarten together that my aunt had taken. And Iona said, how do you rate, and I said, well Helen always took pictures just like I do. And I said, she took that picture and, Phyllis thought it was really cute and, I, seemed like we had on dresses alike. Cause my aunt sewed all the time. And here was this great big picture and I thought.

MS: That's great. Well, tell…

BE: There's a lot of our class that's passed away. And you know, it kind of touches on you. But Jay got an arm cut off (and he's still alive) a corn picker, that Albert Marsing kid. And the Spadafore boys, they moved to Colorado, and we haven't heard from them. But I said, Dwendle Wilcox, his wife is married to the fellow that owns Hollow Mountain down here after he died. I said, we had a dozen, six boys and six girls. And Duane Scovell and this girl were going over to Huntington, to the graduation of his girlfriend and her boyfriend, and they rolled, wrecked and rolled down this hill. And they didn't find them until early in the morning, and that was the day after our graduation. And Duane's mother was in the hospital having a baby, so she didn't get to see the graduation. So we did the graduation over for the family. And Duane was like you, he had all kinds of photographic equipment and he had the yearbook ready, waited till the end of the year to do the year book, and so Iona and I finished up the year book, and they had a double funeral for them in Green River. But all of his camera equipment, he had Navajo blankets on his car, her engagement ring, everything. Somebody went down there and stole all that stuff out of that car before the law got there.

MS: With them in it, still!

BE: Yeah.

MS: Ah, that's horrible.

BE: Because the family wanted that stuff,

MS: That's horrible.

BE: Can you imagine going down and takin' something off of kids like that? But his photographic equipment, her ring, I can't remember, I can remember the Navajo blankets. And I said, it's sad.

PART 4

MS: Well, so you talked about cooking out at the mine sites. Did you do any other stuff? Like, did you do any prospecting, or any mining? You said you went down in the calyx hole once… (laughs) it freaked you out, but did you do any other work out there?

BE: Well, out there, I mean we had trailers. We had grandma and Harry's trailer, I mean, so we weren't inconvenienced that way. But, I said, you know the guys worked 9-5, and it was just like a tiny town, and then on Saturday, I mean on Friday everybody left and you didn't go back until Monday morning, it wasn't that bad, but there was another crew that did that. But Randy could tell you more about it, because him and his dad worked out there and I forgot all about that. And then his dad and mother went back there long after… I mean Odlum got screwed (in other words), and they thought they could find, and they started pulling pillars, and Mechams couldn't make it. They lost more than they made. But, uh, I didn't even think about Randy, but I remember that book he was writing. And he's got a sense of humor, oh god. And we knew him when, when he comes home teaching Jess said, I don't want any of that, I'm just visiting with you about mining or fishing or hunting or something. We weren't out there that long because Ray was trying to get somebody to run his place, and everything, and we went over to Green River.

MS: That's when you…

BE: That's when we started mining down here. It's where the John Wesley Powell Museum is located.

MS: Right, right, right.

BE: The John Wesley Powell Museum.

MS: So when did you start mining, and when did y'all stop and move to Green River to run the bar?

BE: Well, I really don't know, because we weren't out there. We'd gone down to Shootaring and around there to mine down there because the ore was a lot better.

MS: And what year was that?

BE: Well, I was pregnant with Justin and he was born in '64.

MS: So ’64, then you came back to Hanksville in…

BE: I came back when the girls started school.

MS: And that was when?

BE: And he took our son-in-law and his friend down there, and they mined. And his mother had died by that time.

MS: So he kept mining, but you came back to live in Green River.

BE: No, he never did go back to over here, we were just between here and North Wash and different places. We had, claims Green Lizard in San Juan County. But you just go off the bridge there and you turn, and I mean you’re in San Juan County. And it was just me and the kids, and him, and you know, I said, you can go in the tunnel and be cool. You come out and you just blah, you know, it is really hot down there. But we mined all over. But just him and I. If you wanted to take off you went and took off, and you was your own boss and everything.

MS: Well, what was that like being down there just as a family working in mining? Did you enjoy that?

BE: We had some Indians who’d come up to our camp, one little girl would beat it over to our trailer, and she would slide in a booth in the trailer, and she’d slide in against the wall. And as she came out, she cleaned up all the leftovers off everybody’s plate and even drank the coffee. And here she was barefooted and all this kind of stuff, and long dress you know. So I told the kids, we’re going to put some jeans and shirt on her and some shoes. Well I find out why they wear those long dresses. They don’t house break, (laughs) house break like a dog, they don’t, the kids don’t know about it, and they just squat and do their job and get up. And here she was, she couldn’t get out of her jeans to figure out what it was, so we let her go back to her dress. But her mother was the most beautiful person I ever saw. And she had black, really coal black hair, and shiny. And they were taking ooze, it’s like the cactus. And that’s what you use, like we use conditioner and stuff. And they lived up to Harold’s camp, and we had a camp down below ‘em there. But Riter would get their relatives to come up. He’d go down there and pick ‘em up, and he’d sit on the back of the ore truck, and they’d go in the mine, bring out a wheelbarrow and go up the ramp, drop it in the dump truck, and he’d give’m a dollar, and they’d go back in. Work all day long, and I said, that’s not right! And then Darys, one guy had a real bad shoulder, and he couldn’t work, and Darys said, “Oh get here on the table and I’ll fix it.” So he went and took some ketchup with some vinegar in it, and rubbed it, and they were thinking the rubbing helped him, but anytime anybody got sick they’d come in and we always called him ol’ doctor Ekker. But the surprise was one night he…this guy brought his wife in there and she is pregnant. You can deliver, you can deliver! Oh no! Take them to Hanksville to my mother! Jess’s mother delivered about half of the kids here in town, she was a midwife, and everything. I said, I can remember racing to Price to have Sybil, and she wanted to go. And I thought, I am not having this kid in a car! (laughs) I don’t care if you want to deliver your own grandkids. (laughs) But I delivered a baby on the ambulance, and I know what that’s like. I mean, the mother was drunk happy, the father wasn’t too happy about the deal. He wouldn’t even get in the ambulance to cut the cord. And just as soon as he was born, he just let it fly. Pee and shit and everything. I said to his mother, you deserve this. She was, oh! She was uncooperative. And Lisa Wells, she said, “What are we going to do?” And I said, “We’re going to pull off the road here.” And I was screaming at Duke, the fellow that owns the burger shack down there, and I was screaming at him to get to the hospital. I said, no pull off here, we’re going to have to deliver this kid in front of a

Roadway Inn (laughs). You know. And so, they even gave me a thing saying I delivered the boy. A birth certificate (laughs). Named him Jesse.

MS: That's great.

BE: And I said, that's spooky. I mean, they can come the wrong way, you got to get the oxygen to them immediately. And I said, that's spooky. I never want to deliver another kid, but, and then to have the mother drunk and cussing the whole time. I said, the ambulance, I could write a book on the stuff on the ambulance.

MS: (Laughs) Yeah, I bet you've seen it all.

BE: And I said, this kid came in from up county and he went to school with my girls, and so I was measuring him to get the crutches for a broken leg, and he said, so what are you measuring me for? And I said, you know Springer we got to have this for the mortician, and it'd scare those kids to death (laughs).

MS: (Laughs) That's great.

BE: I was on that ambulance 20 years.

MS: 20 years! Wow!

BE: I said, these bodies are getting too heavy, I don't need this anymore.

PART 5

BE: I remember waiting tables for fifty cents an hour.

MS: Rely on tips when they came right? Well, look, do you mind if I ask you a couple more questions about mining, and then…?

BE: That's all I know. But let me get you dialing Randy's number.

MS: Would you rather do that?

BE: Yeah, but I can call him and see if he's there.

MS: I don't know if I can do that today, I can't go there today, but I'd love to meet him today on the chance that I get to come back.

BE: Do you want me to mention you to him?

MS: That would be wonderful and I'll get his phone number so I can, cause I think I'm coming back.

BE: He keeps on trying to sell me a car for $600. He says, Lavar and I are going to the Holy Land and we want this for tickets. I said, I'll give you some National Geographics and you won't be over there getting shot at. But he wants to go over to the Holy Land, and I said, "You went from the town drunk to the person who wants to do all this stuff?"

MS: Even the worst can take a turn, huh? That's amazing. That's good for him. I'm excited to meet him, but, uh…

BE: But you know, Randy was extreme one way, and now he's obnoxious the other way.

MS: Well, is there anything else that you can think of that you want to say about the mining industry? Or uranium or what it's done for you?

BE: Randy was out there, him and his dad were, and I forgot about that. We weren't out there that much. Jess was out there mining, and we got married, and we lived out there in his mother and Harry's trailer cause Harry was doing all the drilling. We were laughing, the rig was parked in here when Harry died, quit drilling. And I had come home from Denver to marry Jess, and so I brought my television with me. And so, Jess had…well my dad had one in his house in Green River. And he said, what are you going to do with this TV, and I said, oh take it to Hanksville; they don't even have electricity hardly. But Grandma and Mart had a light plant, that was her second husband. And so we put this mast up on this drill rig, and put a pair of bed springs on it, and we got television! And that was the days of the roller derby, and we had all the miners and all the single guys at our house at night watching this. And I said, we had the only TV in town for years! And a light plant.

MS: Where was this at? Was that down at Hanksville?

BE: huh?

MS: Where was that at?

BE: Right across the field there, to the east of my home here.

MS: Right across the field, alright.

BE: And then they put this, pool hall in when the Pershing missile base was here. We had five hundred guys who couldn't leave. And so we rented my dad's trailer to one of them and Grandma and Mart built that pool hall, and I mean, they had, uh, pool tables and everything. And when they…they were firing the Pershing missiles down to Arizona. And so anyway, when their thing was done, they left. Year later I'm working at the café, and here comes these guys from Germany into the café. And they were here on that deal, they wanted their family to come back and see where they'd had to stay. And so I said, it was really nice, because I said, they remembered the whole town, and we played ball, we did everything. And so, they came back to visit us. When you get five hundred guys, all of them didn't come at once, and here they were bringing their families back to Utah where they spent their time, and it was amazing. I said to do the moon walk now, when his wife's getting her head put back together, you know, I said, that's amazing. Just hope nothing happens, because she's really progressing fast.

MS: It's amazing isn't it?

BE: They had to take the piece of her skull out because of the pressure and everything.

MS: What would lead a person to do something like that? It's just kills me that that kind of … ah! Terrible, terrible.

BE: Yeah, it's amazing what they do with medicine anymore.

MS: Medicine too! Well, can I ask you one more question? And this is something that everybody has said about you, and I think it's wonderful. I've been told that you have just helped so many people, get claims. Now, are you, is the AEC the one that is paying for the health of the uranium miners? Who is it that actually is doing that, and how have you helped people get the money that

has helped them survive today, you know, with their medical conditions associated with uranium mining? Can you tell me about that just a little bit? That's my last question, then I'll leave you alone, I promise.

BE: (laughs) Well, I said, you know it's amazing what you can do for people, and I said, I helped with the HEAT program. I help… I've been a judge of election for thirty five years, and I said, you can only do that if you don't have a relative running (Laughs). And I said, I can remember when we used to have the election in my house over there. And here would be these old timers, come in and get comfortable in my chairs, and Jess said, you don't/can't be this close to the polls. Now get our ass out of here. Well we can, you know. And he said, no you can't there are rules you know. And so Sam Wells, he was father of the bishop, and he chewed. And Jess said, come out here and look. He said, looked like a gunshot doe walked around our house where he spit his old tobacco. (laughs)

MS: Spitting

BE: And he, he wanted to get married in the temple, and the bishop, Glenn P. Johnson, wouldn't let him when he wanted to get married. He said, you got to quit that chewing. Oh I promise not to chew in the temple.

MS: (Laughs)

BE: And when he died down there, his daughter…no, when he died, his son was the head of the state road deal, and my nephew worked for UDOT, and they were all down to Hite trying to save the ferry so Gwyn called me and she said, go stay with Pearl while I go down there and get the guys down there in time Sam died. Well I go down there at the house, and she's bathing him, she's putting a diaper on, she's putting his teeth in, she's putting a diaper looking thing to hold his teeth in, and I thought, I've never done this before (laughs). And I thought, you get into all kinds of things around here. You know, it's a thing to do, but a lot of people don't do it. You know, it's the same thing when her husband died. I could have packed him out of the house in my arms. He had arthritis and stuff, but anyway, she had him all ready to go, diaper and teeth in and everything you know. But another thing, I shouldn't be saying this. You can turn those things off.

(End of interview)

ON-SITE INTERVIEW WITH MERVIN MILES AT COPPER GLOBE MINE

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: July 13, 2011
LOCATION: Copper Globe Mine, San Rafael Swell, Utah

PART 1 – Storage Cave

MM: That is some of the copper from the portals that we'll go to in a while, and they was following that seam. It dips to the west quite a bit. This was a storage bin that they used, probably for dynamite and probably for some of their groceries, I would think because it is always cool in there. It's about 50 feet deep, and that's all that I know they used it for was storage for materials for the mine.

MS: OK, describe the seam for us one more time.

MM: It's just a seam of copper, and little tiny bits that slope to the west. And when we see the portals, we'll see the same thing, which will be in a little while, we'll see that portal.

MS: OK, just before we close out this shot, this is July 13th. This is the San Rafael Oral History Project, and we're here with Mr. Mervin Miles of Orangeville, Utah. And we are at Copper Globe, Utah.

MM: Copper Globe Mine.

MS: Copper Globe Mine, which is the copper mine here in Utah.

PART 2 – Vertical Mine Shaft

MM: …because all you see left of it now in the shaft is pick marks. And it was all done with a hand pick. There are no blasting sites, bulges where they used any kind of explosives. And I've been told, and I don't know whether this is fact or not, it was 1600 feet deep. I doubt that because back in the late 1850s they had no way of getting air to them. And I would suspect that down that deep, if it is 1600 feet, they'd have a problem with air. So how deep it is, I really don't know.

Continued:

MS: Yeah, it is beautiful, how square it is, or how squared off it is, is just amazing.

MM: Yes, how square, the corners are square. And you can see even the desert varnish on the top. It started to build back on it. So it's just phenomenal.

PART 3 – BLM Compliance

MS: So what you were doing was looking at the safety issues concerning a lot of these mine sites after they were abandoned, right?

MM: That was one of the things that we all did in the BLM is when the public started to come in, we wanted to reduce the hazards that was out there. Then in the Sinbad area on a lot of those claims where they drilled some big holes, about maybe 18-inch diameter hole. Well when we found some of them, we had gotten a report of a person's dog who fell down in it. So we went down and investigated, and we did make them come back and plug those holes to take care of the safety hazards. But if you wanted to look down in one of those holes, just take a signaling mirror and get the sun just right, shine it in the mirror, and shine it down that hole and you can see down there for several hundred feet.

MS: And that indicates more or less how deep it was, right?

MM: Most of the time we couldn't see the bottom, but if we couldn't see it, even if we could, it was still a hazard. And so all BLM people were always trying to alleviate the hazard that was on public land so people didn't get into trouble out there.

PART 4 – Cabin/Bunkhouse

MM: I should have brought the little picture…I have a picture of me sitting in a big wood chair right there.

MS: Could we get you to get right in front of it right there? Can you get in there?

MM: Yes.

MS: Well, we'll do it in just a second, but I was just curious. You're allowed to go in?

MM: Yes, we can still get in there. These were living quarters, and I don't know who lived here, somebody connected with the Copper Globe claims that was here. In a minute I'll show you the water storage cistern they had for water here. But this is just a cabin where they lived. It's got a fireplace in it and some bunk beds and that kind of stuff.

MS: Let me have you repeat that. Just a second, I'm going to get the volume turned up on this. OK, tell us again about the structure.

MM: The structure itself is just a dirt-covered roof where people lived here when they was working these claims. And they even stayed here while they was doing their assessment, their yearly assessment. There's an old fireplace inside and some old bunk beds inside. And they always had food here, and I'll bet you when we look there's still food here. The people come, and they leave a can of pork and beans or whatever inside.

MS: Alright, well let's head inside.

Continued inside:

MM: We're inside the cabin now and you see shirts hanging on the wall. There's a mirror on the wall. There's a big double bed, fireplace in the far end of it, with bunk beds on this side, a pleasant little storage bin. Looking over here on the shelving, you see a can of milk, can of tuna; there's some coffee there (laughs). Just a few supplies that people kind of want to leave. There's even a coffee pot there and a little whisk broom to sweep the floor (laughs). There's some sliced green beans. Some dish soap so you can wash your dishes and a towel rack.

MS: And none of the cans are bulging so maybe you can still eat it.

MM: Yes, right. (both laugh) You could probably still eat them, but I won't attempt them today.

MS: That's a good idea, good idea.

Continued (video out of focus):

MM: I'm holding in my hand an old flour sifter that was made out of a #10 can. And it's got a handle on here the end and a handle to hold on to and they'd put their flour in here to sift it prior to making sourdough or biscuits or cornbread or whatever they might have made in this cabin. This was a very important tool (holds up sifter), about as important as a frying pan. But I have this in my hand and this is really a collector's item, which I will leave here (laughs).

PART 5 – Privy

MM: This is the outside plumbing. When you had to go potty, why this is where you came. This was probably a hole six or eight feet deep. The old toilet seat is still here. So when Mother Nature called, this is where you came. There was a little shack here and a shed over it.

MS: I'm going to get an up-close shot of the seat. Look at it. The enamel is plumb cooked off of it, isn't it?

PART 6 – Water Storage Cistern

MM: OK, we're here at Copper Globe Mine. We came from the privy and the house, and now we're at the rock storage area where they caught water off the ledges when it would rain. This rock wall you see here continued clear on over and hooked on to that other ledge. And they caught water in here all the time and this was their main source of water. And over on that end that's gone, down near the bottom, they had like an inch pipe that come out with like just a regular tap on it. So from the cabin they'd come down here and draw a bucket of water and go back to the cabin. This was one of their main sources of water. And it was good pure rain water, I suppose. But this was rocked up. And this other section over here, when you look at it, they had a roof over that to keep the sun out from evaporating so much of it. I don't know what else to tell you.

MS: That's perfect. That's great. That's really neat.

MM: But you can see the slots in there. They had a cover, and this wall went clear over to here. Now I was hoping we could see that tap that come out between the cracks. It was just a regular tap. And that is where they came and drew their bucket of water.

PART 7 – Steps in Cliff Face

MM: This is a ladder here at Copper Globe. This is a ladder that goes up this ledge. And when you look close you can see the pick marks for the toe marks, and they would leave the cabin, come here and walk up this ledge over the other side and jump down onto a barrel. And then they could go to the portals and work, and it would save them from walking clear around this butte. This was a shortcut, you might say, because it did cut off a lot of time and a lot of walking.

PART 8 – Portal 1

MM: OK, we're standing at one portal here at the Copper Globe Mine. This was opened up many years later than the original portals here. And this shaft is dug down until they hit the copper seam, and then they followed it back like a mine. But this part of it is a real hazard, and this here needs to be left, but it needs a good solid grate over it because all of this that we have talked about today is Emery County history, and we don't want to lose the history of Emery County. Now there was a ladder where we could walk down and go in there, but the ladder is gone, so we'll walk in the other portal.

Continued:

MM: One thing that I forgot to mention…

MS: Is the winch?

MM…is this winch. Maybe you'll want to get that on tape, too?

MS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MM: OK, still at Copper Globe Mine at one of the portals, this little was winch laying on the ground sat up over the portal. And they had some cable, which shows here, and a bucket on the end and a handle when they brought the sand and stuff up, they'd winch it up out of there (howling noise in background) with this little winch, and winch it up out of there and dump out here on the…you can see the tailings out here on the side.

MS: I think that was Mr. Anderson.

MM: Oh, it could be. (laughs)

MS: I don't know what else that would have been.

Scott Ure: Wrong direction.

MM: Yeah, it was over here.

MS: What did it sound like?

MM: I don't know, maybe a coyote or…

MS: Coyote? (laughs)

MM: Yeah, could have been.

PART 9 – Portal 2 (Video is out of focus)

MM: We're ready. This is just another portal here at Copper Globe Mine. This is one of the earliest where they tunneled back in following the copper seam back to mine it out to take over to the smelters. Now there was another portal north of here, which is all filled in now with rain water and sand. It's completely filled it up. But they would take the ore out of here to the smelters that we'll come to in a few minutes. This is all dug basically with pick, but you can also

see some blasting marks in this where they've used gun powder or black powder or whatever. They've used it here to help them here with this tunnel.

MS: Excellent. Let's go ahead…we'll film going in there, if you just want to keep filming, we'll walk in.

Continued:

MM: Now on the side here you can see the little copper vein that goes, and it slopes to the west. But you can see it all the way along as far back as you can go. And this is probably three or four hundred feet deep now, but a lot of it has filled in with the water and the sand coming in. So a lot of it has filled in. But if you look here, you can still see the pick marks, and then probably some blasting marks, whatever powder they might have used. But for the most part, it was all done by hand. And there was some tracks with a little car that came down here, like a railroad track, they was about an inch wide on top, and had a little car, and they would push the ore out of here on that track.

MS: Perfect, perfect. Great! (Why don't you get a shot of the seam? It looks really good right there.) This is great. Did you say about four or five hundred feet, huh?

MM: Yeah, you can walk back here quite a ways.

MS: Oh, wow.

MM: But it fills in until you can't get in there.

MS: Oh, yeah. So it used to be this high, but down there.

MM: Yes, you see where somebody's laid here? They've had something there, and they've been laying there where it's cool.

MS: You can see a nice pocket outline.

MM: Yes. (laughs)

MS: Well, I'm really glad we came over here to this one. This is really neat.

PART 10 – Wood Pile

MM: This is the wood pile that they piled up here, what is left of it, is still here at Copper Globe. And this wood was the fuel for the smelters to smelt the copper from the veins of copper they was bringing out. However, the wood pile that we see here today is only about a third of what was here when I was here in 1957. People have just hauled it off, used it for whatever. But you noticed how they've stacked it. And it's both pinion and juniper. That's what they hauled in, and they hauled it from right around this area, team and wagon. They actually didn't have any saws, just chopped with an axe and hauled it in with a team and wagon.

PART 11 – Smelters

MM: This here foundation that you see here, still at Copper Globe, and this was the big smelter of the two. You can see the little openings on the side, that's where they could take the product out, they could bring wood in. The entrance was right here where they could carry wood in to fire up the smelter to get the copper from the whatever rock it is in. But this is the big smelter, and there used to be lots of clinkers like the one on the rock there laying around here, but people have carried most of it off. Now there's another little smelter we'll see in a second, but this was the big smelter of the two.

MS: Alright let's just walk right over there…keep rolling.

MM: Do you want me to go right inside?

MS: If you want to stand right outside the door, and then we can take the camera in there after.

MM: This is the little smelter that they used, and it's still fully intact. Hopefully it can stay that way because it is a big part of Emery County history here. And this little shack needs to be restored to protect this historical site. But we need somebody to protect this from people.

MS: Excellent.

MM: Well, as you can see in the back, the smokestack went out the back, clear back of the smelter. Here is where they put the product in. Down here, this little outlet, is where they took the product out. But they could do it on a very small scale here. But everything is still intact here, and it needs to be kept that way. It's just so neat to see this historical site.

MS: Now when you say "the product" down at the bottom, do you mean…

MM: The copper.

MS: The copper. So they put it down there.

MM: Well, they could take the ashes, you know, from the wood. They could take that out, plus the copper. And I don't know how they separated it, but they did.

MS: So the copper and ashes…they'd put the raw ore in…

MM: Put the raw ore in (thunder in background), then the wood, and then built the fire.

MS: Perfect.

MM: And you're getting the thunder. We better get our butt out of here.

MS: We better.

(End of interview)

ON-SITE INTERVIEW WITH JOHN ANDERSON AT HIDDEN SPLENDOR MINE

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: July 14, 2011
LOCATION: Hidden Splendor Mine, San Rafael Swell, Utah

PART 1

MS: Today is July 14th, 2011

JA: 2011

MS: We are on the San Rafael Swell at the Hidden Splendor Mine, and we are here with …

JA: John Anderson

MS: John Anderson from Salt Lake City and we are working on the San Rafael Oral History Project. So what we are going to do to start off, just state your name and where you are from one more time and we'll roll from there.

JA: Well, I am John L. Anderson. I am not the country and western singer, or I am not the one that ran for president in 1980. I'm just an old miner. I am 74 years old. I was born April 16, 1937 in Salt Lake and, I've been in mining all my life. The first experience I had with mining was my dad was resurrecting a silver mine out in Nevada when I was six years old, and that got me interested in mining. My father always was interested in it, so was my grandfather.

MS: (Instruction)…So you were mentioning a little bit about your father and how he got into mining and how that got you interested in mining.

JA: Well my father always was interested in mining. His father had a gold mine on Mount Nebo called the Little Eva and whatever became of that I don't know. My grandfather was killed when my father was seven years old. We lost track of an awful lot of things. My father got interested in the gold and silver mines we have out in Nevada when he was just a young guy, I guess about 20 years old, and as time went on he got interested in other mines. And the biggest thing was in about 1950. A few people that could see the future, could see uranium and the energy that came out of it for the little bit that it took to produce it. And my dad searched around for people that knew, or had something to do with uranium mines. My first trip down here on the Swell was in the winter of 1950. I was 13 years old. I came down with my dad and some other miners. My dad had an old blue 1941 Pontiac, which was a great car. I mean it did things that cars shouldn't do. But, uh, we came down and I saw the Temple Mountain area and the area over around the Family Butte. My dad had made acquaintance with an old gentleman from Wellington, his name was Mr. Day and he had 11 claims there on the west side of Temple Mountain. And I remember he had a green 1936 Ford four door sedan that he thought was the, he thought as much of it as my dad thought of his Pontiac. But he was interested in leasing my dad these claims on Temple Mountain. Well, my dad was interested. We drove down and took a look at the property. It belonged to two Italian sheep herders from Price, Johnny and Charlie Patini. They had a small tunnel that went into the west side of Temple Mountain. And I remember digging into the ore that Mr. Day had. He had some adjoining claims. And my dad told me, "don't handle it, you could get uranium burns." And of course, being a 13 year old kid, I knew everything. And we took a pick and we dug some of the ore out of the seam that was showing and I never let my dad know that

my fingers tingled. I had some minor exposure there, nothing serious, but after he told me don't, you know, you know how kids are, I did it anyway. But the reason my dad didn't go for that is these other people that were with him were not interested. It was 92 miles of dirt roads from Wellington to get over to Temple Mountain and every time there's a storm, the roads wash out. And my dad was left alone. He couldn't finance it himself and then we never had anything to do down here again until 1955. And at that time everybody was talking uranium. That was the biggest thing going on in the United States. People were buying 4 wheel drives, which were brand new at the time and looking at Geiger counters, buying uranium stocks and it was something everyone talked about. There was an old saying, "Don't talk about uranium for anything less than a million dollars."

And there was the story of Charlie Steen over there in Moab, who later on I met Charlie, and he was very stubborn, but he had a fantastic mine there at the Mi Vida. And then there was talk here about the Hidden Splendor, and as time went on, well of course, I'm getting ahead of the story. I started buying mining stocks when I was 14 years old, off the money I made off my first paper route and as time went on, it was a time when people were interested in mining and oil and some of the stocks went up and I started making a few dollars and by the time I was a senior in high school I had $30,000 dollars worth of stocks, believe it or not. Which is pretty good for an 18 year old paper boy, but if you figure that that money, in today's money, be about five time that much, that's pretty good for a paper boy. And the emphasis was on uranium mining and all the things that were going to do, up until then only the government, the AEC, had bought uranium, and they were the only people you could sell it to. And they were anxious to buy it for supposedly nuclear, er, peaceful purposes, atom bombs, hydrogen bombs, nuclear power plants, and whatever else. The next year, 1956, the government quit buying uranium because they were so heavily loaded with what people produced. If you could come up with a sizeable uranium deposit discovery they paid out bonuses of from $10 to $100,000 dollars just for going and locating it and they would have their engineers come out and take a look. I mean there was lots and lots and lots of money in it.

MS: Hold on just a minute, hold that thought right there. (Wind in background)

PART 2

MS: So back to talking about the Atomic Energy Commission, what they would pay for, for uranium?

JA: Okay, if you discovered a sizeable uranium deposit, there was rewards out from anywhere from as I understand $10,000 to $100,000, which was quite a magnificent sum of money in 1950 and there were prospectors out all over the west hunting for uranium. And the best thing you could do was to buy a Geiger counter. My dad had a Geiger counter. As I remember, he paid about $105 for it. It was about this big, it was aluminum and it had a little trap door on the side that you opened and you took out a probe with a cord attached to it. And then there was a gauge on it, on the Geiger counter, and you would touch the rock with the probe and it would tell you how rich the rock was or how poor it was. And it was quite a good business at the time. But anyway, 1956 the Atomic Energy Commission finally decided they had all the uranium ore that they needed, and probably warehouses full that they didn't need. So they took the bonuses off it. But miners still kept shipping uranium, as long as the mills would buy, they were producing uranium up until about 1958 or 9. Some of them had contracts with the government. And Hidden Splendor here was the richest uranium deposit as far as I'm concerned that I ever heard about at the time. Most of the uranium that they mined was about 1 percent or less and you could mine

under the right conditions low grade uranium that was 10 hundredths of 1 percent which is only three times as rich as what the radiation the sun throws at us on a hot July afternoon at 3 o'clock in the afternoon we are getting an average of 3 hundredths of 1 percent radiation from the sun. And that doesn't bother most people unless you are susceptible and you get carcinoma real easy. But anyway, um, there were uranium mines all over the whole western United States, they were finding uranium up in Alaska and Canada. I don't know if they ever found any in Mexico or not, but Utah seemed to be the center of the uranium mining industry and we had another thing here, we had the Salt Lake Stock Exchange, which I'm sure that most people have never heard of. It operated from 1888 until about 1980. It was on Exchange Place in downtown Salt Lake. It had, when they closed down, it had 90 different stocks listed on it, mostly mining and oil. And by the time it closed down, one time or another, I'd owned stock in almost every one of those companies. But, the government got too heavy handed with the stock exchange and people were buying penny stocks instead of New York stocks. And the New York brokers didn't like that and so they were able to finally to shut down the Salt Lake Stock Exchange, which was terrible. But, fortunes were made and fortunes were lost overnight. One of the greatest things I did was in 1954 there was a new stock came out called Uranium Incorporated and not having a lot of money, being a little paper boy, I bought 1,000 shares for $60, and the next year I sold it for $1.05 a share, and that $60 was now $1,050. And I did that a number of times. And it was just fantastic and I had this beautiful fiancé, we were going to get married and in the afternoons sometime after school I'd drive her downtown in my old '42 Plymouth and we would go over to the stock broker's business and we would stand there and hold hands and see what the stocks had done that day, "Oh this is pretty good Kaibab uranium is up two cents today," "Well John what does that mean?", "Well that means I made about $35 on paper." I mean it was fantastic, it was really exciting. And then there was one of the other great ones I got was the Tar Baby Mining Company and I bought that stock for 10 cents a share. It was an old silver mining company up by the Alta ski resort. And a month later the stock went to 75 cents a share and I sold mine out at 52 and ½, but I made a fantastic profit on that. And the market was so hot that these new issues had come out for a penny a share and a week or two later you'd sell them for 3 or 4 cents a share on people's anticipation. And then when the government quit buying uranium anymore, the market collapsed, and here I was this rich guy with this beautiful fiancé in 55 and 56, I'm still delivering newspapers and I've got a pile of worthless stock certificates (laughing).

MS: Well we're here at the Splendor, so why don't we shift gears and talk a little bit about the history of the Hidden Splendor.

JA: Okay

MS: And then work into how, and what you did at the Hidden Splendor as a miner.

JA: Okay

MS: So start with the history and then we'll talk a little bit about what you did here.

JA: The story that I have heard about Hidden Splendor was that Vernon Pick discovered this fantastic deposit in the early 50's. 1950, '51, '52, somewhere in there. And the story was that he went up to Tomsich Butte which is about 10, 12 miles north of here as the crow flies and probably 18 miles on the ground, and he supposedly rode a log down from there to Hanksville, which is down below Hidden Splendor here, and he saw this magnificent deposit and staked it up. That's one of the stories, there are other stories, and which one's right, I don't know. I never met Mr. Pick. But that floating down on the log, the river usually is not more than 2 or 3 feet deep and I don't think you're going to float very far in that kind of water. But other times it does get real

deep, just like we had a flood yesterday and you can see it's full now, I bet its 5 or 6 feet deep today. But that's a long ways to float on log, I don't care what anybody says, but anyway.

MS: Hold on just a second, hold that thought, the wind pretty bad?

PART 3

MS: Alright, so back to the history, you already talked about Vernon J. Pick.

JA: Well in 1955, he sold this mine to Atlas Corporation for $10 million dollars cash, in today's money that'd probably be at least $50 million or more, and my attorney, I didn't know him at the time, he made the transaction. His name was Allen Elgin, and he had an office in the old Felt Building across from the old post office on Main Street in Salt Lake. And on his wall, he had that check framed. They'd run, they cancelled it by running needles through it so that you couldn't, nobody could do it again, but it was something else, $10 million dollars cash.

Now what was Atlas, to start with? Atlas was a tire products company, auto products company, and they sold tires, batteries, fan belts, stuff like that. And their stock was worth $2.50 a share at the time. Nobody was interested in Atlas Corporation. And then uranium was big, so they did a stroke of genius, they bought the mine for $10 million dollars cash. And what did that do for them? Their stock doubled in one day from two and a half to $5 dollars a share, became one of the most actively traded stocks on the American Stock Exchange, and then they expanded, they went into milling uranium ore and a bunch of other things. They became a giant corporation and they got their start here with the Hidden Splendor Mine.

PART 4

MS: Rolling, Rolling, Okay

JA: Okay, Anyway, there was no road down into here at that time. And they built the road, I was told Emery County built the road, but I'm not sure of that. Maybe the AEC or the government agency did, but they put about 20 miles of road in here so they could start producing uranium ore and put a bunch of men to work. And they mined here from about 1954 to '59 or '60. And I was told, now I was never here at that time, but I was told they had about 1500 people in here, which is hard to believe looking at what's left, which is nothing. But I was told most of them lived in trailers and that the trailers went from way up this way clear on down a mile into the bottom of the gulch. And they went over on the other side. I could take you over there and show you where there are some fences that are standing. And there's an old destroyed 1937 Ford pickup truck over there that was left behind. But anyway they had a sizable town here and then when the government quit buying uranium anymore, Atlas had produced about $6 million dollars and they paid $10 million for the mine, so they're about $4 million in the hole. So being good businessmen they took that $4 million dollars off as a loss on their income tax. They came down here and burned down all the buildings, bulldozed everything. It's worthless, we paid $10 mil for it, we only got 6 out of it, we got a $4 million dollar tax write off that we can use for our other products. So they came out of here smelling like a rose. And there's no potable water around here, but down in the bottom of the gulch somebody had drilled an oil well and they got water instead of oil, and that was where they got their water supply. There's a place I call the town square, down just over the hill where you'll see a lone cottonwood tree, and to me that was, I was told that was

the town square. The amazing thing is that that much wealth came out of something that looks worthless. It was a hidden splendor, literally. But anyway.

MS: Wonderful, that's great, that's wonderful. So that gives a good history of the Hidden Splendor, now let's shift in then to when you came on the scene.

JA: Okay

MS: Alright

JA: Alright

MS: You and your father

JA: That's where I was going next

MS: Excellent, excellent

JA: Are you ready?

MS: Ready

JA: Okay. Well Atlas abandoned the place in about 1960. And my father being a miner and he was forward looking, he realized that there was a future for uranium. And he had a friend named Lynn Brady, who was also an old miner and they got together and Lynn said, "We ought to really look at trying to get the Hidden Splendor Mine." And so they did get a lease on it, from whoever still owned it. And they came down here in 1966 before the price of uranium started to go up and anyone was really interested in it again. And there are some old cabins down there and they fixed those cabins up, put a new roof on them. They had a stove made out of a 55 gallon oil drum down there. My dad even went so far as he took the carpet off our front room floor in Salt Lake and brought it down here and put it down there in the cabin. And he brought down a stack of old papers from 1966, as far as I know if the carpet's still there, they're still under the carpet. And of course that didn't sit well with my mother and he had to buy her a new carpet. But at least they had a nice carpet down there in the cabin. And what they would do was uh, these were two old guys, my dad's had a couple of heart attacks and he's a serious diabetic and uh, Lynn's health wasn't the best and they would, uh, I suppose for the most part, enjoy each other's company and talk about girls they used to know, and mines they did. And if they felt good, they'd get, my dad had a 1953 Pontiac and Lynn Brady had an old bicycle, and they'd put the bicycle in the trunk of the Pontiac, just in case the Pontiac broke down, then Lynn could ride for help. Once upon a time, he rode 15 miles from what I understood, to get some help, to get the Pontiac going again. But they, on a day they felt good, they would drive up to the mine and they'd do some work. And then we ended up in litigation over it. And my father had spent the last year of his life down here. And he died on July 4th of 1968. And then I got involved. And uh, we bought up some claims that were around here. We tried to get the Hidden Splendor, but the people that owned it would not deal with us. And of course that is their prerogative. But that was where I first got interested in it and I could see the deposits down here and I knew enough about mining that I know there are some rich mines down here. And that was how I got involved in it. My first trip down here was probably in late 1968. And I came down in the old Pontiac that he left me, which I inherited. But anyway, I have held on to these old mines, all these many years, come down and done so much work every year or paid the maintenance fee. We have to pay $140 dollars a year to the government for nothing, just to hold the claims anymore. If you are not actively mining them, and if you are not actively mining them well you can't really afford to with all the environmental restraints there are at the present time. But there was a second uranium boom that started about

1968, which died down again in the early 1970's. Then there was a third uranium boom in the late 70's. And then it died a couple years later. And I've held the property all these many years. I used to come down here, try to come down here on the 4th of July and stay overnight down there in the cabins before they closed the road. And I felt close to my father down here, I really did, um. I don't know what else you'd like me to say about it, other than how much I enjoy coming down here. And I look forward to the day that I can open up these mines, that I can get the government off my back and I can get some small mining company that's willing to take a chance, to lease my mines and try to put them into production. That is what my long range goal is. I don't have just one or two mines down here, I've got a number of them and I have some others in different locations on the Swell. But in the meantime, I'm 74 years old, I'm not going to be around forever, I've had 4 heart attacks, I'm a diabetic. I wanted to mention one other thing that I forgot to mention. My father was a serious diabetic. And he had to have insulin; he had to have two shots every day. And I watched him. And he would "chhh"(quick motion of hand onto his leg) in this leg in the morning and "chhh" in that one at night, it'd go right through his overalls. And it just, I'd just go "ewh" (shivering) I don't want to ever do that." But fortunately when I became a diabetic I'm on pills. But there's no electricity around here for eighty miles and insulin has to be kept cold. Now how in the world did my dad keep his insulin cold? Well back in the mine there was a crack with a little seep and they took a bucket back in there, and the water was cold, it was just like in a refrigerator and that's the way he kept his insulin, which I thought was pretty ingenious. And then there was another thing, I mean they're down here all alone, miles away from nowhere, they don't know what's going on at home. So, uh, my dad could drive the old Pontiac up onto a hill, and turn the radio on and maybe get a station so they'd know what was going on in the outside world. And then of course it gets awfully cold down here in the winter. And how did they keep warm? Well over by Canesville somewhere there is a seam of coal right out on the surface and they used to take a couple of gunny sacks they'd put in the back of the old Pontiac and a pick and a shovel and spend a Sunday afternoon filling two or three gunny sacks full of coal that they'd burn in that homemade stove out of that 55 gallon drum and that was the way these old boys existed down here. My dad really loved it. Lynn was a great guy. He was a good companion to my dad. I wish things had gone better, but uh they haven't.

I could think a bit and come up with some more things if you are interested.

PART 5

JA: I've got mines in other locations.

MS: Back to Hidden Splendor mine and some of the mine work.

JA: Okay, now most of the mines that produced uranium, most of the uranium was 1% or less. A lot of it was around 10 hundredths. But here in the Hidden Splendor they hit a stope where they had the richest ore that, until 40 years ago, that had ever been found on the planet and it ran 28% pure coming right out of the ground. And that is hazardous to your health. The thing you need to remember, this was the 1950's and they didn't know much about radiation. And from what I was told, the miners would last about 30 or 45 days working back in there, and then they were done. They had radiation poisoning. And finally what they did, I was told they put a lead door over that part of the mine, to keep the radiation locked up from going into the rest of the mine. And I was told that most of those miners were dead within a year and a half, from radiation. I don't know

how many of them but uranium that is that rich is not hazardous to your health, its absolute poison. But that was one thing I thought of.

Um,

MS: What about your father and Lynn Brady? What kind of stuff did they build down there, did they use down there, to live, and what kind of equipment did they have to work with?

JA: Well, they had a compressor up here (pointing). They had an air compressor and a drill. And I imagine they had a mine car or two. And they had the old faithful Pontiac that drove them up to the mine you know whenever they wanted to go up there. Down there at the cabins, those were old cabins that were left from the 1950's. And they fixed them up, they put a new roof on them, and my dad, they put that homemade stove in there and the rug off our front room floor in Salt Lake. And they were, for cabins, they were in pretty good shape. They were wood on the outside and the thing that is so sad is that people have gone down there and they have destroyed those cabins. They've pulled the boards off the walls and use them to make bon fires out of it. When you go down there, you'll see how sad it is, how badly they've been destroyed, which is really bad. They could be fixed up for very little money. But it hurts me here (pointing to his chest) to see how badly hikers have destroyed the buildings down there.

To me it was a wonderful place to stay. If the weather was bad I'd sleep in that front room on that old carpet that had the 1966 newspapers under it. If the weather was good, I'd usually just sleep outside on the ground on the foam rubber mat.

Now I was thinking of some other things that happened. Now up here at the Little Susan, that's another mine, that's about 3 miles up the gulch here. Somebody had a sense of humor up there, cause they had two old crannies, two old out houses and they put on the nicer one "ladies only." (Laughing) I don't think there was a woman within 50 miles. But anyway, that was painted on it.

MS: That's great

JA: One of the other things that I think of is my boys came down here with me during the summer when they were out of school. And those kids climbed these hills and chased lizards and one thing or another. And they had the time of their lives down here. And they worked a pick and a shovel like I did. I used to bring Uncle Bob down here with me, he was, he had a drinking problem. He's long since passed on. He wouldn't drink around me, just like Lynn didn't drink around my dad. And Lynn and my boys would do most of the pick and shovel work and I'd push the wheelbarrow out and I'd dump it. That was what we did for the most part. And like I say, he had this old Ford pickup. The radio wouldn't work, but we'd park it up on a hill and there was a clothesline there at the Little Susan mine and we hooked some baling wire up to it and the radio worked (laughing).

MS: That's great, that's great.

JA: We'd listen to that, you know, listen to some western music. We had a good time doing that. And I'm trying to think of some of the other crazy things that happened.

MS: What about you as a prospector, you said you did a lot of prospecting, not so much pulling ore, but uh, what does that process entail? Kind of give us an example of how you come up and actually start prospecting for uranium, that's something I haven't heard much of from folks either, so it'd be good to hear.

JA: Okay, well are you just talking about uranium or gold and silver?

MS: Uranium in particular.

JA: Okay, well the first thing I look for is the right formation. I showed you on the way down here the Chinle Formation, and that's where you're going to, the Chinle and the Shinnarump, are where you're going to find your radioactivity. And if you look at the Wingate Formation, that tall one with the cliffs, it's a waste of time, there's no uranium in that. Or down below in the Moenkopi, which you can see around here, the red, the brown, there's no uranium in there. You've got to start out with the right formation. And then, what you need is a Geiger counter. And then just walk along the side of the cliff, checking every couple of feet to see what kind of a count you get. And if the count goes up, then you want to do a little digging and see what you run in to. If you don't find anything, then you want to go somewhere else. I think that's the best thing I can tell you, isn't it?

MS: Excellent, excellent. Do have any stories about maybe the highest count you've ever found or anything like that, that you can remember or where, I don't know if you'd want to say where.

SU: Let's take a break, we need to move the shade.

MS: Oh yeah, why?

SU: The sun's starting to hit the top of his head.

JA: I think I'm starting to feel a little heat.

PART 6

MS: Okay, excellent.

JA: I think the richest ore I ever found was around 1%, most of what you'll find won't be that rich. And if you find 1% ore, you generally you won't find an awful lot of it. It's where maybe ten million years ago a stream came by and it narrowed and a bunch of logs and debris gathered together there and then it was covered up and it was crushed. And you had a heavy concentration of material and that would make for the higher grade stuff. But most of it's just low grade. I was thinking of this guy that, uh, he was a flake, a promoter. I got him to bring me down here so I could do some assessment work over at the Ryan 101 Mine which is up by the Little Susan. And I had my boys with me, they were in high school, and Uncle Bob. And he had this 4 wheel drive with a trailer on it. Okay. And he left us here for two weeks. He was only going to leave us here a week and then he was going to come get us. Well, we ran out of food. We were down to one or two cans of chili left. And we had brought two 10 gallon cans of water. We used to go over to Spring City, Utah on the way down here and get some of that wonderful spring water, we'd bring down 20 gallons. And that would usually last us for how long we were going to be here. But anyway, he finally showed up. And we were way up on the cliff over there (pointing). He finally got here and picked us up and we headed down and, uh, he got a flat tire on the trailer. They used to call him round head. I mean his head was just as round as a marble, they called him round head. So, we happened to notice that the tire was flat. So I pounded on the cab. Uncle Bob and my boys and I are riding in the back, it's about 11 o'clock at night, "Hey round head, you got a flat tire on the trailer." And he stopped and got out and looked at it. I said "You got a spare?" He said, "Oh no, no, no, we just drive on into town." Eighty miles on a flat tire, no that isn't gonna work. So we went up the road and of course this flat tire is stirrin' up so much dust you can't believe it, I mean even in the dark you can see a dust trail behind us. And finally the tire came off. I pounded on the cab, "Hey round head, you lost a tire, you're down to the rim" "Oh that's okay,

we'll go to town." We went up about another 10 miles or so and the sparks are flying off the rim, off the rocks he's running over. And finally, he was going to drive to Green River that way. And I just told him, I said "No!", I said, "You're going to cause an accident. Somebody's going to run into you. The trailer's going to fall apart or something." Well what are we going to do?" And I said, "Well I know where there's a place we can ditch the trailer for tonight and you can come back with a spare tire." So it was kind of off-beat, I could show where this old road went. It was one that went under the freeway. So we went over there and we were unloading the stuff out of the trailer putting it in the back of the pickup. And we hear a coyote. Well, I howled back at the coyote, and we heard a couple more. Pretty soon it sounded like we were surrounded by coyotes and everybody started gettin' scared. You couldn't see 'em, it was dark. But you could hear 'em out there. So, Uncle Bob, I was doing all the coyote calling, and then he gave out with some goofy call and that stopped it. They weren't interested anymore. I don't know what he said in their language. But they went away and we never heard from them again that evening. And we left the trailer over there. That was kind of an interesting, amusing thing that happened.

MS: Yeah, that's a good story.

JA: Well there are so many other things I can think of but it takes me a while.

MS: That's quite alright. Well, let's see, what can you tell us, why would you feel it's important to preserve this history here, not only here at Hidden Splendor but the San Rafael Swell. Tell us your opinion on that.

JA: My opinion is to leave it the way it is. But people that want to come out here to camp, let them come out and camp. Leave it open, let the cattlemen bring their cattle out here. They're not destroying anything out here. I mean it's barren, just about as barren as it is on the moon. And there's going to be oil booms and uranium booms in the future. Just leave it for multiple use the way it is. As to lock it up and preserve it, I don't agree with that. It's too valuable a resource. The towns in Emery County need the revenue from people coming out here. One thing I think where the county has made a mistake is they haven't advertised what's out here. I have gone to their monthly land use meetings for two years. I've told them I'm against locking everything up wilderness. You're not going to get anything. You're going to get a couple of backpackers that are not going to do anything for your economy. But if you were to advertise some of the things that are out here, you'd bring people in here. Local people aren't much interested. People back east love stuff like this, they've never seen it. One of the interesting things would be to advertise the mines, the history of the mines. And that there was once a town here, now it's a ghost town, there's nothing left. And there's one thing that people like to do, if you can get 'em out here, and they've got a hammer or a pick, is to go break some rocks open, see what kind of interesting rocks they can find to take home. They're probably not going to find anything that is any good. But uh, well there's this rock that I got when I was in Utah out on the desert, I got a couple of 'em here in my rock garden. You know people go for things like that.

MS: What about the history? What of the history do you think is important for people to know when it comes to mining?

JA: The history of what happened. That's what's interesting. The stories of the miners, what happened. What they did. How they lived. How they existed out here. Things like that. Now, there was one of the miners that worked for us, that used to work down at, uh, I'm trying to think of the name of it, it's down in the Henry Mountains. And he had a mine down there in the 50's. And he hit a log of petrified wood and it was high grade. And he had these old, dynamite used to come in wooden crates. And he got a bunch of these wooden crates. And he dug that log to pieces with a pick, put it in the wooden crates and took it to the mill and he had over $8,000 dollars

worth of uranium out of that one log. Now one of my mines, there was a 18 foot log that was in the ceiling of the mine. It was black. It had turned black kinda like coal. As I remember it was 1%, it was pretty high grade stuff. We took a tape measure and we measured it, that was 18 feet long, and it was in the ceiling and we shipped it. There's interesting things like that, people are interested, petrified wood, or there are people that like to take, look for crystals and make earrings out of them. I had a fellow call me, I have some silver mines up there in Salt Lake County, and he wanted to know if I had any crystals up on any of my mine dumps. And said "Well, I know there's one mine over there." And he went up there and I don't know how long he took, picking over that mine dump, digging up crystals that he was going to cut up and make earrings out of. There's things like that, that people are interested in.

I think for the most part, people would just like to come out and see the scenery. And camp, be away from their friends for a couple days. The history is the big thing. To say that all these millions of dollars came out of here and there was once a town here and things like that. Those are things people like to hear.

MS: That's really neat, yeah. That makes a really cool, to think that millions of dollars really did come out of here.

PART 7

JA: Okay, well about the ore that they mine, they stock piled up at the mine and when they got enough for a semi load they were going to have probably McFarland and Hallenger, that do that sort of trucking business, come in and haul it off to the smelter. Well they ended up in litigation with the people that own the property who kept them from shipping any of the ore, so we never got anything out of it. But I wanted to talk to you about the wildlife a little. There are a lot of bats down here. You don't see them in the day time but when we were camped over there at the, over there in Chimney Canyon, there's an old mining camp over there and, uh, at night, you know we'd build a fire under a cottonwood tree there, and you'd hear a woosh, and a woosh. And you'd wonder what in the heck's going on? What was going on, I mean the bat, the gnats were just absolutely horrible. And when you build a fire the gnats are attracted to it. And the bats would fly, swoop down (motioning with hand) and they'd fly right above our heads and feed on those blasted gnats, those biting insects, I mean those things were horrible. But you'd hear the swish or you'd feel something, but you never saw them in the darkness and we didn't have any lights over there or anything. But we were sure grateful for the bats.

There's another thing that nobody ever thinks of, and that is as many old mine tunnels as I have opened up, around the entrance of the mine tunnel, there's usually a little dampness and that will breed gnats and other things, and it also breeds some little frogs or toads. There's these cute little green, I always called 'em frogs, maybe they're toads, about the size of a half dollar. And you'll find them in the dirt, right around the mouth of the mine tunnel. They're there eating the gnats and the insects that come there for the moisture. And whenever I've done any excavation around the portal, we've always done it very carefully, we didn't want to cut up any frogs. But that's kind of interesting. You'll never see 'em, unless you dig around in the dirt and you'll disturb them and they come out. But that's interesting. There are, now, they are down here, mountain lions, believe it or not. We were up in the head of Reds Canyon many years ago and it was cold. There was about a foot of snow on the ground. It was so blasted cold that we had to have two fires going all night, that we slept between. And we got up in the morning and put our stuff together to leave and saw some tracks. And Big Eddie, who knew a lot more about wildlife than I do, He said, "we had company last night." And I said, "We did?" "Yeah, come here and look."

And we could see where these mountain lion tracks had gone all the way around us at night. You know, they're curious. We had the fire so they didn't bother us. If we hadn't had the fire, I don't know whether they would have bothered us or not. But we saw the tracks in the snow. We followed 'em a little ways but we never saw the lion. Didn't really want to, if you want to know the truth.

But there's another thing that I've seen down here and that's a lynx. They're curious and what they'll do is, they're camouflaged so they look like a post, like an old chunk of tree trunk. And they are very curious. They'll sit on their haunches like a cat and they'll watch you. And when you look away, then they'll move over a little further. And you look back and "Hey, wasn't that tree stump over there!" And it's been a lynx watching you.

MS: Is there anything else you can think of that we haven't asked, associated with uranium mining in general or with Hidden Splendor Mine itself, that you can think of that might be important to get on camera, as part of the oral history or otherwise?

JA: I'll have to think, I'm sure there's something, I'll think of it.

PART 8

MS: What do you love most about the San Rafael Swell?

JA: How beautiful it is. What I love most about it is how beautiful it is. How remote it is. And that I can come out here and prospect or camp or something without somebody bothering me. That's what I love. The thing that I hate is there are places where they've put everything off limits; they've closed all the roads. What the heck use is that for anybody? Well maybe some hikers can go hiking, but what about the general public? Most people won't go hiking. If they do, they only go a block or two and they get tired and that's it. You know it's like Yellowstone Park. I lived there in West Yellowstone when I was district manager for the newspapers. You know, most of the people have only seen 10 percent of Yellowstone Park. Did you ever think about that? There's all these areas that nobody has ever seen and it's because they are off the roads. If they can't drive to them, they're not gonna go. Ninety percent of the people, and they miss all that stuff. There's a lot of geysers that people never see. But that's because they can't get to them or, well, they don't want to hike them, or they don't know about them, they're not publicized. They could do so much more to boost the tourist industry up there in West Yellowstone. I think the greatest thing they've done, is they've made it the snowmobile capitol of the world up there. 'Cause when I lived there, there weren't any snowmobiles and about the 15th of September West Yellowstone was a ghost town. The places were boarded up for the winter 'til the 1st of June next year when the tourists came. And now they are open for the snowmobiles in the winter and Targhee Ski Resort that's about 7 miles west of West Yellowstone. See that was an old ghost mining camp. I bet you didn't know that. Yeah, that was an old ghost mining camp at one time.

MS: So, when it comes to the Swell and the mining out here, you have the hope that you can come back to your claims.

JA: I do.

MS: So if you could make a prediction on what's going to happen, what would say and of course this has a lot to do with the preservation of these mines, but if you could make a prediction, what do you think would happen….what would be the best case scenario if these mines were to open

back up, and you were able to come back and be part of the prospection and removal of some of this uranium.

JA: Start mining the ore again.

MS: When do you think this might happen or how might it happen?

JA: To start with, get a new President and a new Congress for one thing. Get somebody that's interested in promoting things in the West. People back East don't understand what's going on out here.

MS: What about, we know that there was a uranium boom, one reason being the atomic and the nuclear arms race. But then also there's the atomic energy that was a big part of the boom. And the building of nuclear power plants. Of course those aren't as popular anymore, but, is that something that you think needs to be….

JA: They're still the most efficient use of energy there is. Back in the 1950s they took a lump of pure uranium the size of my fist and put in that first nuclear submarine, the Nautilus or something, and it had enough energy that it went around the entire world seven different times. Had you ever heard that? It did. It had that much energy in it. How many hundreds of thousands of gasoline, gallons of gasoline and oil would it have taken to do that? That's the energy. And the thing where they have missed the whole picture is they scream about nuclear waste and I heard 'em scream about wanting to close down Clive out there in the west desert 'cause half a million years from now it could become radioactive, oh my gosh, get off my back. There's not gonna be a world half a million years from now. We know that, at least in our church we do. But the thing that needs to be done is they need to come up with a process to reprocess that nuclear waste. It can be done. They don't have the, it's not available now, but to give you an example, out east of Park City, Park City is an old silver mining district and they had a smelter out there before the turn of the century, that was east of Park City, which is all gone now, there's no trace of it. And they had this huge mine dump out there and somebody came up, they closed the smelter down, and somebody developed a process to reprocess that ore and they pulled I don't know how many millions of dollars worth of gold and silver and lead out of it. And then the pile was maybe two thirds the size of what it had been before. And then another ten years later, somebody came up with a new concept. They ran all that material through a reconstructed smelter and they pulled millions more dollars out of it. Now the pile's about half the size of what it was to start with. And they've got I don't know how many millions of dollars of worth gold and silver and lead out of there. And three different times they worked that smelter dump over. And finally, when they, uh, after the last time they worked it over, there wasn't a heck of a lot left. I mean it was maybe a third of what was there in the first place. Maybe someday in the future, well it's been hauled off since Park City became a ski resort, but maybe sometime in the future they could have pulled something else out. But there's things to think of. Everything is not going to stay the way it is today.

MS: Right. So the hope is, the hope definitely is that, and of course this is why you keep your claims active, is that you will be able to come back, or that somebody will be able to come back and work it.

JA: Right, well see, there's things that people never think of.

MS: Yeah.

PART 9

MS: This goes back to your father and Mr. Brady. At one point you said you had people working for you, either for you or for your family, what did you mean by that? Did you guys hire people to work the mines or did your dad hire people to work the mines? You said you had people working the mines for you.

JA: Way back in the early, before, well let's see. My dad was running the silver and gold mines we have out in Nevada. And he had a crew of miners working out there for him. That's probably what you're thinking I'm talking about. We have that old ghost mining camp out there and he had a number of miners working there.

MS: That answers my question. I thought it was here that he had….

JA: No, that was out in Nevada. Those mines have been worked since 1850 and the last work that was done there was 1980.

MS: The last question that I had, and this has kind of been the first question that I've asked most people, but you answered it actually pretty well without me having to ask, but just kind of a general overview of these booms and busts in the uranium industry in the mid-20th century, so if you could just give an overview. And again, this is kind of, we're doing the first last, but it'll be good, I can always edit it in.

JA: Okay, alright. It's called supply and demand. That says it all in those few words. If there's no demand, who wants to go supply it? Now to give you an example, what do you think zinc was worth at the turn of the century? Zero (holding up hand making an O with index finger and thumb), totally worthless. In fact, if you had a lot of zinc in your ore and you shipped it to the smelter, you got penalized for it, cause it was a nuisance that the smelter had to get rid of. And then what happened in the 1920s? The automotive industry started booming and they needed zinc for batteries and for car bodies. And all of a sudden zinc has a value and it still does today. And there's other metals that have been that way. I'm trying to think of … palladium. What value did palladium have years ago? No value. What value does it have today? Last I heard it was around $765 dollars an ounce. What is it good for? It's a cheap substitute for platinum. And they use it in catalytic converters and a bunch of other stuff. And there's going to be other elements as time goes on that come into demand, you just don't know when or what. If you knew, it'd be different, but you don't know. It's just like I have some silver mines that have titanium in them and at the present time I can't do anything with it.

MS: Right.

JA: The hope is, the titanium I have is of commercial grade. But it needs a lot of development done and a lot of work, which I don't have the money to do.

MS: Then tell me, what spurred the first uranium boom here in the United States, and then how it went down and went up after that?

JA: Okay, the first use of uranium was Madame Curie, for x-rays, for medicinal purposes. They got radium out of it for x-rays. And that was it's only use until World War II, that I am aware of. And then the atom bomb came along and that created the demand. That created the demand.

MS: And then after that there was nuclear power.

JA: Nuclear industries. Now, maybe as time goes on, I'm sure they're going to find other uses for it. But are we going to be around to see it? Who knows how long we're gonna live? We don't. We don't know what. But whenever I took a sample of ore into the assayer, I had a real good assayer, and I had him run it for everything. And I found out that, that's how I found out I had titanium in one of the silver mines. And I've got some other stuff. But that's how I found out. Those are things that most prospectors would not have an assayer look for. And this assayer I've had, he's got what they call a boob tube. And he will run the sample for any and everything, period. Now, most of the assayers, you take your ore to them, and you tell them, well I want to know what the silver and gold, lead, and zinc, most of them won't even mention zinc. And you're throwing away, heaven only knows what you're throwing away, cause you just don't know. But I've had him be very thorough, and say well you got this, you got this, you got this. And most of it's no good at the present time, but this one metal could be commercial and that was the titanium. That's just an example.

MS: How much would it cost to have an assayer run a sample and like how much of a sample would you actually give them?

JA: Oh, I've usually taken a sample about the size of my fist.

MS: And it costs how much to run?

JA: I haven't had one run for several years, but it used to cost me around $35 dollars. But I'm sure it's a lot more now. And I don't know if, I used to have Claire do it for me, and I don't know whether he's still alive or if he's still doing that or not.

MS: Who was that? What was his name?

JA: It was Claire Rogers.

MS: Claire Rogers. And was that in Salt Lake City or actually….

JA: That was in South Salt Lake.

MS: Okay.

JA: And then when we had to start paying $100 dollars a claim to hang on to our claims, I mean he had his work backed up for a week or two, and after you had to start paying all that blood money out, he basically ran out of clients.

MS: So he lost work after that.

JA: Oh, he did. Well he was my age and he was in bad shape physically, but his wife ran the business and he had two sons that were there with him.

(End of interview)

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN ANDERSON

INTERVIEWER: Michael Searcy (Office of Public Archaeology, BYU)
DATE: August 5, 2011
LOCATION: Salt Lake City, UT

PART 1

MS: Here we are with Mr. John Anderson in Salt Lake City. It is the 5th of August, 2011. We're working on the San Rafael Mining Oral History Project. We've already met with you out at Hidden Splendor Mine, and we're here today because you have a few more stories to share with us, right?

JA: Right. That was my understanding.

MS: Excellent! Well, if you have one right off the bat that you want to share, let's go from there.

JA: Okay. Now after the mines shut down, I had to come up to Salt Lake here, I had to get a job. I had a wife and eight kids at home here. And 'cause I've got a bad heart, nobody would hire me. And I ended up driving one of those old dangerous backend loading garbage trucks for ten months. And I was the only driver there that wasn't a prisoner from the joint down at the Point of the Mountain. I worked with murderers, rapists, whatever the devil it was. But while I was working for them, I ran a nail through my left foot; a rusty nail. And it didn't heal up. And it got worse, so I had to go have some minor surgery on it. And me being indestructible and all, the next morning, well that very night I took off in the old Pontiac, took my boys with me. We went down the cabins at Hidden Splendor, and I had a box of dynamite with me, got up the next morning, put the bag with fifty pounds of dynamite on my shoulder and hiked up the road to the Black Jack mine. And we had a lot of fun, you know, we were basically clearing the road. The road had all those big boulders slough off every time there's a flash flood. And we stayed there several days and blew up a bunch of boulders, and this was very foolish on my part 'cause I should have stayed home and rested my foot. Well, it got worse and I had to go back and have a second surgery and they took part of my foot off this time. This time I didn't go back down to Hidden Splendor and do any dynamite. (laughs) I stayed here in the house for five weeks on crutches so that my foot would heal up. I didn't want to go through that again. I thought that was kind of a funny story. You know when I was young forty years ago I was indestructible. And now I've been destructed. But that was a story I thought was kind of interesting.

MS: That's great.

JA: The very next morning after the surgery, I was headed up the old road with fifty pounds of dynamite on my back, go up and clear the road. We had another funny thing happen I thought of.

PART 2

MS: Okay.

JA: Okay, I had the mine, my properties leased to this mining company, and I ran things for them down there. And we finally cleared that road to where you could drive a four-wheel drive right up to the Black Jack Mine, which was all about a mile and a half which was quite a job. It took a D9 CAT to clear it, and we came up there the next year and of course a lot of the rocks were back down on the road again. This was a narrow switchback along the cliffs. And as we came around the corner, we heard a rattlesnake. And so, I had my boys and I had my friend Dennis with me, and I says "Freeze!" And we froze, and I says "Let's just wait and see where the snake is." And there were some tumble weeds, Russian thistle growing in the road that we had plowed the year before. And we waited for an eternity, and this green rattler stuck his head out of one of these tumble weed bushes. It was a young one, about two feet long. And he started slithering away from us, and there was a welding rod there on the ground. So Dennis picked up the welding rod, which is kind of like a sparkler after it's all burned up, and he threw it and he hit that rattler right on the head. And you heard "BONK." (laughs) That rattler slithered off the switchback and then we went about twenty, thirty feet further and we heard another rattler. Usually from what I understand, they travel in pairs. And this was in another Russian thistle. And this one slithered out of our way. But that was funny, Dennis just threw it at the rattler and it got him perfect right on the head. You could hear "BONK." (laughs)

MS: And he survived, that's the crazy thing.

JA: Oh yeah! He slithered off the road; I mean he just got the heck out of our way like you wouldn't believe. And it was enough that the other one didn't give us any trouble, I mean it just slithered right off the road too, down over the side of the hill. But I thought that was kind of interesting.

MS: That's hilarious.

JA: From what I understand there are basically two kinds of rattlers. Have you ever heard that?

MS: Well, I actually have seen both kinds at least when it comes to the green and the other colored ones. I ran into a green one in Mexico. It was not good. I almost stepped on it.

JA: Well, from what I understand, the green ones are what they call timber rattlers. Even though there's no timber down there at Hidden Splendor, we ran into those too. They were only about two feet long, they were just young ones. And then the others are dirt colored. They just blend right into the dirt. The green ones of course didn't. Once they got out of the Russian thistle, which was green, they were very easy to spot. They just wanted to get the heck away from us, and I imagine that one got a pretty good headache. (laughs)

MS: It sounds like it. Let's shift gears a little bit. You said you knew some more about some of the other mines that we're interested in down on the Swell. Just to name a few, Little Susan is real close to Hidden Splendor, Lucky Strike…

JA: Lucky Strike is over in Reds Canyon.

MS: Right. Close to Family Butte, isn't that what it was?

JA: It's kind of in that area between Family Butte and Tomsich Butte

MS: Which is another that we were interested in knowing about. And then of course, Copper Globe which we already went to and then the final one was, I can't remember what the final one was. But if you know anything about the ones that I've just mentioned here, any stories that you remember, or perhaps going there as a young child with your father, or if you know of anyone who's ever prospected, things like that. Maybe visits after, or while you were prospecting down there, if you know anything about that.

JA: Well, I'll tell you Family Butte. Now the first time I went down to the Swell was with my dad in December of 1950, and we went down with Mr. Day, from Wellington, Utah, who had some claims on Temple Mountain he wanted to lease to us. I think I mentioned that before. And we took off at Wellington and came down across the Swell, this would be before the uranium boom was there. Those roads were just horrible. They were four-wheel drive roads and my dad had this wonderful old 1950 Pontiac, I was amazed, everyone was amazed at what that car could do down there. And the thing I remember the most other than Temple Mountain is we went by Family Butte, coming down across Swasey Flats, and I remember seeing those pinnacles there. Very, very noticeable. I remember that. Now years later, I went back there after my dad had died and we were prospecting and staking claims, and there's an old mining camp down there at the bottom of Family Butte, and there was a cabin, and an old 1949 Hudson that was still there that somebody had abandoned and left. Now I never went in the mine, I've seen, I know there's an area of blocked out uranium there. I've seen the map. But we didn't go inside the mine. Now, do you want me to talk about Temple Mountain?

MS: Sure, it sounds like you've been there.

JA: Oh, yeah. Well see, one of the companies I was involved with leased the North Temple Mine from the Milatchy family that was there in Price. And that was where Madame Curie got her first uranium from in 1903. And we actually ran the mine there for six or eight months. We had a mining camp there. We had fifteen miners there on the payroll. We were shipping uranium on a regular basis. And we were told the thing that shut us down was that there was so much asphalt in the uranium ore that the mill didn't want it anymore. And he said there was too much asphalt in it. But you could walk inside the tunnel and you could smell the asphalt just like they were paving a road out there. And that's why we quit mining there. We also went over to Four Corners after that, I don't know if you've been over there, Four Corners Mining District, and we did some mining over there. There's so many other things, we did mining there at Tomsich Butte, and that was a Spanish Trail Mine. I've got a folder, some old pictures in my storage shed of one of the miners driving this old army deuce and a half on the switchback from the Spanish Trail Mine. And we shipped three semis that were towing pups behind them, which was quite a bit of uranium. We'd hauled that out of there in I think it was February or March, 1978. And then the government destroyed us. They started subsidizing the uranium miners in Australia and Canada which drove the price of uranium down, and put us out of business. That's what killed the second uranium boom. I'm trying to think of anything else you might be interested in.

MS: That's wonderful. That kind of wraps up, cause I've been watching some of the videos this past week and that kind of wraps up a lot of what happened especially at the end of that second boom. That was perfect. Let me think if I can think of any questions. We focused on Hidden Splendor, but it sounds like you've done a lot of work at these others.

JA: All over the Swell.

MA: When you say "We" who're you referring to? Is it your father, Mr. Day?

JA: No, you're thinking of Brady.

MS: Mr. Brady. So, that was Hidden Splendor right?

JA: Lynn Brady we were involved with at Hidden Splendor, and also at Temple Mountain. Now over at Tomsich Butte and also at Temple Mountain, I was involved with Lowell Potter, with Century 21 Mining Company, and Cimarron Mining Company. Let's see. I'm trying to think of something I haven't said before. Did I tell you that Potter used to fly us down there? He had a Cessna 182. And it would take us all day long to leave Salt Lake here, and we'd always stop, we'd go out to Harmon's store on 72nd south, and get a bunch of groceries and go through Spring City, Utah with two ten gallon milk cans, fill them up with spring water at Spring City so we had water to drink. And then get down there to where we were going to camp, usually at that time we were working at Tomsich Butte. We had a trailer there. And that would take the whole day. And he could fly us down there in two hours in that Cessna 182. And we would land just east of Tomsich Butte, on that dirt road there. And I was there with the pilot, his name was Bob Tanner. He was a great pilot. He had been in the air force in the Vietnam War, and he was very gutty, very nervy. He's a great guy. And we would land just east of Tomsich Butte before you get on down through that last gulch. We'd land on the dirt road. And we did that, well every time we went down. But this particular time, I'm looking at the altimeter that gives you the air speed. And we were doing about 82 miles an hour air speed, and we were down almost on the ground and we were hit with a cross wind. And if we'd been any further over this way off the road, it would have blown us off the road and we'd have flipped over and probably got killed. That was so scary that it even scared the pilot. But it was a cross wind which, where we were above there was no cross wind. It was all nice and mild. And we got down there to that particular point and that cross wind hit us. I mean it just knocked the plane this way. That was scary, we almost got killed that day. Of course that's just one of the times we almost got killed. (laughs)

MS: I bet those occurrences happened quite often.

JA: Well, we had a lot of things like that happen. Now you've been down to Tomsich Butte, haven't you?

MS: Actually I have not. Our company has. But I have not personally.

PART 3

MS: Okay, so why don't you tell us a little bit about Tomsich Butte?

JA: Okay, the big mine down there was called Hannert mine.

MS: Maybe you could start off saying "The big mine down at Tomsich Butte."

JA: The big mine at Tomsich Butte was the Hannert and then I think the next biggest one was the Spanish Trail which belongs to me. But the Hannert**,** they produced ore out of there in the original uranium boom, and they were mining ore there in the second uranium boom. Now just a little to the west of the Hannert are what we call the woodpecker holes. When you go down there you'll see what I mean. There's about six different tunnels along that cliff face. And then there's a larger tunnel just a little east of there, then there's the Hannert mine that had three openings if I remember right. And where we camped, where we lived there's a cottonwood tree all by itself down at the bottom of Tomsich Butte. It's very prolif… very pronounced. And we usually camped there because it was cool in the shade of the cottonwood. There were still a number of old buildings that were in existence, I've got photos of some of them. They had a school house there, have you ever heard that? They said at one time about four hundred and fifty people lived there, mostly in trailers. And they had a school house, they had two cabins that were joined together, and then there were two or three other cabins that were a short distance away. And I think all that's been bulldozed and burned to the ground by now. The school house even had a blackboard on the wall. It was still there in the early 70s, late 70s. It was a great place to go. I just, you know, we camped there, and it was a great place. I remember there was to the east of the cabins, there was a small powder magazine, which has been destroyed. It was dug into the foothill over there, that's where they'd stored some dynamite and that's all been destroyed. And then to the north of where the schoolhouse was, there was an old shack, that if I remember right, was made out of wooden dynamite boxes. And then there was another place that was a powder magazine. And I'd slept in all those places at different times I was down there, and I think all that's been destroyed by now, which is really terrible. Going south from Tomsich Butte, along the Muddy River, there's a cliff face that runs along the Muddy River. And you can see two tunnels, about halfway up the cliff, with ore chutes coming down, and switchbacks. And at the end of that was a real nice cabin that somebody burned to the ground, which was terrible. And back around there behind those two tunnels you can see on the face of the cliff, there's another tunnel that goes back in. At the Spanish Trail, that's in the first gulch, going south from Tomsich Butte, on the west side of the river. The ore chute's still there, that's, the company that I leased it to left a metal dynamite storage box there. I'd understood it was still there. It was too big to move. And then there was a powder magazine that was a short distance away. And from what I understood now, the old road came past the mine and I think it went on top of the mesa. And I think they did some drilling up there, drill holes that they ran the tunnel after the ore. But I remember when we were mining there, that in the roof of the one drift, there was a black petrified log that was about this big around (indicates with hands) and we measured, I think we measured that it was twenty three feet long. And they'd run the tunnel in underneath it. And I don't know whether they mined that out and shipped that ore out or not. But I don't remember the tonnage, but they got McFarland and Hallenger they called them Mack and Hack, and they had three semis with the small trailers behind them. They called them pups. And this was in February of 1978, and Century 21 Mining Company flew me and the president of the company down there to watch the first ore come off our property, which was wonderful. We flew above the trucks and we landed on the dirt road and stopped them. And Lowell Potter who was the president of Century 21 and

Cimarron**,** he and I climbed up on to those ore trucks, and we were sorting out the ore. (laughs) And of course the Moenkopi is kind of a red-brown color, and it carries no radioactivity. And he and I, we stopped the three trucks. And the two of us, we went over all three trucks and their pups and we were throwing out the Moenkopi**,** throwing the waste rock away which was kind of funny. We left a big pile of waste rock over there in the weeds and kind of in the middle of the road there. And then of course they shipped that stuff to the smelter. And that was kind of interesting. And we stopped the ore trucks and Potter and I got up there on the back and we were sorting all the ore and throwing all the waste out of there, we (laughs), we didn't want to haul any waste rock away from there.

MS: That's great. Well that brings up a question, at least for me. It sounds like you worked for a couple of different companies.

JA: Yeah.

MS: So is there any way you can give me kind of a history of your experience with the companies and role in those companies and maybe how they changed over time? So maybe the first one you may have worked with and were you a field supervisor or something of that nature?

JA: Oh, okay.

MS: Kind of, what your roles were in each of those companies.

JA: Well the first company was Uranus Incorporated. And that was an old...

MS: Maybe you could rephrase that and say, "The first company I worked for…"

JA: The first company I worked for I was the secretary of, and it was at Uranus Incorporated in 1954. It was in the first uranium boom, and then when the government quit buying uranium the company became dormant. And in 1966, Lynn Brady was in Uranus from the very beginning, he got my father into it, and my father was secretary and Lynn was president. And then when my father died I became the secretary. And we mined ore there at Temple Mountain. We also mined ore there at Hidden Splendor. And then we got into Temple Mountain, Union Cartwright said we aren't going to buy your ore anymore you've got too much asphalt in it. And over at Hidden Splendor, we had a lawsuit over the lease, and so that killed that. And then of course I had some other companies from the 1950s, I had Uranium Services, and I brought that back to life. And we bought the Little Susan Mine, and put it in Uranium Services. And we got Uranium, rather, Monument Uranium, which was incorporated in 1957. And Monument had some claims over at the Four Corners Mining District. And then there were a couple of other companies, old companies that I brought back to life that had property down there. And after the second uranium boom died, well, during the 70s, the late 70s, Lowell Potter came along with Cimarron Mining and Century 21, and he was the president of those companies. And I did work for them. I don't remember if he had me down as a director or not, but I didn't have a position as vi…, you know, I didn't have a position on the board or anything, but I was their man down in the field that saw what was going on. And then the government started subsidizing foreign companies with the uranium and that killed that. But I think that was what you wanted to hear there.

MS: Absolutely. So you, not only have you had experience a lot with a lot of different companies, and a lot of different places right there on the Swell, huh?

JA: Oh yeah, what's even more than that, I have a brief case that is full of all the mining information from 1903 up to about 1980. I spent a month down there in the county recorder's office in Castledale, going through all the old mining books. I don't remember how many hundred there were. And I put all that information down. I have it in a brief, in my little suitcase in the other room. And that was to see what mines were open, that could be taken over, and what conflicts there might be. But I spent about a month doing that; I did that for myself and for Century 21 Mining Company. And Century 21 Mining Company had a lease from myself and my companies on our properties out there. I wouldn't sell them, I'd lease them. And then they sold the lease to some investors in the Northwest who dropped the whole thing. And, basically was the history of all that.

MS: And that's how it happened?

JA: That was how it happened.

MS: Well, it seems like you were there mining as well. Did you get in and mine the ore and haul it out, things like that with these companies, or were you more kind of management, cause it sounds like you were more management.

JA: I was more on the management level.

MS: Okay, okay.

JA: I'll tell you one thing we did over there at Hidden Splendor. There was the Ryan 101 uranium mine, and that was caved at the portal.

MS: Give me just a second.

PART 4

MS: Okay, Hidden Splendor. Okay.

JA: Okay, the Ryan 101 is just north of the Little Susan. And there were two cabins and cook shack at the Little Susan, and we camped there. And we went up to the Ryan 101; this was Uncle Bob and my sons and I. And it was hot August. No shade anywhere. And well we figured, we'll get in the tunnel, and we'll do a little digging and when we, you know, when we get hot we'll just go back in the tunnel and rest a bit, you know. I know what heat strokes are and I don't want to get one. So we hiked all the way up there, the road had been washed out. And guess what? The tunnel was totally caved at the portal. We couldn't get in and out of that hot sun. So we had a shovel, a couple of shovels and a pick, and we dug and dug and dug until finally we got a little dog hole. And we climbed over the rubble pile and got back there in the tunnel and we rested a while and we had some Pepsi cola that had got warm out there in the sun that we drank anyway, and we totally cleaned out the portal of that tunnel which was quite a job. My boys were probably

just young teenagers at that time, and Uncle Bob and I were doing all the work. But that was an interesting thing. We went over to the Little Susan, and we cleaned that out. The one portal was filled in, there were, maybe the rubble was about three feet high. And we dug out, believe it or not, 102 wheelbarrow loads of rubble to get back into that mine. That was an awful lot of work.

MS: Definitely, most definitely.

JA: Nice thing was, we could work out there in the heat, and then we could go back in the tunnel and lay down and rest a little bit so we didn't get heat strokes.

MS: Cool off just a bit, huh?

JA: Cool off a bit, yeah,

MS: Just being out there a few weeks back, man it was hot. It was hot, that's one thing I remember. Well, when, so say for example when you worked at your own claims like that and you pulled ore out, typically, how would you get that shipped or taken up to, where was it where you usually had it processed? Or the plant that you, it was purchased from you at one point, at one place.

JA: Well the ore that we shipped that was purchased from us,

MS: I don't know if you could say that one more time.

JA: The ore that we shipped that was purchased from us, Cimarron Mining got the money for it. They put up the money for the mining, this was over at Tomsich Butte. And they got the check for it. And I had, I had made a deal with them that my companies got a minimum royalty of a thousand dollars a month. And, either that or ten percent of the value of the ore that was shipped. And so we got a thousand dollars a month for about a year or so, which was I'm sure, I never saw this, the returns from the mill. Potter never let me see them. But that was what we got out of it. And Potter paid to have that shipped, or rather**,** Cimarron did. The other stuff we just piled on the ground.

MS: Did you ever ship any of that stuff off, or is it?

JA: No.

MS: It's still sitting out there?

JA: It's still sitting out there.

MS: Wow. So when it comes time for the next boom, you could easily haul that stuff off.

JA: Yep.

MS: Great.

JA: Well what I have in mind, is I hope that some angel with a lot of money, that's interested in mining will come along and say, "we'd like to lease your mines again" and I'd make a deal with

them, they'd put up the money, I'd go down there and supervise, and we go from there. That's basically it, and then I forgot something else, there were some millionaires here in town, some high rollers and they were stock promoters and so they leased some of the uranium mines from me. This was after the boom was over, and we got some money for the lease. And I went down there, did the assessment work to keep the claims active, they paid me to do that. And that was great, I took Uncle Bob, who didn't have a job, and I took my boys down there with me, we enjoyed it. We had a very good time. We worked digging out these old caved in tunnels, and when we could get back inside the tunnels where it was cool, my boys had a stack of comic books, we could cool off there in the shade and read these comic books. You know it sounds kind of weird for some guy 40 years old to read these comic books, but we had a great time doing that.

MS: That's a great story. I really love that. Well, maybe, maybe you can touch on a little bit maybe your experience with…

PART 5

MS: If you'll of course preface it in the beginning with "At Hidden Splendor when I took my boys" or where was it at?

JA: This was at Hidden Splendor.

MS: Yeah, so if you'll start it like that, that would be great.

JA: Okay, well I was down there with my boys, and

MS: At Hidden Splendor, make sure you say

JA: At Hidden Splendor.

MS: Okay, I'll let you start over there.

JA: And we were clearing the road, the switchback that went up to the Black Jack uranium mine, and there were all these boulders that had rolled down into the road so you couldn't get up there. So I had this box of powder, and we'd set off, we'd push the smaller rocks over the hill. You know you watch them roll down the cliff; you know how boys like to do things like that. And the ones that we couldn't push that were too big, we'd blow up, and then we'd push them over the hill. Well, the boys wanted to light off some powder, and of course that's not a cool thing to do if you don't know what you're doing. Anyway, I let the boys have the experience, I was right there supervising and we had the box of powder way over here, and got one stick out. And you have to use gloves or you get a nitro headache. And I had the crimpers there, and I let them crimp a hole through the powder, through the top of it, and then you cut off a length of fuse, and you put a blasting cap on the end of it, and then you crimp it with the crimpers, and you stick it into the dynamite stick. And then you have a match there, or a cigarette lighter, it helps if you cut the fuse in half at the very end. It will light a lot easier. You light it like you would a firecracker, and you

yell “Fire in the hole!” and you run like hell. Run over somewhere and get behind a rock and you wait for the explosion. I can’t tell you how much those boys enjoyed doing that. (laughs)

MS: That’s wonderful, that’s such a great story. And again we were talking a little bit about having your boys down there. What was it like having your boys mining with you? That must have been

JA: Oh that was wonderful. Those kids enjoyed it as much as I did. I mean they had their comic books, my wife sent some comic books down with them, and we had some soda, and we had that water that we got in Spring City, 20 gallons of spring water, and we would leave that in the shade in the cabin down there where my dad used to live. So the water was relatively cool. And the boys just had a wonderful time, they just really did. And they raced each other around; they’re only about a year and a half apart in age. And they’d chase each other and play games, and one thing or another, and roll rocks downhill, (laughs) had a real good time.

MS: That’s great, I can’t imagine a better time as a young, young kid or teenager to go down there and just play around. I mean, to light off dynamite!

JA: That was the most fun of all when we’d blow up those rocks. You know, you had to make sure you had enough length of fuse so that you were safe. And then you’ve already picked a place where you were behind a rock, so that when the powder went off, the pieces that flew up in the air, you were relatively safe behind another rock and they wouldn’t get you. You didn’t stand out in the open or you’re going to get peppered with rocks, you know. That’s just unbelievable. We all had hard hats which was a protection. One of the other funny things we did, was we had some claims down there by Capitol Reef, and the boys went down there with me. We staked some claims. And there was an old International drill rig, World War II type, where somebody had drilled for oil, and they’d got water. And they had abandoned this old International truck and left it there. And the tamarisks were growing up around there, there was a forest of tamarisks, and skeeters and everything, and of course the cows hung around there for the water. So the boys wanted to fly the plane. And I said to Bob Tanner, the pilot, I said, “The boys would like to fly the plane.” They just kept after me and after me, “Dad can we fly the plane? Can we fly the plane?” I says, “You got to ask Bob.” So Bob said, “Alright, okay.” So I traded places with them, you know it was a four seater. And my youngest boy got in the co-pilot seat. And oh, he’s all excited, you know, he’s buckled in and everything. So Bob says, “Have you got your hands on the controls?” “Yeah” he says, “Okay, fly the plane.” Well, the kid didn’t know what the devil to do, we were just having fun with him, so he pulled back on the controls, and boy we went up like you wouldn’t imagine. (laughs) “What do I do now? What do I do now?” “Push it back in and we’ll go down” I mean we were going up and down like you wouldn’t believe. And finally he, he got it under control. Of course, Bob had, you know, he was in the pilot seat, he had control of everything, but the thing that we let both boys fly the plane a little bit, and then what was more fun than that, there were all these cows down there by the drill rig, (laughs) and the boys would come down and dive bomb the cows. Cows are running every direction. (laughs) I bet it was a month before some of those cows got gathered up again.

MS: That’s great. Now, Bob, what’s his last name?

JA: That was Bob Tanner.

MS: Bob Tanner. And you worked with him just at the Capitol Reef mines, or elsewhere as well?

JA: No, over on the Swell also, he was the pilot.

MS: Oh, so he was the pilot for several of the companies,

JA: Century 21, and Cimarron Mining.

MS: Gotcha.

JA: He was really a gutty pilot. I would, he had all kinds of nerve.

MS: Even the nerve to let your sons fly the plane.

(both laugh)

MS: That's wonderful, how fun. And stories about flying in other than the one when the side wind caught you? Can you remember anything like that associated with getting in and out of there that, maybe some challenges that you had or maybe years the roads were washed out or anything like that?

JA: Well, what was scary was landing on that landing strip at Hidden Splendor, and taking off cause it's only so long, and if you aren't off by the end of the landing strip, you're going to go over the cliff. That was always scary to land the plane there, and to take off with it. Cause you didn't know whether, suppose it stalled as you're taking off. And you've already got your speed up, and you're almost to the end of the landing strip, you're going to go right down there in the bottom of the canyon, and that's going to be the end of it. But that, that was scary.

MS: So it sounds like you, quite often, flew into Hidden Splendor there in the plane.

JA: We did several times.

MS: And was that with Bob Tanner as well?

JA: That was with Bob Tanner, yeah. Another thing that was interesting, let me see, oh, back in the

MS: Let me get you focused real quick.

JA: Back in the 50s, when they were mining there, they had these, some of the bosses, the supervisors' wives wanted to go shopping. Well it's eighty miles of dirt roads to Green River, or they could go the other way to Hanksville which is about the same, and Hanksville didn't have as much stuff as Green River did. So they would just hop in an airplane and take off, and they'd fly to Grand Junction, Colorado and do their shopping and come back and land there at Hidden Splendor, and unload their groceries. That was a common thing.

MS: And when you say they, the wives of the bosses, which company were you working for at the time, what year was it?

JA: Oh, this was before my time. This was in the 50s, before I was ever down there.

MS: Well, you were on the Swell in ’56?

JA: I went on the Swell for the first time in 1950. And then I didn’t go again,

MS: And that was with your father.

JA: That was with my father. And I didn’t go again until ’68 after my dad had died. But this was the, during the big uranium boom, I was told they had fifteen hundred people living there at Hidden Splendor, most of them were in trailers, and the ladies when they wanted to go shopping, I imagined that they had husbands that knew how to fly. I don’t know a lot of ladies knew how to fly an airplane at that time, let alone land on a scary landing strip like that where you’re looking off a cliff no matter what you do. But that is what the ladies used to do. They’d fly on over to Grand Junction, Colorado, and get their groceries and fly back and give them something to brag about. “Oh we had this nice airplane ride today.” (laughs)

MS: That’s great. That’s a great story. Yeah, the landing strip there was amazing, I couldn’t imagine going off the end of that landing strip, and I imagine you have to make a pretty hard turn to get out of that canyon too.

JA: Oh, you do!

MS: So you’re not hitting the other side.

JA: Well, you do, and you have to be very careful. And you have to be careful, did you see the windsock that was there?

MS: Yes, it was

JA: That was so you knew which way the wind was blowing so you didn’t get blown into a cliff. (laughs) It was a dangerous experience.

MS: That’s amazing.

PART 6

MS: Kinda your daily routine working with, with both Cimarron and Century 21, at Tomsich Butte. So, and you can make sure to say those names, Tomsich Butte, Century 21.

JA: Okay, Cimarron was a new mining company that Lowell Potter brought out. And they had an initial public offering, and they raised a bunch of money, and they leased my mines from me, and they also leased some uranium mines over at Yellow Cat, Utah which is out east of Crescent Junction. And I don’t think they did anything over there to speak of, I think they just leased the

claims so they had something of value in case they were going to do any mining. The only mining they did were on the claims that I had. And what I did, I would usually go down there, I had to be here part of the time to take care of my apartment houses, collect rent and rent places. And I had to come home, keep an eye on the family, you know. And it was a good thing for me, I loved to go down there. And I'd take the boys down there and when they were out of school, we'd go down there and stay a week or so. One of the things we did, did you go over the bridge over Devil's Canyon?

MS: I didn't. Wait, is that…

JA: I think they called it Eagle Canyon.

MS: I think so, I think so.

JA: Well, what we used to do is we would take a load of old moldy tires down there with us.

MS: You told us about this in the car.

JA: We'd dump those tires off that bridge, we'd roll them out into the middle of the bridge, and you know most of the traffic thirty years ago was beer trucks coming from Colorado from the Coors distillery. And we'd roll these old tires out there and wait till nobody's looking and throw them over the edge. (laughs) I mean, you'd watch them go down there, and they'd get down there about half way and believe it or not, they start spinning around in the air, and they'd hit the ground and go boom, boom, boom, boom, about three or four different times before they'd stop. I mean that was so much fun to do that. That was mischievous. But another time, we took an old moldy stove over there with us, and we wheeled it out with a 2-wheeler on to the bridge, didn't want to stop out there and cause an accident. Nobody's looking, the old stove went over the edge. It sounded like a ten car pileup when it hit the bottom. Pieces flew every direction like you couldn't imagine.

MS: That's amazing.

JA: Well, that was so much fun.

MS: I can't imagine what that looked like. So, and just to go back a little bit to Tomsich Butte, so Cimarron**,** let's say, when you went out and worked for Cimarron, what would you do out there on site at Tomsich Butte? And maybe you could start by saying, "Well at Tomsich Butte, when I worked for Cimarron blah, blah, blah."

JA: Okay, well mainly I went down there to check on the guys, that was the main thing, to see that the work was being done. That was basically what I did at Tomsich Butte. And over at Hidden Splendor, Temple Mountain, and Red's Canyon, the boys and I and Uncle Bob did some actual digging with a pick and a shovel and a wheelbarrow. But at Tomsich Butte it was just mainly me going down, checking and seeing what's going on and stay a day or two and enjoy ourselves, basically.

MS: And get paid for it.

JA: And got paid for it.

MS: So that's interesting, so not only were those claims yours, you're getting paid for the leases, but you're also working for Cimarron as a manager. What was your title? Did you have a title?

JA: I didn't have a title, I was just "miner," "supervisor" or whatever the devil you wanted to call me. 'Cause it was as much my concern what's going on down there as it was the company's concern. And the president of the company, he's jet setting around in that Cessna 182 promoting mine leases and things. He couldn't go down there and stay down there like I could. He'd come down there occasionally. The one time that we flew down there, he just wanted to fool around and so he sent Uncle Bob and I, its eighty miles from Tomsich Butte to Green River. Have you ever eaten a Porterhouse steak?

MS: Yeah.

JA: I had my first one down there at Tomsich Butte. He sent us, he sent, he was real mellow, he'd taken a couple cases of beer down there for the miners, and we had a couple cases of Pepsi for Uncle Bob and I. He had us drive over to Green River, to the store and we bought a couple of Porterhouse steak, believe it or not, the first I ever ate in my life. And some potatoes and some carrots, and onions and other stuff. We took it back over there to Tomsich Butte, and he got the miners to dig a pit, and they had a big kettle, and they peeled the potatoes and the carrots, and the Porterhouse steak, cut it up, put it in that oven, set it in the ground, threw dirt over the top of it, built a fire. Couple hours later, put the fire out, lifted the kettle out of there. That was a feast you just couldn't imagine. That was just so wonderful. I think I've eaten two Porterhouse steaks in my life and they were both down there. That guy was a terrific cook. He really was. If he couldn't ever do anything else right, he could sure cook. There was another thing we did.

MS: And what was his name?

JA: Lowell Potter.

MS: That was Lowell Potter, and he was the owner of Cimarron**.**

JA: Yeah, well he was the president.

MS: President of Cimarron and when you…

JA: And Century 21.

MS: And Century 21. So Century 21 turned into Cimarron?

JA: No they were separate companies.

MS: Oh, they were separate companies. Okay, okay. And when you mention Uncle Bob, this is just to clarify it in my head, who is he?

JA: He was my wife's cousin.

MS: Wife's cousin, so what was his full name?

JA: Bob Taylor.

MS: Bob Taylor. Okay. Got it.

JA: He was my wife's second cousin.

MS: Okay.

JA: And he was, he had a problem with the bottle. But he's a very nice guy, we loved him. He never drank when he was around me, he was very happy to drink Pepsi and just be cool smoking cigarettes you know. There was one other thing we did that was kind of interesting. I was District Manager for the Salt Lake Tribune and the Deseret News six different times. And the last time we, they made us get the papers as they came off the presses and deliver them to our carriers ourselves instead of the company doing it to save the company money. Well I had, I bought two of their old trucks when they quit doing that, and when the dairy went out of business I bought one of the dairy's trucks. And when we would go down to the desert, you know the city has their pick up, I'd find out what area of town that the city had their pick up, and we'd drive around and there's these old moldy couches that people had tossed out in front of their houses to be picked up, and we would load three or four or five of them into the truck and take them down to the desert with us. And we'd burn one every night. (laughs) oh, we'd have a nice fire you know, cook whatever we were going to eat, and then in the morning, you'd take a stick and you'd dig through the ashes and find the pennies, nickels, and dimes that had been in the couch. (laughs) And in the winter when it was real cold, oh that was so nice, you know, you'd back up, get your back to the fire there you know, get warmed up before you crawled in your sleeping bag. I don't know how many old moldy couches we burned up down there. (laughs)

MS: That's great. Is that when you were with your boys?

JA: That's when I was with the boys.

MS: That's awesome, that's a great story.

(both laugh)

MS: Use those trucks to pick up old moldy couches. This is great. I am so glad I got to come back. You had so many more stories. This is great.

JA: Oh, there's more than that, that's just a few things I can think about.

MS: That is wonderful.

(End of interview)

The San Rafael Swell is not only rich in mineral resources, but it has also been home to many miners and their families who eked out a living on its unforgiving landscape. Each of these people holds a piece of the history of this region and its mining past and serves as an invaluable resource of knowledge for generations to come. They are each connected to this region of central Utah in different ways, but they all possess a keen knowledge of the difficulties related to the harsh, yet beautiful desert environment of the San Rafael Swell.