

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

**Interview with**  
**Zenna Mae and Eugene**  
**Bridges**

**November 19, 2004**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

Interview Conducted By  
Mary Palevsky

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Produced by:

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The material in the *Nevada Test Site Oral History Project* archive is based upon work supported by the U.S. Dept. of Energy under award number DEFG52-03NV99203 and the U.S. Dept. of Education under award number P116Z040093.

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## Interview with Zenna Mae and Eugene Bridges

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## Interview with Zenna Mae and Eugene Bridges

November 19, 2004 in Las Vegas, NV

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[00:00:00] Begin Track 3, Disc 1.

**Mary Palevsky:** *Well, Zenna and Eugene, thank you for agreeing to talk to me again. I appreciate the first interview that you gave us, and I thought to start, maybe you could go back a little bit to the time at which you lost your son Lonnie in Salt Lake [City, Utah]. And Zenna, you had talked about a journal that a doctor had suggested you keep at that time, and maybe we could start by having you go over that again.*

**Zenna Bridges:** OK. I had read an article in the *Reader's Digest* very similar to what we were going through, and I cried a great deal. And I told the doctor about the article and he said, It's a very good idea. You should keep a journal. You should write down the events. And so I didn't do it right to begin with, but I had kept a very good idea of the things that occurred, and did write down a few notes. But after Lon had been gone for about a month, I just came to the great realization that I couldn't remember a lot of things that I wanted to remember. I could remember the things he had done and that we had done with him and things he liked and his toys and the TV shows—and then I realized I would never remember his voice because we didn't record voices much at that time. So I started to write down his illness in the hospital, all the details that I could remember, and it was very, very clear with me at that point in time that I wanted to quit going through it daily and nightly, all these different events. And once you put it on paper, you do *not* have to keep remembering. And so that is what I did. And I kept it in a little black loose-leaf folder. And Gene never looked at it. He didn't want to look at it. All of our children except maybe one read it—and some of our in-laws's children as the years went by—and there were some that said, *You really should send this in to Reader's*

*Digest*. You should do something with it. But having recorded it and it was down, then I could—it helped me in the grieving process, and I could not just think about it all the time. But I wrote down all the things that he did. And I was amazed at the number of things. Eventually when Gene did look at it he said, You know, I'd just forgotten a lot of those things. But you don't forget them if you write them down early on and keep them.

*OK, thank you.*

[00:03:19] End Track 3, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 4, Disc 1.

[00:01:22] End Track 4, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 5, Disc 1.

*So Eugene, from what Zenna just said, it took a while for you to be able to look at that journal. I guess my first question would actually be, did you consciously not look at it at the time?*

**Eugene:** Yes, I did not consciously look at it. I suppose it's some of the difference between personalities or between men and women. For Zenna, her way of approaching the death of our son was to write about it, get it down on paper. For me, I had to shelve it. I had to literally put it out of my mind because I had to concentrate on my work. And shortly thereafter I started into my master's program and there was school, there was family—and so I had to shelve it essentially. And I did that, I guess, literally for about forty years. And then I was able to address it on one Christmas Day.

*Tell me about that. What happened that made that change occur?*

**Eugene:** Well, our oldest daughter Julia, who had been very close to Lon, she borrowed Zenna's notes and material that she had written. And her husband had written this up very beautifully and put it in a very beautiful binder for Christmas for her, and they brought it over to

show us on Christmas Day. We had the tradition of gathering the family together on Christmas Day for brunch and sharing what everybody got for Christmas. It was a time that after people had looked at the book and some of them had read parts of it, well, I started looking at it and I just decided that that was the time that I needed to go through it and reacquaint myself with the details, which I did for three or four hours to get through it.

**Zenna:** Cried the whole time.

**Eugene:** But I decided that I probably ought to record my thoughts about the event, which I did over the next few days. And [with] my fastidiousness or whatever you would want to call it, I detected that there were a few areas that could stand to be edited a little bit, and—

**Zenna:** Can you believe that?

**Eugene:** —asked Zenna and our daughter if that would be all right to do that, and they consented to that. I didn't alter any of the material facts. It just was for the sake of the good old English language. But that was at Christmas 1996.

*So that's forty-one years after—?*

**Eugene:** He died in 1956.

*Fifty-six. Forty years exactly.*

**Eugene:** Forty years exactly.

*And as I recall, he died over Christmastime. Yes.*

**Eugene:** On the twenty-eighth of December.

**Zenna:** Twenty-ninth.

**Eugene:** Twenty-ninth. I'm sorry. Twenty-ninth. Anyway, at the time of his death—and this is going a little bit beyond your question—but at the time of his death, the autopsy that was done showed that in just less than a month he was all full of cancer again and all of his organs

had [00:05:00] disintegrated. The doctors said they had never seen anything like this. And as far as the diagnosis of what was happening to him or what diseases he had, it was lymphosarcoma, and that was a pretty sizeable growth which they removed from his bowel.

**Zenna:** That is an adult disease.

**Eugene:** And then he also had acute myelogenous leukemia. And that just kind of stayed in the back of my mind and kind of came forward again after all those years. Another thing that had happened was in 1977 the office of Dr. Joseph Lyon at the University of Utah called to get approval to use Lon in a study they were doing on the relationship of the nuclear fallout from Nevada and leukemia in children in the state of Utah. They did a pretty comprehensive study. They divided it into southern Utah and northern Utah and provided statistics. And later when I started researching, I was able to get a copy of that study and did some numerical analysis of it. And it was, quite frankly, very revealing. There had been studies done previously in the early 1960s but those studies had been pretty well squelched—by AEC [Atomic Energy Commission] people primarily but some political people, too—and did not get disseminated to the public. Dr. Lyon's study, in a sense it was kind of forced upon the AEC and became a *little* more public, but still we had no idea what came out of the study. It wasn't until 1997, '98 when I got a copy of the study that I really found out what it—.

*So it was twenty years until you saw the study.*

**Eugene:** Yes. And that was only because I went after it.

*We'll get it there on the time line, but when you say it was "forced upon" the government, what do you mean by that?*

**Eugene:** Well, the government at that point was not in a position where they could squelch it and just make it disappear like they did the earlier studies. The earlier studies, they just

disappeared for a long period of time because they had not come up with what the government wanted, and you had a gentleman by the name of Gordon Dunning, who was called the protector of the Nevada Test Site, and he more than anyone would not let anything interfere or threaten in any way the continuation of the tests in Nevada. There were others involved, too, but he was the prime person.

*So you get the call from Dr. Lyon and this helps you or makes you begin to think or? Explain that to me.*

**Eugene:** Well, it did start us wondering if there was possibly a connection. Now we skip from there down to 1997. Our daughter Julia was taking a university class and the assignment was related to the Nevada fallout. After she had completed this assignment, she came to us. There were a lot of questions that she had about Lonnie and some about us. But she asked us, she said, Did you know that there's a very good possibility that Lonnie's [00:10:00] illnesses are attributable to the fallout? And we said, Well, yes, we are aware that there could be a possible link, but we had never heard, been advised, nor read anything that indicated that. The newspapers periodically would come out with some question as to the safety of the fallout, but there was always a countermand, if you will, of somebody from the AEC or the government saying Well, it's not of enough quantity or enough intensity that it's dangerous to people. Subsequently, though, we found that simply was not true.

*Now Zenna, Julia comes to you, and Julia's the daughter that was close to Lonnie, right?*

**Zenna:** Yes.

*How many years younger was she?*

**Zenna:** Well, she was just thirteen months younger, and they were just like twins. When we brought Julia home from the hospital, he just hovered over her *constantly*. He always had his arm around her or holding her hand, and he didn't really like to play a lot with other children. He just loved Julia. And so when Julia came to us she says, You know, Mom and Dad, I didn't just lose Lon. I lost you and Dad. And this was a great *shock* to us because we had not felt that way, but we found that if we told our children that everything was OK with Lon—that he was back in heaven with Heavenly Father and we would see him again some day and that we didn't need to cry a lot—then if we *did* cry they would say well, you don't need to cry, everything's OK, he'll be fine. So we quit hugging them and kissing them and holding them because if we did, we'd cry. And we felt the only way we could deal with this was to just kind of set it all aside. And it was very interesting because I'm sure we didn't do that with the next three children that came. We were able to hug and hold. But the three that were left after he went, we were not able to do that. And we didn't know that it was causing a great deal of trouble, but it does. And there was nobody in those days to help you go through a grieving process. We thought you just quit crying, shape up, and move on with your life. But we neglected the very important part of letting these other children know how much we loved them. We did everything that we could for them. We were good parents, I think. Their father was always great with them. But it's just that intimate part that we just pulled away from, and it was very painful to them, and especially to Julia. And so then she asked if she could go through his things. And we had a box of his things that we had put away, and so she went through them. She went through them for three days and laughed and cried, and it helped her a great deal. And we tried to help her understand that we had not *loved* them less. We just didn't have the skills to be the kind of parents that they needed. We realized that Eugene's mother's mother lost six out of eleven

children by the time they were between one and two years of age. And her mother could *never* show love to her other children. We should have *learned* from that. But she just could not show love. I mean you can *not* bury that many children and not be afraid that you're going to love something and lose it again. So we had a lot to learn and we always tried hard to be good parents. We did things with our children nearly every Saturday for part of the day, and we were the kind [00:15:00] of people that had breakfast and dinner together, and we visited and talked a lot. And I think that Julia really felt his loss *so* much that I wish we could have done better.

*When you say "his things," what kinds of things were in this box that Julia was looking through?*

**Zenna:** Well, he had a little yellow horse that his father had bought him when he was born. He had all of the letters from people that wrote to him when he was ill. He had the top of the cake of his seventh birthday that he spent *in* the hospital. And then he came home that night, and then he died just a few days later. He had gone back to the hospital. We had, did I say the shirt?

*No.*

**Zenna:** OK, he had a beautiful yellow cowboy shirt that he loved so much. And it was a little big for him and so we didn't let him wear it really often, but he loved that yellow cowboy shirt. We had little pictures that he had done with the, oh, the iron point. What do you call it?

**Eugene:** Well, these were pictures that you'd have a hot-pointed tool and you'd draw pictures by burning it onto a piece of plywood or something like that.

*Yes. I know what you're saying now. Yes.*

**Zenna:** He had his little doll that he had always loved. He had one little doll that he liked. And it's just in a box about this big [indicating size] and holds pictures of things that the school sent to him and a few—when he wrote his name the first time and, you know, just a few of those

treasures. And she just went through them, and we also did, then, too, and it was helpful to us, I guess if crying is helpful it was helpful.

*Yes. So then Julia is saying from the class that there might be some connection. Does this then spur you to research that more? Explain a little bit to me how that progressed.*

**Eugene:** Well, that brought back the recollection of our suspicions at the time the Lyon study was commenced. At that same time, the National Cancer Institute came out with a report, a little bit unwillingly but the—well, the existence of the report was leaked and the Downwinder organization—which we didn't belong to and we still don't—but it picked up the laboring oar to get a copy of that report. And so finally the National Cancer Institute did publish a report, and we requested a copy of it and received a summarized version of the report. It indicated unequivocally that there was heavy fallout that had come over Salt Lake. And the thing that it did—it was relating it to the one radionuclide, iodine 131 [I131], which was a very dangerous radionuclide, particularly as it related to children because it has the propensity of settling in the thyroid. With children, for some reason, they are much more susceptible to this concentration. And you could take an exposure that was a relatively small external exposure, but by the time it [00:20:00] gets concentrated in the thyroid, then it's at a very dangerous level. There are other ramifications going through the food chain as it relates to that one in particular.

But at any rate, when we got a copy of that, then that convinced me that there was dangerous fallout that came over Salt Lake, in spite of everything that had been said previously, and I just decided that why keep wondering about this? Let's do something about it and start researching and see what we can find out. Well, it was a much more comprehensive project, a much larger project than what I had ever contemplated. And quite honestly, to begin with, I didn't want to get involved in what I knew had to be done. I really didn't. And I had read in a

couple of the books that Julia had used as a reference for her class work, which was very upsetting to me, quite frankly.

**Zenna:** How upsetting?

**Eugene:** Well—

*Which book did you read first, do you remember?*

**Eugene:** It was [John Grant] Fuller's book which basically covered the death of about 4,200 head of sheep in southern Utah [*The Day We Bombed Utah: America's Most Lethal Secret* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984)]. Initially the ranchers and the local veterinarians and two government veterinarians had concluded that these sheep deaths and the aborted births—and they're not only aborted births but grotesque embryos that were evident—they had come through an area on the drive back from the winter range, or summer range I guess it was, they'd come through an area that had been heavily inundated with fallout from shot Nancy. The result was these deaths and that's what all of these people concluded. Well, the government was not willing to accept that, so they pulled the two government vets. They sent out another team, and these people, quite frankly, the absolute arrogance and manner in which they treated these sheep ranchers was unconscionable, in my estimation. There's even some indication there was one rancher that, after an encounter with those people—because what they did, they said *There's no radiation that had contributed to the deaths of these sheep. It was malnutrition.* And, you know, they're talking to ranchers that have been in the business all of their life, and their fathers before them, and they're trying to shove this kind of story down their throats. But one rancher, after his encounter with them, went home and proceeded to have a heart attack and die. It was that severe.

So it was very disturbing to read how calloused the government was, how focused they were on national security. And then you have to say “national security” for whom, is it for everybody or just for certain people?

Anyway, after reading those books, and I guess there were about three or four books that I went through and read, and the one, Fuller’s book, dealt with the sheep people.

**Zenna:** Carole Gallagher.

**Eugene:** Carole Gallagher had spent seven years interviewing people throughout the area.

[00:25:00] She did an absolutely excellent treatise on what happened to those people [*American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War* (New York: Random House, 1994)]. As I looked through *that* book, there were two people that I personally knew. I knew they were having health problems but I didn’t know what the nature of it was.

*Were these people also in Salt Lake or—?*

**Eugene:** Yes. Actually, the one fellow, he had been with a group of other fellows that had gone hunting, and they were up north of Logan in the Cache Valley area when a fallout cloud came over as they were eating lunch. And it had the effect eventually of—well, he lost most of his tongue, lost a lot of his mouth, gums, because it settled in his teeth. And it ultimately killed him, but a very tortuous type of death, which most radiation death is. It was with our son. It was very tortuous.

Anyway, that kind of helped me to make the decision to research it, and it became something that I couldn’t let go of.

**Zenna:** He would get up at two or three in the morning, or four, day after day after day because he was so—he had to do it. He just had to do it.

**Eugene:** Does that provide a little background on it?

*It does. It does. Let me go back to something you said because I just think it's such an interesting human question. You said you didn't want to do it but you had to do it. So was there a moment where you said, I know I have to do it, that you remember where you crossed that line, or was it gradual?*

**Eugene:** There's probably two aspects of that, Mary. After reading these first two books, the first on the sheep deaths and the other on primarily the Allen trial [*Irene Allen et al. v. United States*, 1979]; I don't remember the name of the authors on those and I should. [*The Day We Bombed Utah: America's Most Lethal Secret* by John G. Fuller and *An American Nuclear Tragedy* by Philip L. Fradkin] We have that.

**Eugene:** Anyway, after reading those, I wrote up about a dozen pages of material that was livid reactionary material. I was coming off the wall, quite frankly. And we had gone back to visit a daughter in Florida, and the more I looked at that, the more I realized that that was venting emotions, that it was useless as far as doing anything constructive or being anything constructive. So that kind of got me onto the right track of dealing with facts—and verifiable facts, not just anything—because throughout the history of this whole thing, well, there had been a lot of facts and a lot of surmises and that kind of approach, which doesn't really give you anything concrete.

So at that point, I decided well, if I'm *going* to write about it, then I'd better do it right. And so there was a decision to try to do something, but it was a difficult thing just simply because I was starting from square one, and I didn't know all that much about it. I've always [00:30:00] been interested in science. In fact, in high school I had thought that's what I would go into was chemistry, but it didn't work out that way. Anyway, I had always stayed in touch with science to some extent, and still do. But I knew that I had to have concrete things, and so I

started searching. And it seemed like an insurmountable mountain to climb, quite frankly, but I persisted with it. It seemed like I'd find a little bit of something here and a little bit of something there, and I found a few more books that had information about various aspects of the fallout, and news articles, and then there were some news people that had done some special reporting on all of this. And so over the years, bit by bit and piece by piece, there were a *lot* of things from a lot of different sources, and eventually I was able to start building or bringing this together. And the more I did it, the more I felt compelled to do it.

I don't know whether we shared with you before, I don't think we did, but I'd pretty well got everything together, we had done a lot of proofing—in fact, I bet we've proofed that book one hundred times or more—but it was in 2002 in Idaho. I had finished doing some indexing on the book. For all practical purposes, it was done, if you ever get a book done. I don't know that you do. That night I had a dream, and the dream was how to reorganize that book and what the chapters ought to be. And when I got up the next morning, it was still with me just as clear as clear. I wrote it down and I looked at the book because you question yourself. As I looked at it, I realized that it was absolutely the way it needed to be. So I spent another year revising the book and finally got it completed for the second time in 2003 [*The Forgotten Patriots: The Abuse of Power During the Cold War*, Unpublished]. And you know, I don't know what it is that causes you to have feelings or dreams or impressions, but the book, the research part of it, was a compulsion. I was compelled to do it.

**Zenna:** It needed to be done and it was divine intervention. Because the book needed to be written, whether anything ever happens, because it needs to be written.

**Eugene:** And we have found that with people that we've talked with who have been involved with the testing program and even people that have not been involved with the testing

program, you run into a number of different reactions. It's somewhat like what you were saying with some of the people we have encountered that they've been involved with the program. It's like we talked with a fellow that was the meteorologist that was involved with determining when [00:35:00] atmospheric conditions were all right for detonations, and he wanted to know why we were—this was out at the Bechtel, is it? Out at the library that they have out north here. Have you been to that?

*Yes. That's moved now. It used to be out in North Las Vegas.*

**Eugene:** Yes, it's off of Losee Road.

*Right. Off Losee Road. Right. Yes, I've been to where it is now.*

**Eugene:** Anyway, he was very irate that we would even think that there was any problem from the fallout. He said, I was involved with that directly. I know that there was *nothing* that was dangerous with that. And that's fine.

*You met him at the library?*

**Eugene:** At the library. He was a volunteer there. And we have met with our political representatives, it's been a very offish relationship.

*"Offish"?*

**Eugene:** Yes. The first encounter I had was when they were having the '79 hearings in Salt Lake. I went over and I was able to talk with Senator [Orrin] Hatch, and he informed me very curtly that the hearing was not for anybody in Salt Lake. It was for the southern Utah area, which—so be it.

*This was the hearing on the downwind phenomenon and its impacts?*

**Eugene:** Well, it was from those hearings that he and Senator [Edward] Kennedy were able to put together legislation, and ultimately it came out under Senator Hatch and became the

Radiation Exposure Compensation Act [RECA] of 1990. It went from '79 to '90 before anything was enacted. And I don't know how familiar you are with that. The downside of that was that it covered people that had lived or worked in the area up to a two-hundred-mile radius from the test site, and then it covered a very limited number of types of cancer and leukemia. If you were one inch over two hundred miles, you were out. If you didn't have exactly the type of cancer or leukemia that was stated, you were out. So in the book I've called it—all it was, was a damage control measure. It wasn't really to provide any great amount of benefit to anybody. There were a few people that received benefits from it, but very few people. And you had to have a lot of medical backup on your claims, and that doesn't sound too bad to begin with. It sounds very logical, but when you consider that a lot of these people died in the early-to-mid-fifties, and here we are down to 1990, in that period of time medical records can get lost and destroyed. And so it was almost a no-win situation for people that were victims of the fallout.

*In a little while, I want to get into the more of the detail of some of the research that you did that goes into the book, but I wanted to ask you, Zenna—I'm going back a little bit here now—you're revisiting the journals and Lonnie's death and what you described about Julia in the [00:40:00] nineties, and then Julia comes with the class, and Eugene. Why don't you talk a little bit about what happened when Eugene read those books, from what you were seeing, and then I just want you to tell me a little bit about your observing this pretty—from where I'm sitting—a real shift, sort of a major turning point, in both your lives, but in Eugene's decision to really pursue this, what's your perspective on these things as this is going forward?*

**Zenna:** Eugene was very angry when he first started reading those books, and he threw one of them across the room. He didn't hit me or anything, but he—he wasn't trying to. He was so angry to think this was happening. And as we gathered more books and he read more and he

made the decision to write down his feelings that he was having concerning the books—not as memoirs but his feelings concerning these books—he became very, very absorbed. And I think for, I say five years but maybe it was three or four years, as I said, he slept very little during that period of time. He became ill quite a number of times, and we just felt like that the anger that he had—.

**Eugene:** Let me interject one thing here. I was angry, but the reason I was angry was these books documented from AEC records the absolute outright lying and misrepresentation that government people foisted upon the public. First of all, in order to get the test site here in the United States, they were told things that were so untrue. And then after they started the testing, how they just hid—*anything* that was adverse to the testing, they killed it. And here you had people that were suffering—and I mean really *suffering*—from all the effects of this radiation, and they were being totally ignored and lied to. And that was—it still angers me. Sorry.

**Zenna:** No, that's fine. But I think that the family, we all realized what an intense thing he was going through, probably more than any of the rest of us. It was something that he had to get written and get out. But it also took a toll, I think, on his health for quite a while. He didn't stop, though. He kept doing it. And once it was done, although he says he can still get angry—I can too—but once it was done, it was something that we could relax a little bit from. Now I'm not sure if I remember the other part of the question.

*I'm not sure I do either, but what I was asking was just what you told me, so thank you for that.*

*Sort of your perspective on this radical change that happens with this. Now let me think for a second because something you said raised another question for me. I think it was about—just say a little bit more, that you felt that this was something that was really Eugene's, in a certain*

*sense, the rest of the family is seeing this, and so you're realizing that maybe he's getting sick because it's just taking so much of his energy, or tell me a little bit more about that.*

**Zenna:** Well, he wasn't sleeping more than three to five hours a night for a long, long [00:45:00] time. I mean it was very unusual for him to be able to sleep longer than that. He just had to get through this, get it written. And I think that there were a lot of people that thought, you know, *It's over, it's done*, what do you worry about it for? You can't bring him back. That isn't the point. It should *not happen again* either. And so it needed to be recorded, and I think he did a marvelous job of recording the things that he read. But we have found so many people that [said], *It's over, it's done*. But it's *not* over and done. People are still dying, and they want to start it [testing] again.

**Eugene:** That kind of gets back to what I was sharing with you before we started the interview, Mary. I went back through the book, I guess it was before we came back down to Las Vegas. It was, in fact, because we went to a hearing, I think I told you, in Salt Lake—. *Right. So now we're up to 2004. This is this summer when you were up in Idaho. OK.*

**Eugene:** Anyway, I went through the book and I did an outline of the salient points and facts that are in that book. And I came to the realization that we tend to think of this as something that happened back when. The thing that we fail to realize is that it's still with us, and let me demonstrate that. If you accept the thesis that there is no safe level of radiation, the thesis that the radiation is cumulative, and that's pretty well founded, if you accept that there are—I came up with four, actually there are more than this, but there are four major radionuclides. One of these, iodine 131, has an eight-day half-life. Cesium 137 [Cs137] has like 30.07 years. Strontium 90 [Sr90] has a half life of 28.79 years. Then there are three isotopes of plutonium. One of those has, I think, an 87-year half-life, one has a 6,000-plus year half-life, one has over a

24,000-year half-life. Now there was a study done by two scientists, Harold L. Beck and Phil Cray in 1982. They studied a couple of things. First, they wanted to find out what traces of radionuclides still existed in Utah. This is 1982. This is after all the atmospheric tests. Well, they found that all of Utah was very permeated with all of these radionuclides. The iodine 131, of course, had dissipated, but these others still were there. Salt Lake City was especially heavy with it. They also found that plutonium deposits were 3.8 times greater than anywhere else in the country. So what does this tell you? It tells you that they're still with us. Maybe they've been able to leach into the ground, but then you have—what's the effect on the ground water, the aquisystem? What's the effect on animal life: cows, horses, sheep, deer, elk? It doesn't matter [00:50:00] whether it's domestic or wild. What's been the effect on plant life? I don't know. Maybe that's not quite as much of a problem, unless it's a garden. But if it's a garden—?

**Zenna:** Well, if the animals eat it, why, they're exposed.

**Eugene:** Sure, again because it's through the food chain. So all I'm saying is that if you accept these as being factual situations, I think that it is not a very big step to make the next assumption that the continual increase that we see in some of our diseases, not only cancer and leukemia, but those especially, MS [multiple sclerosis] for example, certain types of lung disease, certain types of diabetes.

You see, I have copies of a set of minutes, and I may have told you this, we found in 1998—no, '96, I think it was—that there had been testing going on at Dugway Proving Grounds, which is about seventy-five miles southwest of Salt Lake City. This testing included radiation, but it was not exploding nuclear bombs. What it was, was taking standard munitions, standard bombs, but putting a payload in that bomb that was radiated material that would spread when the bomb exploded, the idea being that it would be used to wipe out life within a certain strategic

area. They tested those munitions, dropped those bombs, and of course they produced some fallout. But the big thing was, they did eight intentional meltdowns of nuclear reactors—small nuclear reactors that they had built—to test what would happen if you had a meltdown. All of those put more radiation into the atmosphere than Three Mile Island. Substantially more.

OK, now what I'm really getting at is this. On the minutes of the Chemical Corps of the Army, at their meeting—and it was a meeting held in 1952 in Washington—and scientists that were working with the Chemical Corps from Rochester, New York, they came up and they made the flat-out statement that any full-body exposure to gamma radiation will enhance any disease. It's not just cancer and leukemia, but any disease. Now if you accept that thesis, then again that adds to what I've already told you.

One other thing that I have is a 1996 report on the major causes of death in Utah. And what it does is it goes through and every disease declines in Utah except for your neoplasm, or **[00:55:00]** your cancer, leukemia-type diseases, one type of lung cancer, and one type of diabetes—all of which are affected by radiation.

So I think you can say there's a pretty good case that we haven't gotten rid of the effects of the fallout. And then if you look at maps, trajectory maps, of where the fallout went, it hit every state in the country, in the union, and some areas in Canada, and some areas in Mexico. It was very encompassing. And then if you accept the proposition that these radionuclides with the long half-lives are still here, then you can see why we have happening what's happening, a lot of our disease and especially cancer and leukemia.

**[00:56:19]** End Track 5, Disc 1.

**[00:00:00]** Begin Track 3, Disc 2.

*Zenna Mae and Eugene, I think we first met each other earlier this summer. I know we did. In June. And you were on your way up to Idaho for the summer to, was it your great uncle's old house?*

**Eugene:** Just an uncle.

*An uncle's house. That's another story for a whole other tape. I want to get an update on that. But you wrote to me that during the summer or into the fall, you went over to a meeting in Salt Lake related to the subject matter we're discussing today.*

**Eugene:** That was in July.

*In July. Could you just tell me what that meeting was called for and who was in attendance?*

**Eugene:** It was a meeting sponsored by the National Academies of Science, and the objective of the meeting, ostensibly, was to determine if there had been fallout in Salt Lake and northern Utah, and whether there had been any injuries from that fallout. So what they were doing was soliciting testimonies from people in that area, primarily.

**Zenna:** They didn't advertise it, though, very much. I don't think they wanted a lot of people to come.

**Eugene:** No.

*How did you find out about it?*

**Eugene:** A friend in Washington, D.C. called us and asked us if we were aware of this meeting that was coming up. And we weren't, so she gave us the name and telephone number of the person to contact. And it took me a week to get through to them, but I persisted, and as a result I was able to provide some testimony.

**Zenna:** One of the big problems at that meeting was that people were angry they had *not been notified* about the meeting.

[00:01:57] End Track 3, Disc 2.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 4, Disc 2.

*So Zenna, you were saying people were angry at the meeting but before we get there, who was at the meeting? We've got National Academy of Science people—oh, what did you say, Science Foundation?*

**Eugene:** No, the National Academies of Sciences, and there's a longer title than that. I don't remember the rest of it, but it was dealing with radiation issues.

*Are there any government officials there?*

**Eugene:** Well, I assume that the National Academies of Sciences is probably funded through the government in some way.

*Oh, you're right. You're right. I guess I'm thinking from any of the organizations that were associated with the test site but—.*

**Eugene:** No. No. These people, they all were doctorates. It was an interesting phenomenon.

*OK. Zenna, you began to say that—?*

**Zenna:** Well, we had had a hard time finding out about it or even being able to go, but we found that when we got down there, there was a lot of talking and hubbub from people saying why hadn't this been advertised if they want people to come? And they were refuting that and saying well, it was in this paper or that paper, but it really wasn't very much advertised.

**Eugene:** The interesting thing is we sat there—first of all, before the meeting started, those of us who were going to testify, we had to sign in, so to speak, and then they would call on you. And the interesting thing was we had five minutes? I think it was five minutes.

**Zenna:** Three to five.

**Eugene:** Yes, three to five minutes to give our testimony. Well, what can you do in three to five minutes, first of all? But the interesting thing is as we sat there, listened to the testimony, and watched these people, it was obvious that a number of them had difficulty staying awake. In fact, one of them would get up and move around the room a little bit, behind the table that they were at. It really came across strongly that these people knew what the stories were and they knew what the facts were. They didn't really need this, and yet they were going through the motions. That's the essence of it. They were just going through the motions.

Well, there were some really interesting things that were provided there. One woman provided some graphs that were very telling. But there was a doctor from Idaho Falls, Idaho that was very critical from the standpoint that they had found that there were areas of Idaho that had been just as hard hit as areas of Utah, but nothing much was being done. And so he was very desirous of getting a meeting going up in Idaho so that they could provide the National Academies with information about what had happened in Idaho. There was another gentleman, and I have one of his books. He's from Texas. Richard L.— ?

**Zenna:** Didn't think I'd ever forget that name.

**Eugene:** Oh, I didn't either.

**Zenna:** You'll think of it.

*We can get it.*

**Eugene:** Anyway, he is an environmental scientist and his book—can you pardon me?

[00:04:55] End Track 4, Disc 2.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 5, Disc 2.

**Eugene:** OK, it's Richard L. Miller and the book he wrote is *Under the Cloud* [*The Decades of Nuclear Testing* (New York: Free Press, 1986)]. In my estimation, this book is about as factual as you will find anywhere. A number of the issues relating to the testing and the fallout and the whole thing—the selection of the test site, as well. He was there and spoke, and he has now written another book which in essence is an update of further research he has done on what the effect has been on the environment [*The Atomic Express* (New York: Two-Sixty Press, 1997)]. And I need to get that book. I don't have it yet.

But anyway, the doctor, Mr. Miller, and myself were probably the only ones where any new information came out. The main new information that I had was about the testing that had gone on at Dugway Proving Grounds. And the way that we got onto that, there had been a newspaper article indicating that there had been testing done out there. Zenna and I went to the Utah Department of Health and we said, Here's this information coming out in the newspaper that there was testing involving radiation out at Dugway. What do you have on it? And they said, Well, it just so happens that we requested information under the Freedom of Information Act and we have received that and you're welcome to go through it. Well, what was it, two or three offices full of boxes of documents. And so we spent several days going through all of that. A lot of it you can go through quite rapidly. But in the process, that's where we came up with these minutes of the Chemical Corps where the scientists from Rochester had indicated what the effect of gamma radiation was as it related to diseases, what it did for enhancing diseases. And I'm assuming—I don't know, it doesn't indicate it in there—but I'm assuming that the reason it enhances the diseases is that it has a negative effect on the immune system of the body, and that's just my own personal assumption.

*So you, during your five minutes, am I correct in understanding that that was the presentation that you took your five minutes to make?*

**Eugene:** Well, it was broader than that, and I took more than five minutes. I probably took seven or eight minutes.

**Zenna:** You also took plenty of notes for them. The panel paid for it.

**Eugene:** I had given them a copy of the outline, which is similar to this but taking a little bit different approach. But I wanted to be sure that they had the whole thing and not just what I was able to say. And fortunately—because I didn't know whether I was going to have five minutes or a half-hour or just what. And I timed the material and I had about twenty minutes, as I recall. And I didn't want it to get cut short.

Anyway, it provided information on what shots came over Salt Lake, what their intensities were, what their timing was, because that's a very critical thing. Most of the shots—there were three main groups of shots. There were shots in '53, there were shots in—'52 and then '53 and then '55. And there was a group of shots in each one of these periods, but with each group, the timing between the shots was sometimes just days, sometimes weeks. For the [00:05:00] most part, it was weeks. But again, if you relate that to what the half-lives are of those major radionuclides that are coming from those shots, then you get—this may have been a milder shot here, but then you pile on that, because of the cumulative effect, this shot and this shot, this shot, and pretty soon you have a very hazardous level of radiation. It's just there.

So anyway, that was the main thing that I wanted to get across. Actually the Dugway thing, as far as I was concerned, was incidental, but nobody had heard of it, so it became—got a lot of questions on that and it became an important factor as far as the meeting was concerned.

*Questions from whom?*

**Eugene:** Both from the panel and from the floor, from the people who were there.

In fact, there was one gentleman that said, Are you sure that that went on out there?

And I said, Yes.

And he said, I worked out there and I didn't know that was going on.

*This is from the floor?*

**Eugene:** Yes. Yes.

**Zenna:** That's kind of hard to believe. But we went through those boxes and it was very interesting. We would think we were just going to read some really important thing and then it would all be blacked out or cut off.

**Eugene:** Yes, there was a lot of—.

**Zenna:** A lot of blacking out and cutting. But we did find enough things that were very pertinent.

**Eugene:** And there were some other things besides that.

**Zenna:** We ended up with a good case of allergy. You go through boxes of paper and you know that's what happens. Why don't you tell about the thing that was the cincher, though. How long it was going to take them to—?

**Eugene:** Again, Mary, I don't know, we probably aren't very good people to go to these meetings, but after we got done there, I just thought, you know, this has been the most useless exercise of time and money that you could possibly conceive because all the real pertinent data to resolve the questions that they have has been available since 1960. And why do they keep going through, just pounding this to death year after year after year? But anyway, in the information sheet they gave us about how they were going to gather all this information together and they were going to review it and they would have the report to provide to somebody else in

government that was one step between them and Congress. I can't remember what that was. But anyway, they'd have the report to them within thirty-four months. So I'm saying OK, let's say that it takes thirty-four months to get a report to that organization. I don't know how long it's going to take them to get a report to Congress. And then Congress is going to debate this thing to death. So you're going to be another ten or fifteen years down the road before you make any decision about whether to include people in northern Utah under RECA. Well, it upset me enough that I wrote the president.

**Zenna:** Of the United States.

**Eugene:** And I just laid it out. I said, you know, This is utterly ridiculous to take this kind of time and the amount of time that it has already taken, to take this kind of time to try to gather together something where the information has been available for years, for decades. It is just not acceptable. And I said It's time that the government recognize that they need to do something, they need to do something on the order of what they did for the 9/11 people, and have somebody [00:10:00] that will genuinely represent the victims of the fallout. That was the essence of it.

**Zenna:** He hasn't answered.

*That was my next question, did he answer you yet?*

**Eugene:** Well, he didn't, and I explained that I understood that he was in the midst of politicking, and so after the elections I sent another note and enclosed a copy of that and suggested that they give it consideration now.

**Zenna:** He has answered one of his letters that he wrote two or three years ago.

*OK. About the same subject?*

**Eugene:** Well, it was about starting testing again, and I wrote and let him know that we didn't think that was a very good idea. And we got a response back and it was very noncommittal, which you would expect. I've been in government so I know how it operates. But anyway, they did respond.

*You've said several intriguing things about this meeting. One of them is this question of the—am I understanding you correctly that the purpose of this meeting was to see whether RECA should be expanded to include other areas? They're gathering information on that.*

**Eugene:** Yes.

*So they're asking for public comment, and then obviously professional scholars or people that look into it like Professor Miller and other types of people.*

**Eugene:** Yes.

*So he too was to be limited to this five minutes, but he must've spoken for longer than five minutes, or was he—?*

**Eugene:** I'm sure that the doctor from Idaho Falls was given extra time.

**Zenna:** Yes.

**Eugene:** And he should've been. Miller was given extra time.

**Zenna:** And you got a little extra time because you didn't stop.

**Eugene:** I usurped extra time.

*Good for you. Now this whole notion of comparing radiation victims with 9/11, did that come up in the meeting itself? Did people make that point in the meeting itself?*

**Eugene:** No, that was in my letter to the president. But the question has been raised, like at the meeting in St. George [Utah], it was raised there, where there were people that were just irate that here these people are getting one to two million dollars; we get fifty thousand dollars. Now,

let me give you a financial insight into this fifty thousand dollar payment. That was the amount that was established in 1990, OK? Now, you have inflation, so what is that fifty thousand dollars worth now? And I went through and I did some calculations, and in order to have the same purchasing power, you're up around seventy, seventy-five thousand dollars. Still, even with that, if they were to give you the present value of that fifty thousand dollars of 1990, it's still is just a drop in the bucket to—you know, this little fiasco of mine so far is just in about forty-five thousand dollars.

*Your recent surgery, you're referring to. Yes.*

**Eugene:** Yes. Yes. So you say what if somebody has some real serious cancer where they have to have follow-up chemotherapy or radiation and things like that? They can eat up a hundred, a hundred and fifty thousand dollars [in] nothing flat.

*Did this point come up at the meeting? Before we move on to something else, I'd be curious to know sort of the flavor of the rest of the floor, the feeling that was coming from the rest of the floor about this presentation. Did other people get up? What was the mood?*

**Eugene:** They had a break for lunch. We went back for just a little while, but the ranks really deteriorated after lunch.

*People left?*

**Eugene:** Yes. And I don't know whether it was because they had the same opinion that [00:15:00] we had or not. I talked with some of the people. I know some of them had. Some had the same feeling about the meeting, that it was just another kind of exercise in futility.

**Zenna:** Well, if it's going to take fifteen or twenty years, it is, because so many of the people will be gone.

**Eugene:** Well, so many of the people are already gone.

**Zenna:** Yes, that's right.

*So there were people that were ill in the room?*

**Eugene:** No, I don't think there—not in that meeting.

**Zenna:** Not in this one.

**Eugene:** It wasn't like the St. George meeting. The people that were there in the Salt Lake meeting were people who had information that could be provided to support the thesis that there was hazardous fallout over Salt Lake and northern Utah and there were people that died as a result of that. Those were the questions that people were basically addressing. And Miller, he was on a broader scope as to what it was doing to, had done, and is doing to the environment. The doctor from Idaho Falls, he was just flat out indicating that hey, they've got as much of a problem up there as there is anywhere else in the country and they need to have some attention and they need to get input on what needs to be done for people up there as well as for northern Utah.

*OK. Before we move on, Zenna, maybe you can tell me, because you were just saying there was a contrast with the St. George meeting. When did that meeting take place and what was the atmosphere in that room?*

**Zenna:** I think that was in 2002, January or February. I've got it in my journal. Anyway, in that one, so many of those people were affected themselves with cancer or other illnesses, or they had family—I think there was one family that had about seven that had died. And these people were angry because there were just little nitpicky things that were keeping them from getting their money. And that's why the meeting was being held, so that people could bring their complaints or their form or whatever it is they needed to have filled out and get corrected, and they told them that they would. It was indeed the worst meeting I've ever been to in my life. The

air, you could've cut it. And it was just so high with anger and electricity that I was just shaking. And I wasn't one of those people. We don't even know why we were invited. But I just shook and shook, and so were others because there was such anger in that room. That man that got up whose tongue was mostly gone and people who had had several die.

**Eugene:** The woman that had been born with numerous handicaps to her body.

**Zenna:** One that had had cancer and now it had returned, and fifty thousand dollars wouldn't even cover one surgery, and she had to have another one.

**Eugene:** The people that were representing the government, they were representing the Justice Department, and that's the area that handles all of the claims. And most of these people had filed claims, but like Zenna said, for one reason or another they hadn't been approved. And so the representative from the Justice Department said, I'll work with you after the meeting and we'll see how many of these we can clean up. The other representative was from Senator Orrin Hatch's office. Anyway, they were indicating that there was going to be money appropriated to do a study to see if RECA should be broadened. That was in 2002. And I don't know whether this meeting in Salt Lake in 2004 was the result of that or not, [00:20:00] but again two years. Two years to realize anything from that. And then, like I say, the information has been available for years if they really wanted to do something.

**Zenna:** This was a much more orderly meeting in Salt Lake. In St. George, there were lines of people waiting to get up to take the microphone to say what had happened or what hadn't happened and how upset they were. And in Salt Lake, like with Eugene, he was able to get up and give testimony. And did they have ten or twenty people that did that? There weren't too many but—?

**Eugene:** No, there were about twenty people.

**Zenna:** About twenty people that were able to do this. But your feeling in the meeting was not one of this high anger and anxiety because we didn't have anyone get up that said, you know, I've applied and I haven't gotten anything and the cancer has spread and I have a child now that's—.

**Eugene:** That just wasn't the purpose of the meeting.

**Zenna:** It was a different type of meeting.

*I see. I see. OK. Is there anything else that you want to say about those meetings before we go on to something else?*

**Eugene:** I think we've covered it pretty well, unless you have—?

**Zenna:** I think so. I've written my material in my journals, too, so I have it down there, too.

*Oh, good. OK. That'll be a good thing to look at.*

[00:21:42] End Track 5, Disc 2.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 6, Disc 2.

*Gene, I wanted to ask you to revisit a bit the reasoning behind why you did this research. I know we've talked about it a lot this morning, but you were saying that you had two purposes in actually pursuing this research in depth, and then where it actually led you, the new questions and the new information that it led you to.*

**Eugene:** All right. In 1997 when I first decided to start researching this, it was mainly to find out whether or not there had been hazardous fallout come up over Salt Lake, because over the years we had conflicting reports in the news media about whether or not there had been any. The other thing was, if there had been hazardous fallout that came over Salt Lake, then did it contribute to the diseases that our son had? As I went through that process of research, I did pretty well determine that—well, not pretty well, *in fact* determined that there was fallout,

hazardous fallout, that did come over Salt Lake, and due to the cumulative effect of it, it was really hazardous. The other thing is that yes, if we're taking into consideration various factors such as our lifestyle, such as what our son had been subjected to, and what likely would've occurred had there been no fallout, the tie from the standpoint of the time frames involved between the fallout in 1953 and when he died in 1956 fit the time frame quite perfectly as to the gestation period of time for the type of diseases that he had. And his diseases were not diseases—at least the lymphosarcoma was not one that was common. Well, it was an adult disease, so it just was not seen in children as a rule. But after doing all of the research and as I've had a chance to go back through, one of the questions that just keeps rearing its head and plaguing me is why has the government done essentially nothing to try to identify people that *were* affected by the fallout and to do something for them? And at first, my conclusion was that it was probably just because of liability. But as I've reviewed my research material more and more, I have come to some other conclusions. One is that during the period of time in the political world from the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt, we started shifting our court system to a pretty liberal stance, and that kind of came to a head when Earl Warren was made chief justice, and from that point on, our federal courts have become makers of the law, not interpreters of the law. And so you have a situation that has developed that has created a power level that doesn't want to be taken out of power. And every time that you have appointments coming up for consideration to the federal courts, it's a royal battle between the conservatives and the liberals. But it has been liberally [00:05:00] controlled for essentially since Roosevelt's administration. OK, you tie to that, then, what else? What other considerations did we have in that respect?

[00:05:30] End Track 6, Disc 2.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 7, Disc 2.

**Eugene:** OK, tying with that and based upon the factual information that I have been able to develop and the research I've done—and I should mention that we purposely have not joined any organization such as the Downwinders or the Inner Circle or any of these other groups that have been instrumental in trying to keep attention on the fact that there were people that were damaged and that were victims of the fallout. And it's not because we have anything against these organizations, but I wanted my research to be as totally independent as I could possibly get it. I didn't want there to be the influence of other thinking coming into it. Not that my thinking's better, but I just wanted it to be essentially my virgin research. Now I've had to use a lot of material from other people, of course, and that's fine, but I've been able to decide whether it was good factual material or wasn't. And I've had people that as I got into this that had wanted to contribute information, but there were times when I'd ask, Well, OK, what's the factual backup on this? If they couldn't tell me, then it didn't float. It didn't get used.

But anyway, what I was getting down to is that with the research as I have reviewed this further and further, it's telling me a story, and it's not a story that I like at all, and it's not a story, I'm sure, that the people in power would like at all. And the story is this: that what has happened with the testing is that the government has unleashed a radiation plague upon this country. It's still with us. It wasn't that it just happened at the time the fallout happened, but all of that is still lingering with us, and obviously for economic reasons, political reasons, this doesn't want to be acknowledged. People *do not* want to acknowledge it. And I think it's bipartisan. It doesn't make any difference whether you're a Democrat or a Republican or Libertarian or whatever, but basically the people that have been in power don't want that. That's too much of a threat. Because if you were to announce to the public, the American public, that Hey, we have poisoned your environment with these tests and you're still going to be affected by it, people would not look too kindly on that. And I think that's where we are.

Why is the government so paranoid about acknowledging what they have acknowledged a little bit, but they won't acknowledge the whole thing, and why?

*When you look at the RECA act, you look at that, why are you drawing the conclusion that that's not the government really wanting to find out what happened? Because that appears to be—?*

**Eugene:** It's so restricted. It doesn't begin to cover all of the people that have been affected by the fallout. Again, going back, the original act only covered a two-hundred-mile radius around the test site. Well, a few years ago, what's the newspaper, *USA World?*

USA Today?

**[00:05:00] Eugene:** *USA Today*. They got wind of a study that the government was doing and got the information finally, but that study indicated that there were between ten to fifteen thousand people along the West Coast that died as a result of the fallout from the South Pacific tests and the Russian tests. OK. What information have we had come from the government otherwise? We've had the National Cancer Institute study in 1997. That's it. No, I'll take it back. In 1999, there was a study that was issued in a press release of the National Academies of Sciences again which dealt with the comparisons of leukemia for military people that had been at the test site *versus* those that hadn't been at the test site. And how it was presented was, in my estimation, quite misleading.

*Why?*

**Eugene:** Well, the essence of it was—for the casual reader—there wasn't any effect due to the fallout from the tests, even though these men were right there at the test site. But if you look further in what they *did* report, you would find where there was a 50 percent differential. Now that's important. They said on the people that were at the test site *versus* other military people, initially they made a statement to the effect that there was a 14 percent differential. That could be

by chance or it wasn't of any consequence. Fourteen percent? Now I don't know about most people, but I think for most things, 14 percent is pretty recognizable. But like I say, as you look further into the study, the bottom line was that there was a 50 percent differential between those that were at the test site *versus* those that were *not* at the test site as far as leukemia was concerned.

So the government has not been very willing to—it was 1997 before *anything* was issued. You've got this in 1999, and then in, I think, it was 2000 is when this *USA Today* report, maybe it was 2002, came out. But there has *never*—other than this National Cancer Institute report—there has never been anything released to the public as to what the total effect has been of the Nevada fallout. Now I'm sure the information is known by the government. If it *isn't* known, then our government has really failed us. But they have not revealed any of it to the public. *So this 1999 report, am I understanding you correctly, has to do with Pacific testing and Soviet testing influences on the West Coast, as opposed to test site—?*

**Eugene:** OK, there were two different things. The *USA Today* report that dealt with people along the West Coast that died from fallout from being exposed to the fallout from the South Pacific tests and the Russian tests. OK, why don't they come out with a report as to how many people died as a result of the Nevada tests?

*I understand.*

**Eugene:** OK, now the other thing that I was referring to was the National Academies. What they studied was the relationship of leukemia to military people that were on maneuvers at the test site when they did some shots *versus* those that were not. And then they also made a comparison between the Army people and the Navy people which, in my estimation, was worth [00:10:00] tiddly-poo because you've got a whole different set of atmospheric circumstances

with the South Pacific testing by the Navy people *versus* the Nevada Test Site testing, a lot of different things that—so they're not really, in my estimation, able to be compared very well.

*We've got a few minutes left, Eugene, and I wonder if you'd be willing to—for my own understanding—bring it full circle back to your own, for lack of a better word, inner process of addressing the death of your son in this way? How has that affected that whole situation?*

**Eugene:** Well, it's not a simple answer. I've had a number of people that have just thought I was out in left field to do this. Maybe I am. I don't know. But I'm a person that believes in justice. I don't feel that there has been any justice given the American public in this situation at all, including our son. We can't bring him back. We can't bring these other people back. They're gone. But it shouldn't have happened, and there ought to be an acknowledgement of that fact. And there is a very reluctant, almost a paranoid reluctance of the government to admit it. And it needs to be something that—people need to be made aware, and then if they don't want to do anything about it, fine. But people need to be made aware of what happened. And the people throughout the Intermountain West in particular were so trusting of the government, they trusted them into their grave. That's what it did. And so I don't know whether any of this—I guess as far as it relates to our son, I feel like I have done all that I can do to make things right for him. But I know that there are a lot of people that feel like, *Hey, that's the way the chips fall*. He died, and so what if it was by radiation, well, that's no different than the chances that we take otherwise. Well, maybe that's the way it is, but I just feel like that not only he but all the people that have suffered through this—and it is a suffering that I don't think anyone would want to see anybody go through—they deserve better than what they received, which is nothing.

[00:14:46] End Track 7, Disc 2. [End of interview]