

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

**Interview with**  
**Robert Friedrichs**

**August 27, 2004**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

Interview Conducted By  
Mary Palevsky

© 2007 by UNLV Libraries

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

Produced by:

***The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project***

Departments of History and Sociology  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 89154-5020

Director and Editor

Mary Palevsky

Principal Investigators

Robert Futrell, Dept. of Sociology

Andrew Kirk, Dept. of History

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.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these recordings and transcripts are those of project participants—oral history interviewees and/or oral history interviewers—and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Energy or the U.S. Department of Education.

## Interview with Robert Friedrichs

August 27, 2004

Conducted by Mary Palevsky

### Table of Contents

As an employee of the Department of Energy [DOE], Mr. Friedrichs worked for the Environmental Protection Division. In an unusual situation, he had to serve as a liaison between the DOE and the Shoshone Nation, which claims sovereign title to portions of the Nevada Test Site.	1
One of the highlights of Mr. Friedrichs's federal career was his assignment to Johnson Atoll in the Pacific, where he oversaw quality control and compliance with environmental standards.	3
After returning from Johnson Atoll, Mr. Friedrichs was irritated by poor management practices. He quickly accepted an offer to work for the DOE Arms Control Division in Washington, DC.	11
Mr. Friedrichs participated in many arms control negotiations, including talks involving a comprehensive test ban treaty. He also traveled to Russia to attend negotiations.	15
Mr. Friedrichs describes his reactions to seeing Russia shortly after the end of the Cold War.	21
Mr. Friedrichs went to Vienna, Austria to attend United Nations arms control negotiations.	25
After returning to the United States, Mr. Friedrichs became involved in emergency management and the formation of the Nuclear Emergency Search Team [NEST]. He also accepted a position at the DOE's Public Affairs Office in Las Vegas, Nevada.	30
Mr. Friedrichs reflects on his experiences as a federal employee and civil servant.	36
Mr. Friedrichs was actively involved in the creation of the Nevada Test Site Historical Foundation and the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada.	38

## Interview with Robert Friedrichs

August 27, 2004 in Las Vegas, NV

Conducted by Mary Palevsky

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

**Robert Friedrichs:** When I was first hired in, I was hired specifically to do radiological safety assessments. And then the group I was in became a branch, and we did environmental, radiological, industrial hygiene, and packaging and transportation assessments. And I was selected as the branch chief. After that, we had the reorganization and we spun off as our own division. And it was a bucket division, so I was the deputy director of the division, and we had environmental regulatory oversight in addition to the routine assessments.

**Mary Palevsky:** *“Bucket division” means what?*

The terminology for division, for branch, that denoted a certain size of an organization, number of people involved, and so a normal division would have multiple branches and a staffing of, say, twenty people. A bucket division would not warrant individual branches underneath it because the staffing was smaller.

And so as a deputy, I had a chance to do some details that were really neat. The first time I went back to headquarters was when I was in that position. And I went back, and one of the taskings I had was to take, first, fourteen Tiger Team reports that had been performed by headquarters teams and analyze them and write a summary report on it for headquarters use.

*So the division was called—?*

The Environmental Protection Division.

*And what year was this that you go back, approximately?*

Oh, Lord. Approximately 1990, '91 time period. But that environmental background as the deputy became very useful later on, too. So I was expanding my knowledge base as we went along. And this is at the point where the federal employees and the contractors still thought they were immune from the federal environmental regulations. So it was an interesting time. And that's where I first had the experience of having the spiritual head of the Shoshone Nation [Corbin Harney] come in with a letter to the government of the United States, and I was the one that had to go down and accept that and interact.

*Tell me a little bit more about that. That's interesting.*

Well, the Shoshone Nation feels that they, under treaty rights, still have the test site. And the United States government feels and interprets the Ruby Valley Treaty of 1863 to be very different in its meaning. And it's clearly a cultural thing that to this day the two people simply do not read the words and see it as a single way. And the government has paid compensation, which the Shoshone Nation refuses to accept, for the lands that were taken under the treaty, and they routinely have protested at the test site. They routinely enter the test site for visitation to special locations and leave no record. No one knows they've come and gone. And on this occasion, they were bringing in another protest letter, essentially. And so it was an unusual situation for me to be in. It was something I was totally unprepared for.

*So you're informed that the man has come, or did you have any advance notice?*

No. None. The front guard desk called up and said I had a visitor, and so I went down and here he is.

*Now this is in Las Vegas.*

Yes. And so it was a shock to learn about some of those issues, and that all came out of that time [00:05:00] period and position I had. So I really learned a lot from that that has served me well since then.

I went back to headquarters [in Washington, DC], as I mentioned. I had that type of an experience. I had my first visits to Johnston Atoll, because I actually got over more than once and was able to see that operation, and I understood the working relationship. The Department of Energy had the base support contract with one of their contractors, but yet the administrative control of the island belonged to the Defense Nuclear Agency, and so people going there had a real hard time understanding how things worked. And we had personnel that would go over and do inspections from time to time, help out the Defense Nuclear Agency in a variety of ways. And we had a permanent site representative. There was a Fed there on island all the time. And the position within the organization changed from time to time. Sometimes they were strictly a representative. Sometimes, and when I had the opportunity to go back for a prolonged period, the relationship had been redefined and I was a deputy to the commander, the island commander.

*So just so I can put this in some context in my own mind as we go forward, Johnston Island—I don't know enough about it yet. I know we did testing there, but there's all these presences because other things are going on. Give me a sense of what the story is there.*

Actually, the last testing that was done there was in the early sixties, and part of the agreement or stipulations that the Senate put on signing the treaty to eliminate atmospheric testing was a series of safeguards, one of which was Safeguard C that said the Department of Energy and its predecessors would maintain the capability for atmospheric testing. And that held in place until the early nineties. And so that's how we had the contractual relationship.

*But what's the deal with—there's a military commander and then there's the Defense Nuclear Agency there also?*

Well, the Defense Nuclear Agency is a mixed uniform type organization. They have civilians and active duty military, and the military are all branches. And so when I was there, we had Navy personnel, we had Marine Corps, we had Air Force, and we had active-duty Army. And then we had civilians. But the Safeguard C was what really drove that continuing all those years.

One of the things that happened when I was still a deputy in the Environmental Protection Division, they created a new organization that was going to do performance assessments on the entire organization and the contractors. So the person they selected to be the director for that was in Washington, D.C. and could not come out for approximately four months. So I was tapped on the shoulder to go over and be the deputy to that individual, and set up the organization and start the functions. And so that covered everything. We had a group that looked at management from the standpoint of [00:10:00] performance. We looked at quality performance, and then we had the old-fashioned group that did the assessments like the branch had originally done that I had been over. And we got that started. Total Quality Management [TQM] was the buzzword at that point. And it's interesting because all of these evolutions over time with quality management, quality performance, when you really cut through all of the buzzwords that the popular book has, the underlying fundamentals are all exactly the same, and it's just good business, it's good management, to try to continually improve your product so you stay competitive and you survive. But at that time, it was Total Quality Management, and so we were going down that path. And then the director came on board.

*Who was that, do you remember?*

Yes, I do remember, vividly. The individual's name was Donna Burgman. She, after a couple of years, went to Albuquerque on a detail and did not come back. But it was a very stressful period for everyone. It was unfortunate because she had no supervisory experience. They had just plucked her and made her the office manager. So she had not developed skills of communicating with the staff. You would go home. The next morning, you would walk in and in your mail slot would be a handwritten note that she'd written that evening, dressing you down for a problem that had occurred the day before that she didn't want to talk to you one-on-one about. People were upset because she was making demands on who they could and couldn't see at noon when they were on their lunch break. And it was really a strange time.

And so I had a conversation with a couple of people and they indicated, you know, they wanted someone to go over to Johnston Atoll until they got a permanent person selected, and would I be interested? And I said, *Certainly, I'd love to do that.* And so shortly thereafter I was tapped and told I would be going over there for many weeks, and then I would go back to Honolulu and cover for the director of the Pacific operations while that individual took vacation and then several training classes, and then I would come back to my old job.

And so I was oriented to the operations in Oakland [California] where they actually did the procurement for a lot of material that was shipped to the atoll and then containerized and shipped via cargo container to Honolulu and then offloaded onto a barge that was then taken down to Johnston Island, the Marshall Islands, and other distant locations. But that's the way the nonperishable stuff was all moved. And saw the operation in Oakland and went over and spent a very short time in Honolulu, at Hickam [Air Force Base], getting oriented as to what the expectations were. And then went down to Johnston Atoll.



And I absolutely loved it. There had been problems with the prior site representative. He didn't understand the working relationship that existed between the command and the military people and his role and the contractor. And so the military were trying to direct the contractor, which they could not do, and he in turn was trying to direct the military troops when the commander was off-island, because he was the deputy to the commander. And it doesn't work that way.

**[00:15:00]** *Who was the contractor over there?*

At that time, it was Raytheon Services, Incorporated. I understood the relationship. I understood the concepts of unity of command and delegation of authority. He could not be delegated the authority for the military personnel because he was not in that organization. He was on loan, essentially. And in turn, the military couldn't direct the contractor because they had no contractual relationship. And so I clearly understood when the commander went off-island that the executive officer was the acting commander. And I was the deputy to him, in the same role. And when they had problems with the contractor, I was the one that went in and kicked tail and demanded that things be straightened out. That was my role. No question at all. And so they really were shocked and surprised that someone could come in from an organization that they had past bad history with and everything went extremely smoothly.

And their focus had primarily been at the management level. And I would go out in the evening and I would go to the local places and sit and talk and find out what was really going on on the island, instead of what the management was telling the military was going on. So I had an opportunity to really quickly get an in-depth understanding that was very valuable.

And I thoroughly enjoyed it. We had an occasion where once a week I would take the commander out and he would pick a place and then, without notice, we would go there and walk

in and start asking questions, start seeing what was going on. And then I would take him to places afterwards that I knew there were, through my conversations, that there were problems that we needed to make him aware of. And one time we were standing, looking at a burn pit. And this vehicle drove down, stopped at a large burn pit, and threw liquid into the burn pit there, and turned around and started coming back up. And so we stepped out in the road and stopped the vehicle and asked the person who they were and what they were doing. Found out they had come from the laundry and they were throwing chlorine into the burn pit, which is an environmental violation, big time, OK?

So the next day, when we met with the management, we brought up the issue that they had a problem with the control of hazardous materials, and they assured us, No, everything was under control.

And we said, Well, let's give you an example. And we told about what we observed.

And they said, Oh, no, couldn't possibly be one of our people. It has to be the *Army* contingent that's doing the demilling.

We said, No, it was from *your* laundry. *This* was the vehicle. *This* was the individual. *This* was the time.

And they just couldn't pull tricks anymore. We really knew what was going on. And I got all over the island, and in fact, at one point, I took the commander—and recognize, this is an island two miles long and a half-a-mile wide, so if you walk around the sea wall, it's a five-mile walk. You can't hide a heck of a lot on an island like that unless you're really skillful. I took him on a short road he didn't even know existed, and he had been there almost two years. He was right at the end of his assignment. And took him up to a section of the edge of the island where he had not been before, and I showed him asbestos shingles and piping sticking out of the coral,

so that he was aware there were issues, environmental issues, that had not been documented yet.

[00:20:00] But it's because I always got out, I always went everywhere I could. If I saw a road, I wanted to follow it. If I saw something that looked unusual and out of place, I stopped and talked to the people, what have you. And really had a good time in learning a lot about it and doing something productive to help.

*Yes. Just so I understand, you've said that there was the moratorium but there's still a presence because of Safeguard C, but I really don't have a good understanding of what else is happening on the island. So you've got the burn pit is—what can you tell me?*

Well, the island had an authorized strength of 1,200 personnel, of which 900, slightly more, were there at any given time, which overloaded the capability of the sewage system and other things, but that's a different issue. The primary activity that was going on was demilling of the chemical warheads that had come out of Germany. And they had a large prototype plant there that had been constructed, and they were burning the various materials. Prior to that, the Air Force, when they pulled out of Vietnam, had brought back Agent Orange and stored it on the island, which created some environmental issues. So there seemed to always be some program that needed the remoteness.

*OK, so it's the remoteness and the danger of the chemicals with the contamination.*

Right.

*So that means Germany from World War II chemical warheads, you're saying? Or from the Cold War?*

The Cold War. And I'm drawing a blank right now on which they were. But we had artillery shells. We had rockets. We had one-ton containers. I mean there was a wide variety of configurations and multiple types of material that was brought out and destroyed.

*And these burn pits would destroy it.*

No, no. No, that was just a holdover, old practice, of taking your waste products, and because you didn't have anywhere to bury them, like a conventional landfill—there just wasn't room—you burned it. And then you dealt with the debris that remained, the metals and that kind of thing.

*I understand. So when this guy comes along with the chlorine—*

Chlorine bleach, and throwing it in, yes. There again, it was an effort to help them understand the environmental regulations that applied to them. And being remote, they were a little slower in learning than the contractors at the test site. But it's just one of the things we could do to help.

Because I had spent a lot of time with the locals, when it was time for me to leave the island, I went over the night before to one of the specific clubs that they had. And different groups had these little buildings on the island that they would put together, little almost like, in some cases, sheds, that they would get together.

*And who were the locals, then?*

Well, there were no indigenous population, but the people who were there year after year, you know, they would renew their contracts, their cultural backgrounds, they would get together. So you had one of the buildings that the Filipinos, it was like their club, their space, where they could get together and they could talk, they could do whatever, cook foods that were traditional and, you know, like being at home when they were away from home. And the one I concentrated on were the Pacific Islanders, primarily from Hawaii, and so I'd always go over to what they [00:25:00] called the Hideaway, and it was like a full-blown house on one of the islands of Hawaii proper. I mean it had a kitchen, it had like a living area, and that's where they had the cabinet with the karaoke machine, and porch and tables outside, and they'd cook in the house,

they'd cook outside, and sit around and talk and everything, and just really a wonderful atmosphere. And let me tell you a story. We were sitting talking one evening, and an old gentleman was there that had come up from Kwajalein. And he was telling the story about this *haole* who had gotten an ultralight and built it, and then the *haole* flew it over the lagoon. And I leaned across the table and I said, wait a minute, why do you have to say it's a *haole*? Because I know that means a non-Islander, OK? And sometimes it's used in a derogatory way. And he looked at me and he didn't know if I was taking offense or not, and I said Only a *haole* would be stupid enough to do that.

But the last night I went over to tell everyone goodbye. They said, wait a minute. We got something for you.

And I said, No, you know, you don't need to do that.

They said, No, we have something for you.

And they went in and came out from the kitchen, and they had a bottle of Dom Perignon. And I said, I don't deserve this. I really appreciate the thought, but I don't deserve it. So we're *all* going to drink it.

So we all sat and had sips and finished the bottle off.

Another time before that, I was there talking to one of the old-timers that dove a lot, and he said, I'm going to show you something. We don't show anyone, but I'm going to show you. And they had like a big freezer, and he opened it up and he got way down in the back corner and he brought out this very large crab with unusual coloring. And he said, we catch these here. Nobody knows they're here but we catch them and we eat them because they're delicious. He says, Now don't you tell Fish and Wildlife. So I didn't. I honored the request. But they would cook up stuff they caught, and some strange-

looking fish, and some of them with enormous bones, but the tenderest meat you could ever imagine. And it was wonderful. Just sit there and—

One of the guys from here came out to help with an environmental problem, and he was native Hawaiian of Chinese ancestry, and so I took him over there, and he reconnected with his past. And he had been quite distant from the family for a long time, and he said it reminded him of sitting on his grandmother's porch, and that he needed to get back in contact with the family when he returned. So I felt good about that. But it was just a great opportunity and, you know, it was so open and so loving, you just felt good.

And so then I went back to Hickam and took over the office there. Worked some very specific problems while the director was gone. And they had me staying at a hotel on Waikiki. I had a government vehicle that I drove back and forth, and I parked at Fort DeRussy and then walked one block to the hotel room. And that way I didn't pay for the parking that you would have to at any of the hotels, so it really worked out beautifully. And again, it was such a [00:30:00] really nice environment and working on things that had value added. Good people to work with and everything.

And one day I got a call from my boss back here in Vegas, and she informed me that they got reorganized and I was now not her deputy director anymore, but I was a team leader. Not a branch chief either, but a team leader. And I told her that was unacceptable. The least she could've done was have the courtesy to talk to me beforehand, and that I would be leaving her organization at the first opportunity. And I just felt that strong about it, that because of her poor management practices, all the other problems that went on, I just didn't need to go back and put up with a bunch of crap.

*By "her organization," you mean—when you say, I'm leaving your organization, you meant what?*

Hers back here in Vegas, because I was just detailed to the Pacific.

*I understand, but what was that organization?*

That was the management assessment.

*I'm trying to understand. You don't have to give me the name, but I'm trying to understand. So you would no longer work in that portion of that world. You're just saying, Forget it. Does that mean you're not going to have a job? What does that mean?*

No, I would be leaving at the first opportunity, whatever that opportunity was that was presented.

And so I felt very, very comfortable with myself at that point, where before it was very difficult and it was a continuous tearing down of self-esteem.

*Got it. You weren't going to accept that at that point in your life.*

No. I didn't need that. Simply didn't need that. And so when I came back to Las Vegas, before I reported back to work, I got a phone call at home. And I was asked if I would take a job in the Arms Control Division and do a one-year detail to headquarters, and I said, Absolutely. It was the first thing that was presented, so absolutely. And when I walked back into the office, I walked in to the individual that was my boss and I explained I'd been offered and had accepted this other position. It would take a couple of weeks for them to process all the paperwork and everything, at which time I would be going over there, and in the meantime, Don't screw with me. I was that blunt.

And it was really interesting because when I left, she had one of the people move into the office I had on the very corner of the building, where you could see her coming each morning.

And every time she'd pull up and start to walk in the building, he would get under the desk

because he didn't want to interact with her. She would come in, drop her stuff off, walk in, look, nobody was there. She would then go down the hall until she found somebody, and then start a dialogue, and he'd pop back up from under his desk and go back to work. He told me that a couple of years afterwards. I didn't know it at the time.

But every time somebody would ask me why I left, I would say that I had contributed all I could to the organization, and for my own sake and for that of the organization, I needed to move on. And that's all I'd tell anyone, until she had gone and it was years and people would come up and say, *How in the hell could you stand that situation?*

She had a staff meeting one time and the staff asked her what they were supposed to do, because she was changing things from the way I'd originally set it up and all, and they were pushing her to know what her expectations were. And she got so angry, she said, *You're [00:35:00] professionals. You should know what to do. I shouldn't have to tell you.* And then stormed out of her own staff meeting and wouldn't come back. And we sat there looking at each other, and finally I said, *Well, I guess the meeting's over. We got up and went back to our offices and sat and waited for some divine revelation.*

But it was just awful. She'd storm into the manager's office without an appointment, and right past the secretaries—which is a big no-no because you know who really runs any organization is the secretaries—and make demands and everything else. And that's why they arranged her detail and then gave the FTE [full-time employee] to Albuquerque to keep her. But it was a really awkward situation.

But, to jump ahead—

*But let me just ask one thing before you jump ahead, which is, from what you said last time, and I think you've said it but I want to clarify, it sounds like what you're saying is that your*



*experience in the Pacific, you grew to a certain point or you realized that you weren't willing to do things a certain way. You said it was pivotal, last time. I think that's what you—*

Absolutely. Absolutely.

*So there's a connection between—*

That, and then going on to the next plateau, which was going back to Washington for a year and working in the interagency, dealing with nuclear weapons treaties, plural. The original assignment was to go back and work the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Joint Verification activities, except we had gone into the moratorium so there wasn't a heck of a lot to do in that area. And they gave me other treaties to work. I had the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty and the START [Strategic Arms Reduction] Treaty, which really occupied the majority of my time, and then I provided backup for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT] work that was going on. There was another individual that had the lead on that, but I did provide support to that.

*Who was that?*

Karl Poppe with Livermore lab [Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory] was the individual that had it when I first went back. And then Jay Norman got it when Karl left.

Well, when Karl left and went back to Livermore, he was then put on a detail that found the next lab director for Livermore. The University [of California] Board of Regents called him up to work that issue. So a brilliant man. Absolutely brilliant. And very tall.

There was a lady from Los Alamos Laboratory—her first name was Mary—that was on the hall, and then myself, and so when Jay came back, we explained to him that he didn't belong there. And he said, *Why not?* And we said, *Because you have to be over six feet tall to be on this hall.*

*She was over six feet tall?*

Oh, yes. Yes. And so everybody talked about it, the Land of the Giants. And it was just really fascinating.

*Tell me a little bit about—when you say you worked the treaty, what were you doing?*

Well, you would attend the interagency meetings that would review activities, what was occurring in the treaty partners' countries—

*And the interagencies would be?*

You had State Department, [Department of] Defense, an organization we quaintly referred to as State Department West, you had—well, you had the Secretary of Defense *and* then you had the Joint Chiefs of Staff; they were represented separately. DNA had a representative in [00:40:00] many of the treaties because they had a heavy involvement. FBI on some occasions, not all and not for all treaties. Energy [pause] gosh, I'd have to look it up now to see what the others—

*That's OK. We can look that up. I just want to get a sense. I'm thinking State, Defense, but I would never have thought of the FBI.*

Well, for certain treaties, and not all the time. If there was an issue that was of interest to them, they would come in for that meeting, but they would not *normally* attend the meetings. And we met in the ACDA [Arms Control Disarmament Agency] portion of the State Department building. They took over the eastern end of the State Department building, but they were still in many ways State Department. The ambassadors for the different treaties came out of State, what have you, and you followed all the protocols, everything.

So we'd review what was going on, and then when there were the periodic meetings, we would provide backstopping. So the team that was there doing the negotiations or doing the activities covered under the treaty, they would fire back for information, we'd put the packages together, feed it back to them, that kind of thing.

*Technical information.*

Yes, and policy information. And so they would know what they could and couldn't agree to.

*OK. So your knowledge of policy within DOE, then, makes you be a good person to do that.*

Yes. And what resources we had. You didn't want to commit or agree to something that was proposed when you didn't have the technical resources to validate. So you had that kind of a thing go on. And they also put me on as the DOE representative to the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers, and that originated with the hot line between the president and the premier of Russia. So it grew out where it wasn't just the ability to pick up a phone and talk, but routine communication of activities so they wouldn't be misinterpreted, routine reporting, tracking of pieces of equipment that were moved that were covered under a treaty, all of that type of thing went through the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers. And so there again, I had to learn more than just those treaties I routinely had responsibility for. And in return, that's why I went to Russia, to Moscow, for the consultations, and saw the whole process on how that was handled, and saw the old Ministry of Defense, which is where the meetings were held and where the Russian Nuclear Risk Reduction Center was. Trying to work through with the separation of the old USSR and nuclear weapons that were covered under the treaty that were now in the Ukraine, and the setting up of a Nuclear Risk Reduction Center in the Ukraine, and just the whole thing. It was a very dynamic time.

*Yes, I'd like to hear more about that. So you're part of a delegation that goes...?*

We went to Moscow for the annual consultations. It was really interesting, and that's essentially, you know, to work through problems that had come up where you'd need to modify the treaty implementation processes, or something didn't make sense anymore and you want to drop a

certain report because the information is already captured in a different report so it was [00:45:00] redundant, that kind of thing.

We were scheduled to fly out to Frankfurt and then on to Moscow, and our aircraft had problems, and so we had to lay over and fly out the following afternoon on a different aircraft. The State Department sent the cable saying we had a delay because of equipment failure, and the Russians immediately fired back, demanding to know what equipment we were bringing that failed. They didn't know we were referring to the aircraft that was carrying us from Dulles to Frankfurt. It wasn't even going on in to Moscow. So that was rather amusing.

*What? They think you're bringing some sort of diagnostic something or—?*

Sensors or whatever, you know, to overfly part of the country. So that was an interesting thing to watch.

*That's a great story.*

Yes. We got in fairly late and it was still early spring so, you know, the sun wasn't up all that much and overcast and everything. And got to the hotel, got all checked in and all, and we're all operating on diplomatic passports except our translator, who had an official passport. And it was interesting because I'd always had the grand vision that if you had a diplomatic passport, everything was wonderful. Well, it didn't quite work that way in Moscow because you go in to be processed and they look very carefully and they continually look at you and the passport and you and the passport and you and the passport, while the person with the red official passport just sort of showed it and walked through and they were waiting for the longest time on the other side. So the "dip" passport was not the wonderful thing that I thought it was.

*Maybe they just assume you're a spy if you've got a diplomatic passport. I don't know.*

I don't know if they had a list of photographs back there. They're looking to see if you're one of these other people or, you know, what. I don't know. But it was quite a long, drawn-out situation.

And so the next morning, I got up. I called Nancy and let her know I had arrived, everything was fine, you know, no problem, because she was still hyper about my going a day late. Opened the windows and looked out, and there were blocks of ice floating in the river in front of the hotel. It was cold!

They had a bus that they provided. They had a Russian army major who was our escort, and a driver, Russian driver. Would take us to the meetings and then back to the hotel. And each day, General Romanov would say, We've worked long enough. It's time for you to go out and see some of our beautiful city. And so we'd shut everything down and go get on the bus and they'd take us, tour us through a part of Moscow. Got to go down to Red Square, got to go up to the university, you know, just different places. And we had an army major that was on the team for Joint Chiefs, and our escort was a Russian army major, and so they were comparing stories about their academy days. The Russian major showed us where the Russian army academy was in Moscow. They showed us the old CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] headquarters and where the Russian Bolshoi Ballet was. You know, just really great. The park that is in downtown Moscow where they have the Russian equivalent of the space shuttle sitting out. And it was just fabulous. So we were entertained quite well.

*You said CIA headquarters. It was KGB headquarters, is that what you meant?*

Yes, that's what I meant, although they don't exist anymore and—

*The old KGB headquarters.*

[00:50:00] Right. Everything was very, very open. It was interesting. As I said, we met in the old Ministry of Defense, and the conference room was set up specifically for the type of things we were doing. They had a lot of photographs on one wall of inspection teams and other treaty meetings, and then they had artifacts from the various treaties, munitions, pieces of munitions that had been demilled, that kind of thing. And to stand there and look and see one of our individuals in several different photos for totally different treaty inspections, and she's supposed to be State Department and she was from what we refer to as State Department West, across the river. So they had to have known who were the intel-type people. They had to. We certainly knew those that came out to the test site, which ones were the real scientists and which one were the intel.

*On the Soviet side.*

Right.

*You did know?*

Oh, yes.

*And so you're seeing the photos in the official photos, is that what you're saying?*

Right. Right.

*OK. Yes. That's interesting.*

Yes. The building was old. I mean there was a reason why they called it the *old* Ministry of Defense. And to see enlisted army personnel sitting there with wire brushes, scraping the wood to repaint it and everything, it's just not quite what you normally see here in the United States with military bases. But they got the free labor and they were using it.

*Was it run-down?*

Yes. It was. By our standards, it was.

*Would you say that—sometimes you see these photographs on the news of these very ornate rooms that people are meeting in over in Russia. Was it like that?*

Yes.

*But it was still sort of dilapidated?*

The daily care and maintenance was not occurring. They simply didn't have the resources. But when something would finally get to the point where it was about to fall down or what have you, then they'd bring in the troops and do their thing and, you know, then that was good for another so many years.

Although we had the bus pick us up and take us to the meetings, we got to the point where we would walk from the hotel to the American embassy and back. And we'd go there for breakfast and, you know, planning sessions. We'd go up to the offices for the Onsite Inspection Agency [OSIA] and work issues, usually in the afternoon after we'd been given the tour but before dinner. And we never went through the front of the embassy. We always went through, I want to say it was the south entrance. It's a guard gate, and that's where you look in and you see the new embassy building that was built that had all of the problems. The cafeteria was in use and they had a couple of other minor functions in there, but they had not occupied any of the rest of the building for routine use because of the fact it had been compromised.

But straight across the street from that gate was an old church, fenced, closed off, clearly not maintained and used. And it was a standard joke about the church because every once in a while you'd get a glimmer, something, in one of the towers, and they referred to the church as Our Lady of the Perpetual Surveillance and Our Lady of the Immaculate Reception. Because they were over there with their listening devices and everything, and checking who's coming and

going, and the whole thing, and so you just knew when you went through that gate, somebody was documenting it across the street. That was great.

**[00:55:00]** *This is so interesting, and I'm thinking about all that we've talked about back since your early days at the test site—I'm getting ready to ask you a question—and also just this sort of inborn historical sense that you have. I'm wondering, when you're there, if you're reflecting at all on that you were working at the test site during the height of the Cold War and now you're there in Russia, and how history has moved. Did you have time to think about those kinds of things?*

Oh, absolutely. And made a point of going over to the White House where the Russian Parliament was, and seeing how they had repaired it after the attempted coup, repaired the bullet marks and everything else. And they put up a very large fence around, where before it was pretty open and you could just go and hop the wall and you were there. So a lot of things like that, knowing what had transpired in their recent history, and how their entire society was being turned on its head, literally. And the discussions with some people who felt like, you know, it was the most wonderful thing that ever happened, and then those who were caught in the problem of the fixed retirement income and the Russian ruble being worthless and the widows selling their shawls in order to have bread money, that kind of thing. And those individuals being very bitter at the loss of the Soviet Union, the instability that had occurred, and they simply weren't prepared to deal with it. So they *wanted* a return of the old days. They knew their niche and everything was fine. But money, you know, the Russian ruble, the 200-ruble bill was essentially worthless. It took a lot of those to get any small thing. I think it was 6,000 to the dollar when we were there.



And so there were a lot of things that went on. We went out to a large stadium on one day after we'd completed the work, and they had all of these booths, people selling food and items, what have you, and a lot of people selling just antiques, you know, family pieces, stuff like that. Just incredible to walk through and see some really beautiful things. I got a lovely shawl for my wife that is all silk, hand painted, just a beautiful piece. And the synthetic stones that were all lab-created that really are very, very high quality, and they'd have them laid out and you just picked whatever type you'd like and, you know, just a few dollars. Dirt cheap.

*Synthetic gemstones?*

Yes. It was just unbelievable. But walking through and seeing—a lot of the stands were selling anything they could find in the attic, essentially, and so you could walk through and you could find a lot of things, World War II era, that they were putting out for the tourists to buy. Old household items that would be curiosities. Just totally different than what I expected. And we actually ate the food off the street stands. The Onsite Inspection Agency person that was permanently assigned there said they hadn't had anyone get sick in about four months, so we could probably feel relatively safe.

*What had you expected? Do you remember?*

I don't know. I really don't know what I expected.

*But you were surprised by what you found.*

**[01:00:00]** Well, when I walked in the room, to begin with—well, even before that, the crowds at the airport, waiting for the people to get through customs and come out. I mean you had to literally push your way through a *large* crowd. That was unnerving to me because I just automatically was thinking of somebody trying to pick my pocket, as a starter.

Going to the hotel, and they took the passports, even though we had diplomatic passports, and they held them until the next day, and we were told, *It's OK, this is routine.* That made me very uncomfortable. I got up to the hotel room, and I'd been in Europe before, and so there were some things that I just expected, but I didn't expect that the hot water would be piped through the bars that you hung your towels on, things like that. But I had been in western Europe and it's simply not as cold there, the parts I'd been to, anyway. And so that I found very fascinating. Little things like that that just totally caught me by surprise.

We all were totally prepared for the bugging of the rooms, that kind of thing. That was no big deal. And in fact, one of the individuals that would routinely go over to Russia told me the story that he used to play a game. You know, they would have the rooms with a refrigerator and beverages in it, and he'd go in and he'd open the refrigerator and he'd slam the door and he'd say in a tone of disgust, *God, you'd think that at least they'd have—and he'd name something.* And he said every single time, the next day when he would come back after having been gone all day, they would have that in the refrigerator.

*That's a good story.*

Well, you just expected it. But then when my year was up and I came back, they put me into emergency management, because they didn't know what to do with someone who had worked treaties. We weren't a policy shop out here. Although I did some things that were policy-related, like I set up a two-day session for the interagency where the first day we literally went out in the field and they were shown artifacts from atmospheric testing and underground testing; how to recognize an underground test location from the faulting; other indicators, spalling off the rock faces of mountains, things like that. Because they were very involved in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations and so they needed to understand, if we were to do an onsite

inspection because we suspected a treaty violation, what to look for, how difficult was it, what the logistical problems were of deploying. Because, believe it or not, there were military people who were on those groups who thought, We'll just simply go into the country with a credit card. And we tried to explain to them, You will go to places that are very remote, and when you whip your credit card out to get a rental car, they're going to eat the credit card. They simply have no idea what it is and what you want. You have to be self-contained. And because we'd had the nuclear response teams here and the Threshold Test Ban Treaty equipment was all stored here and deployed out of here, they needed to talk to the people and understand what the issues were.

So the second day, I literally had a full day of a panel discussion where the individuals would give their experience on deployment. And then at [01:05:00] the end, individual questions could be asked from the audience, and then there was a group discussion where they played off each other as the wrap-up. And some of the folks that would come in from the inter-agency were highly offended when one of the individuals was talking about, You give up all concepts of privacy because when you get off an aircraft in the middle of nowhere, and he had experience in Kazakhstan, so he knew what he was talking about. And they're doing the standard negotiations to get everything offloaded and what have you, but nobody can get off until that's done. And you have to go to the bathroom and that aircraft doesn't have a comfort pallet in it, or you're out in the field on one of these teams and you need to go to the bathroom, sex is not an issue here. You're going to have to do whatever you need to do behind whatever bush that may be there, and if unfortunately there's no bush, sorry, no privacy. And individuals were upset that he had been that crude. But, you know, you've got to get a grip, folks. That's the reality of deployment. And you've got to take in enough food and water with the first team to keep you going until the rest catches up. And then you can start doing the more sophisticated

stuff, the systematic searching of areas, what have you, the sampling, all of that. But that's got to come later. And you can't have a credit card and stay in a hotel and eat in the restaurant. You look at the Chinese test site. You look at the Indian test site. These were remote locations, very remote, and if they wanted to pop one off in a place where they had previously tested, it'd be very difficult to tell that it was a new one. Overhead imagery would be your only clue. And there are a lot of things you can do to make sure it doesn't show up on the surface. So those were very interesting things to try to communicate across. I don't know that we ever succeeded with all of the people.

*Now, so I get the time line, this is—?*

Now we're talking '94, '95, '96 time frame.

*This is after Moscow.*

Yes.

*So this is interesting about the test site, that the test site—what I'm hearing from you is the test site expertise and the physical test site become tools to use when people are figuring out how to actually implement the verification portions of these treaties.*

Yes. And we actually had individuals that helped write the verbiage, and that's how I got to Vienna with the United Nations [UN] organization. They were doing—

*Let's change the disc for Vienna.*

**[01:08:45]** End Track 3, Disc 1.

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

*OK, now we can go back to Vienna.*

The United Nations organization offices in Vienna were where they were negotiating and working the details for the organization that would implement the Comprehensive Test Ban

Treaty, and the way you would validate a suspect site, the mix of people and organizations and countries involved, all of that was going on. And so I had the opportunity to go over and participate in part of that. And what was really interesting, the head of the Russian delegation and the head of the U.S. delegation talked a lot offline. And in fact, the Russian head was going to run the office that would be permanently staffed in Vienna, so he wanted to get support for the permanent organization he wanted to put in place. So he gave a copy to our head in advance of proposing it. And one of the scientists from Defense Nuclear Agency, which later has become DTRA [Defense Threat Reduction Agency], and myself went through that to determine if it was the right number of people for that point in the evolution of the organization. And it was padded a little but not bad. But then in that experience, I learned how they staff those diplomatic level positions. And it's very interesting because they distribute it across the nations in the United Nations, so if you have a Russian head, the second may be a Brit or an American or a Canadian, and then at the third level you have Third World nations who need to get that income and participate. And so, you know, it's almost like a formula they have to go through in order to staff the positions. And in the discussions, you pretty well knew what position was going to go to what country. You may not know who the scientist was that was going to step in, or the bureaucrat, and fill it, although in some cases we did. I mean you could read the handwriting pretty clear. But that was something I'd not stopped and thought about before.

And we went through the process of, you know, the formal meetings and then the group working, the delegations working the various issues and, you know, sending back for backstopping feedback, you know, They've proposed this, what's the policy, how far can we go with this? And you couldn't do anything without the feedback from the United States, saying, This is the policy, that's acceptable, that's not acceptable

because, we propose you counter with this kind of thing, and what have you. And so I got to watch that process go on. But when I left, one of the other people that had gone over from the test site stayed for a month, I think it was, helping hammer out the fine detail on deployment, because they had been involved in a lot of deployments. So you had some real experience there, helping walk through the problems.

*Two questions. Now, what year are we talking about? Vienna—?*

That was '95 or '96.

*Yes. And when you say “deployment” in this context, you mean deploying people to do the verification.*

Well, a suspect site, to go investigate to see if there had been a test in violation of the treaty, and all that that entailed. You know, there were limitations in the treaty as to what could—the [00:05:00] methods that could be used, *et cetera*. And so that had all been pre-negotiated. Now how did you actually—it's sort of like saying, we're going to pass a law that says you can have a driver's license at a certain age, OK? Now, then you have to go to DMV [Department of Motor Vehicles] and they've got written procedures and tests and everything else to implement that. So it was that effort, to put all that documentation together on how you were going to implement it. And that is where the real proof of the pudding is: Can you do what was agreed to in the treaty or not? And in some cases you may have been ahead of your headlights in the treaty negotiation in agreeing to something and thinking you had a way of confirming when that technology wasn't fully developed yet. And I think every treaty has that where the people who are at the policy level simply misunderstood information that was passed. And so you got to work feverishly to plug that hole in the development of that technology at home.

*What about the CTBT in general, that it hasn't been ratified here? What are your thoughts on that whole thing, having been involved in some of the work on the ground?*

It's interesting because there was a treaty, and I want to say it was some point in the 1920s, that the nations put together that said, If you are a signatory to a treaty, you will honor the provisions of that treaty, even though you have not ratified the treaty. The United States has always honored that because they were a signatory to that treaty, although they never ratified *that* treaty back in the twenties. And so the mere fact that our president's signature went on the line was sufficient that the United States will follow that. And the Senate will get around to whatever they want to do, whenever they feel like it. But the United States will comply with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty unless some extreme event occurs with the stockpile, or politics evolve in such a way that they feel that they need to pull out of the treaty and have a test. But that would be an extreme. We followed it to the letter up to this point. We continue to support the organization and the United Nations, and we continue our own moratorium.

*Because I know that there's two pieces to that question. One is people that are critics of the treaty say—the point I want to make is there's a provision in that treaty anyway that lets you withdraw if you perceive that it's against your national interest.*

“In the national interest” is the phrase, yes.

*Right. And I know something about this because I know a physicist at Stanford named Sidney Drell who was on one of the big military-scientific, whatever, committees that worked very hard for ratification and worked a lot of that language, I think maybe on the political side, to sort of ease people's minds. And that was the document that I guess was presented in the Senate and then it came out and there's some unclear, you know, that whole thing. Do you know what I'm talking about?*

Yes. Every organization put a group together that worked questions and answers that they thought would be asked and what the correct answer was to respond to the Senate. And I was on the group that did that, and we spent a couple of days working those, and we had representatives from each of the national labs back at DOE headquarters, in the basement. And at the end of the [00:10:00] effort, we'd gone through, we had all verified all of the answers, everybody was comfortable with the product. And one of the lab folks, and I don't remember his name now, leaned back and then he said, You know, after all of this, I wouldn't ratify the treaty. But it was interesting to go through all of the things. And when I was back there full time, 1993-1994 time period, we would routinely prepare questions and answers, or revise ones that had been done, knowing we were going to get questions on a subject because something was happening. And it could be budget-driven. It could be externally driven, outside of the United States. It could be just a level of the press reporting in a given area and we knew we'd start getting questions from Congress. So you'd go through and you'd make sure that when it came in, you'd just be able to answer that very, very quickly.

*And I guess the second part of my question was because we're here in Nevada and the Nevada Test Site and there's things out there in the press about resumptions of testing, for what the current administration wants, and I don't see how that could occur if what you just said is true, that the test ban will be abided by, I guess that's the right word.*

If there is a question about the viability of a weapons system, they would withdraw under the provision of the treaty, even though they have not ratified it. But that's in the treaty, so it permits that kind of an action for a specific question. And once they have the answer, we go back into the treaty. But, you know, it's by exception. So I don't see that that's a conflict.



*Yes. Oh, I see. Yes, OK. I guess when you hear about the nukes that would be used to blast underground bunkers and things like that, you'd have to test those, wouldn't you? I would imagine.*

Yes, the penetrators. You have to test the configuration, the shape, to see if it can penetrate. You don't need to fire the nuclear weapon—

*That you're going to use.*

Right.

*I mean logic would say, with all the development of nuclear weapons that we have, we've got one that going to be good enough, even if it's not the most beautifully engineered one in the world that you could possibly make in a world of technological development.*

But, you know, they're not designing new weapons. They're not changing the device itself. They're changing the casing. It's a pure engineering issue. And so there again, you know, we're not violating the spirit of the treaty. And we've done that all along. We've taken a design that was intended for one use and applied it to other applications.

But the stuff I was doing after I came back was essentially a part-time thing. I had been put in the emergency management group, and one of the functions I had was coordinating the training and exercises for the NEST, Nuclear Emergency Search Team program. And then I was involved in other programs that were classified and continue to be classified.

*So go back to NEST for a second so just on the record we have it. That's where, if there is a nuclear emergency, you are—?*

**[00:15:00]** The team is called out. They deploy to the site. They locate a nuclear weapon, and then they do consequence management as the appropriate people disable it.

*And this is internally. There is some sort of emergency in our own world. Is that the same thing that went up to Canada?*

The NEST team deployed to Canada for the Cosmos satellite, yes.

*All right. That's what I thought. So what would be another possible example of when it would be used, or actual example of when it was used, if you can tell me?*

You would have to request that information because they don't normally provide a list that's all-inclusive.

*OK. All right, that's a good answer. But it would be something like that, and it could be in this country?*

It could be in this country. It could be in a foreign country. They have had activities in both.

That's about all I can say.

*OK. Great. Thanks. I really appreciate that. I didn't say this to you before but I realize it's really helpful to us if you can just say that. One of the things I've started worrying about was cover stories and the historical record. So that's great. Anytime you just can't tell me.... We've had this discussion but it's good to reiterate it.*

Then the person who was the head of that division took the responsibility of reestablishing an office at Mercury, with real Feds out there, not just contractors, and so he asked if I would go out as one of the team leaders to set up the facility representative program.

*For what purpose was that?*

Provide oversight of the high hazard facilities on the test site. Make sure nothing was brought in, a program was brought in, that would go outside the safety envelope. And so I put that together, got the folks going. And then we also had the site operations center out there that did the day-to-

day operations coordination, and a group that did the special projects that went on on the test site. And then when he retired, I stepped in and took over as the division director for that.

*Did you work out at Mercury at that point?*

Yes. Well, I went back out in '97 and I was there until three years ago.

*So you were there about three, oh, maybe four years?*

Almost four. Yes, four years out there. And I'd worked out there twenty-one years before, so yes, I have been at the test site for a quarter of a century.

*Physically.*

Yes. But the opportunity came up for me to come back to town. And I felt I'd given my time out there. I wanted to do something that I was looking at as hopefully the first steps for retirement, and so I was asked if I would go in to the Public Affairs Office and, although not initially. It evolved so that I was the NNSA [National Nuclear Security Administration] representative to the executive council for the NTS [Nevada Test Site] Historical Foundation, and picked up the responsibilities of overseeing the finishing of the construction of the building, the various organizations occupying their spaces, learning to play well together, all of those kinds of things. And then when that was completed, and the reorganization, they essentially did away with the position, and so I then was vulnerable and didn't really know what was going to happen. And then earlier this year, I was offered a position back in emergency management, but the primary responsibility was writing our continuity of operations plan for the office, because I understood how the interagencies [00:20:00] worked, I knew emergency management, I had these various tools and experiences that I could draw on. And so I accepted that, just to be able to finish out my federal career here in Las Vegas, not have to move to Albuquerque or Los Alamos.

*And emergency management in this context means what exactly?*

Continuity of operations is really driven first as the national level. If something happened in Washington, D.C., how could you continue the function of the federal government, putting the provisions in place for the continuity of government? And then continuity of operations is the next level under that. You've got the people that are going to replace those that something has happened to. Continuity of operations then becomes more what happens in regards to the facilities that are no longer usable. And so I've been working that since the spring [2004]. And went back for the interagency exercise this year, where all of the executive branch of the government was involved, and observed both the Department of Energy and the NNSA portion of that. Worked a little bit on the early stage of the week, just understanding what was happening, the people involved, then observed the actual process. And then followed up with the evaluations of the performance of the two organizations, sat in those sessions. And I was fortunate because they allowed me to essentially go anywhere at the relocation site for NNSA and DOE, and so we would observe what was happening in the emergency operations center, go over to security, observe what was happening there, go up and the individual who was filling for the administrator for NNSA, sat in on his briefing, see what information was getting through the filters to him. And it was really fascinating because I thought the NNSA portion ran relatively smooth, but they are used to these kinds of things and they have the backup center there at another location other than downtown Washington, it's routinely exercised, and for them it was nothing unusual. It was just another day in how the process worked. Doesn't mean there weren't areas where they could improve, but it worked. I can't say that was a universal thing with all portions of government. But they're learning, and it's slow. It's very, very painful for many organizations because they've never thought that way.

*Yes. But the NNSA, because of the nature of the beast, thinks that way, is what you're saying, and they've been doing it for a long time?*

Yes. Yes. And in fact, I just finished the draft for our office, and headquarters hasn't even finished theirs yet. And so I sent ours back for their review and comment, and if they like it, they're then going to send it out to the other NNSA offices to use as a prototype.

*So when you're thinking about your situation, is the assumption that something happens to you, or is it in the event that something happens in Washington, what do you do?*

If something happens in Washington, that's part of their plan, and there are mechanisms that are already in place, although the plan itself isn't finished. So that's what I observed there. The plan I wrote is the implementation for *our* location, our office and our facilities.

*Right. Because the question comes because I would assume if something happened back there, it would impact you, but the way it's supposed to work is then they go to their second location and [00:25:00] then you deal with them, so it's strictly with you. OK. Then you have to think about the test site in your planning, too?*

That's a portion of it. The contractors will have to come up to speed on the same types of things, how they will do their portions. But I'm just pleased that we got a product that I could submit back and say, This is how we think we want to approach it. And if they like it, they'll turn around and send it out to the other offices who will plagiarize prolifically. And that's fine. I mean that's the way it should work. It saves the taxpayer money. But I did get an e-mail back and he said, It passed the first test. It was about the right weight. And there are things we need to do. It's always enlightening to do something new like that and find out things that you didn't know before.

*Sounds like a huge task.*

Aspects of it are quite large. Other portions were a piece of cake. I mean there was no real gray matter used for a lot of it, but some of it, you look at it and you say, What makes sense? What resources are available you can draw on to then make your evaluations and decisions? And I'm fortunate because I've worked on the contractor side, I've worked on the Fed side in numerous functions, I've worked at headquarters and the interagency, and so I know resources that a lot of people would not know and I can draw stuff together from multiple sources to come up with a strong product. And I enjoy that. I enjoy that very much.

So my primary function now is to continue that process through implementation, provide backup on the emergency management side of the house, evaluating contractor plans, hazard surveys, stuff like that. And then I've done a couple of things for the engineering group. And what I'd like to end up working into, if I can't go back to working with the museum, would essentially be the type person that any one of the divisions under our assistant manager, or if he has a unique problem, they turn it over and I'll work that problem for them. Because I like working new and different things. And I was talking to the boss the other day about it and I said, you know, I get bored easy. You give me a job and I do that over and over again, after two years I'm going crazy. I've got to have new experiences, new learning opportunities, and then I'll perform very well.

But it's been an interesting time. It's been rocky for the two years where we knew we were going to downsize—I then found out my position was being abolished—and not knowing if we would be here, we'd relocate this close to retirement, and it was a rollercoaster. Emotionally it was very, very—and physically, it was very, very devastating. And until I got some stability back in, it was difficult getting up and going to work and not having a clue what was going to happen. That's pretty well gone now, and I've got the stability, I know what I'm going to be doing, I can plan, I don't have to completely redo all of my finances and everything. Because

shortly before they made the decision on the reorganization, I had gone through and I'd completely restructured all of my finances to make sure that when I got to retirement, the house was paid for, the car was paid for, no debts, all I'd have to do is worry about the basics, you [00:30:00] know, insurance, food, maintenance of the house, be able to travel, what have you, and do the things that I enjoy doing. And the thought of having to go in and completely restructure everything with fewer years remaining was not a very pleasant thought.

The reorganization was needed, desperately needed. But most people would tell you it was very poorly handled. There are still a lot of angry people, a lot of pain, a lot of disruption in people's lives that have resulted.

*When we first met over at your office and you said to me about being a civil servant, I mean I would imagine—the sense I got from you, and I can't remember exactly what you said, was that it was an important thing to you.*

Yes.

*And then I think I would imagine any time you give a lot to your job and then things aren't handled right, that's rough, but I'm wondering in the case of a federal worker, where you really feel like you're motivated by some sense of serving your country, that that—*

A large number of people felt betrayed, that they had truly given. And it's not that they feel betrayed by their country or they feel betrayed by the system. They feel betrayed by their management, that they would be put through such a horrible thing. But I don't know of anyone who feels that, as a result of that, they don't want to work for the federal government anymore.

*I don't mean that. I didn't mean that. But I'm saying I would imagine that any time you work for any organization that you give something to, you want—I just was wondering—I guess if you're a civil servant, something must come with that that you feel a certain something because you are*

*...serving your country, and then I'm not saying your country mistreats you, but then when things go wrong, I would imagine that there would be a sense of—*

Betrayal. Yes. It's like believing you have a binding contract and then finding out, Oh, sorry, we never got that second signature on it. And you've operated all those years with an assumption and it's simply not that way. So yes, that's been difficult. But again, what got me started in wanting to be a civil servant was the fact that what I had received for the first twenty-five years I felt I needed to pay back. And then when you stop and look at things objectively, when I was trying to pay back, I was being enriched far beyond my expectations, and so I think it's an even game. I don't think anybody owes me anything, and I don't feel any regret having made the change. I'm very happy with the experiences I've had, the people I've met. I've worked for wonderful people. I've worked for some very unusual people that would make a book in itself, both as a contractor and on the Fed side. *Very* unusual people. One of my bosses when I was on the contractor side I still have contact with today. I like him in many ways. He was a *terrible* boss, absolutely the worst. And he had certain characteristics that I find reprehensible, but I like him as a human being. I just wish he'd clean up his act, if you know what I mean.

*I don't, but that's OK.*

But I have no bad feelings to the person. Would not wish them any harm. The same thing with [00:35:00] the individual we talked about earlier, when I was a Fed. They simply had not been prepared for the job. I blame the organization for that. And when they saw that the individual was failing, they did nothing to help her correct her deficiencies. Instead, they just cut the string. And I don't wish her any bad luck. I certainly would never want to work for her again, but I don't wish her any bad luck. And I do think it was a situation where I'd given everything I could and I needed to move on, for my own well-being, for the well-being of the organization, and



hopefully for her well-being. I have heard that several years later, her personality had changed to a very positive one and that she was a totally different person now. So that's good.

*Yes, it's hard to know what stresses people are under, and if you don't have the skills, that's a rough one, too.*

Oh, it's horrible. And I developed that understanding, having worked for the contractor that was originally a construction company and still had a construction company mentality, and they would take very, very competent people and move them into management. And it was the same problem there, where they wouldn't give them the tools, they wouldn't bring them up step by step, they would fail at the end of two years, they wouldn't move them back because they had lost their technical professional edge, but they wouldn't help them improve either. They just sat there and every once in a while they'd have a reorganization, which meant they'd go in one night and change the signs on the doors as to what they were responsible for, and everything started off again, you know. That's not how you handle people. That's not how you manage. So I was used to that with the contractor, and then when I saw it manifest on the government side, it didn't surprise me. Where I think if you come out of a Fortune 500, they know how to develop people for the long haul, it would've been real culture shock.

*There were two other things that you mentioned. One is a detail question. Explain to me, when you said the thing with the Nevada Test Site Historical Foundation came into being, I really don't know that history so much. That was a federal initiative that funded it or—?*

It was an initiative from several retired former federal employees who wanted the story saved and told.

*Yes, that I understand. I just didn't understand how your position then dovetailed with that.*

They then convinced the Nevada management that there should be a historical institute where people could go and have access to the old records, have access to the cultural collections, research, learn, *et cetera*. And the museum really was sort of a footnote in the original documentation. Items from the collection would be put on display for the general public, but it was like, Oh, and by the way, we'll also have this display case in the lobby. And as things evolved, they realized in order to tell a whole story, they needed a *lot* of room and a *lot* of artifacts on display. And so the focus shifted from that research institute concept to a drawing together of the collections and siphoning pieces off for display in the museum, but the museum being the focal point, the general public deriving the benefit, not necessarily the research community having access to it.

*And what's your take on the motivation, because it's obvious from my coming into this [00:40:00] community from the outside that there's a huge amount of passion about that story being told, and you're obviously part of that story and you're telling it. But it's interesting to note, one of my observations as maybe part of the issue is that it was secret for so long that there's this sense that people can't know. And then it gets into the question that there continue to be things that even researchers can't know.*

You go from a situation where you're an integral part of the defense of the nation and you have clearly defined enemies via the Cold War and lots of secrets to a situation where the USSR disintegrates literally and everybody shifts gears. The Cold War is over and we're moving on to something new and more important. Everyone involved had always kept their mouth shut as to what they did, and now there's a window of opportunity to tell the story. But you've got to make it fast or people will have moved on and it will be like going to a buggy whip museum; the attendance isn't all that great. It was interesting at a point in time, but it's not a big draw. And I

think they realized they've got to move and they've got to move fast and they've got to get it out there for the general public to learn what happened.

*Because otherwise—I understand a little bit. So there's this immediate shift and all of a sudden it's just going to—?*

It's a validation that what you gave your entire life to had meaning. Twenty years from now, if the story isn't available and there isn't a hook to get people interested, they won't remember it. Because there's not a lot out there. So that's what I'm seeing with the individuals who were instrumental in the creation of the process. And the early funding all came from the department [DOE], people working, supporting the design, the funding of the relocation of the collections, the funding of people, what have you.

*So that's why the archive [Nuclear Testing Archive—NTA] went over there, so that it would be more available to the public?*

Yes.

*That was the rationale for that, rather than sitting out on the edges of town [at DOE offices in North Las Vegas].*

Yes. And not being publicly available. A regulatory requirement being met and that's it. But I think people realized they are mortal after all and they want to have recognition that what they did was important, because they believe it. I think that's the mindset that you're seeing that's changing the way things are going. But it's both.

*Both what?*

You've got to have the research aspects *and* you've got to have the popular acceptance and awareness. And I don't mean acceptance that we have nuclear weapons and by God, there was no other voice, you know, no other point of view, but acceptance that this went on, and all of the

players and how that affected the way the world is today. People want to feel like they did something of value and they want to know that before they die.

*Yes. It's very interesting on a lot of levels which I know you know. But I'll just say what's going through my mind, and this is not the first time I've thought about it, obviously, but you've [00:45:00] articulated it in such a way—this very interesting juxtaposition of this whole universe, this whole reality that so many of us only sort of vaguely knew about because of the isolation and because of the secrecy. And this amazing sort of problem you have there because the reason you're not known is because there was secrecy, and a lot of cachet comes with having been in that secret society.*

*The other interesting thing is that I think this part of Cold War history is extremely important, and I think a lot of other people in the world do, too. But the problem remains and, you know, how do you get that in an atmosphere even now? As I said to you a little while ago, I had this big light go off in my head. I have to tell people who are cleared: please don't ever give me a cover story. Just tell me you can't tell me, because we're creating a historical record and you don't want to complicate that by a cover story. And then I mean, you tell me, Robert, there must be times that someone might not even know that they're telling you a cover story.*

Yes. In particular if you've been on the fringe and that's what you were told and you're repeating it as fact. Yes.

*Right. So all the general problems of oral history—memory, how we conflate—you think something happened but it really happened in another place than your mind actually remembers it; you picture yourself in that house but it couldn't have been that house because you left that house ten years earlier but by God that's how you remember—you know, all those kinds of things that oral historians worry about, and there's this other higher thing.*

*And then the other thing I'll put out here to you, which we'll probably have to talk about again, is it's interesting that you are—now I'm talking about you—you're a civil servant, a federal employee. And yet you've worked your whole life in a world of crisis, in a real sense, and it occurred to me only when you told me about your emergency management job. And I was thinking, yes, everything you've done, because of the nature of the kind of work you went into, is living in a world of work that has to do with crisis and often worst-case scenarios. That's just very interesting. Many people don't live those kinds of lives.*

I can tell you that I was in Albuquerque, down at Kirtland [Air Force Base], the day that Waco went down [April 19, 1993]. And a group of us went to lunch and we actually saw the building burning on the television, and we talked about the various groups that felt the federal government was a great evil thing. And then I was at the office here in town when Oklahoma City went down [April 19, 1995], and I was emotionally shaken by that because here were people who were everyday citizens doing the job to help their fellow Americans, and they were targets, and they had a bull's-eye on them. And some of the things I had done, I knew I had been walking around with a bull's-eye on, and I just didn't know if I wanted to be that anymore. And it made me really stop and think, and that was part of why, and I didn't go into any detail on it, but that was part of why I accepted the job out at the site in '97. It got me out of having to be involved in certain programs, simply because I couldn't meet the time requirements by being out at the test site.

*I don't understand what you mean, but you may not be able to tell me.*

I wasn't able to be at a certain location within a certain length of time because I couldn't get into town and then get to that location within the required time frame. So it removed me from being [00:50:00] involved in those programs.

*Which you can't tell me about?*

No.

*OK. What you can tell me is you were able to remove yourself and you did that consciously.*

And I respect the people who are in those types of programs. God bless them. But I'm too old to do that now. I'll let the younger, stronger, freshly dedicated individuals do those things. And we've got some remarkable people out there. I'm not afraid of turning anything over to the next generation.

*That's good. See, this is where the gap really exists because I have no idea of what you're talking about, and that's—*

I'm packing twenty-five years into it.

*Yes, but isn't that interesting? I know that what you're saying is significant and that it's something that our country is doing and that people are dedicated to do, and I have no idea of what it is. And I'm not passing judgment on that. It's just this is really sort of the—that that's just so interesting, that our democracy in a sense has developed in that way, and culture has developed that way, and science and technology have developed that way, that we are in this situation. But isn't that interesting, because I have no idea of what you're talking about. But you do. So. Well, it's twelve o'clock on the nose. Let's stop.*

All right.

**[00:52:00]** End Track 2, Disc 2.

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

In answer to the question about the difficulty of not being able to talk about what you do and how that affects your life, for years my wife had no clue what I really did because I just never talked about any of the details. And because at one point I was the dosimetry liaison officer for

Reynolds Electric and we had all these records that I was responsible for, I told her that I was a custodian. And she would tell her friends when they'd ask, *What does your husband do?* Oh, he's a custodian. And some people didn't accept it immediately, and there are a few friends that for several years thought I was a janitor.

*That's amazing. So she never could know details of what you did?*

Not for a long time, and then I was able to share some things with her. And to this day, there are a lot of things that I have not shared and can't. But she knows my general functions now because of the fact I'm really not involved in classified work anymore, the day-to-day, and so I talk about the kinds of things I'm doing now in a very generic way. And in some cases, like the fact sheet, I'll actually show her the work in progress because it's totally unclassified and historical, which is something I really enjoy. So I'll share those things. But it was just something that she didn't have a clue. And my son, I don't think to this day has a clue, and he's forty years old. He just knows I work for the government and I don't tell him details and he leaves it at that. So. I thought you'd like that.

*OK. That's a good one.*

**[00:02:38]** End of Track 3, Disc 2.

[End of interview]