

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

Interview with
Cecil Garland

July 19, 2006
Callao, Utah

Interview Conducted By
Leisl Carr

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

Leisl Carr: *All right, we're good. Go ahead.*

Cecil Garland: Well, my name is Cecil Garland. I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. That's always been a kind of an embarrassment to me, to be born in the territory of the Yankees, but my dad and mother happened to be there at the time. We returned back to the hills of North Carolina where I really belonged and where I grew up.

In 1942, I believe, I hitchhiked from Asheville down to Greenville, South Carolina and at seventeen joined the United States Army Air Force as a cadet. As it turned out, the Army didn't need cadets, so they washed out 36,000 of us for the convenience of the government. I went to England as a mechanic and spent a big share of my time in the service in England. It was a delightful experience. I loved England. Then I went on over to the Continent right after the war and spent some time in France and Germany and Belgium. For a young man who hadn't reached his twenty-first birthday by the time I got out, it was all very interesting and educational.

[Telephone rings]

[00:01:49] End Track 2, Disc 1.

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

That's the place to start.

That's the place to start. Your background kind of provides color to your positioning with reference to some of these other stories.

Well, I grew up in a time of extreme contrast to the day in which we live today. The Smoky Mountains, the section that is called Appalachia by other people, it's probably the poorest section

of the country. It was in the Depression. People did everything they could reasonably, including making good whiskey.

That's important, by the way. Good whiskey's important.

Yeah, I guess. And they thought so too.

Absolutely.

Actually it's white whiskey—you know, homemade whiskey is the only whiskey I really ever enjoyed. I guess that's because that's the way you grew up.

Right.

But anyhow, it was the Depression. Not only in terms was it an economic kind of depression, but you could become depressed also. So you had to work against that, and one of the things you had to do was—you know, my mother died when I was eight years old simply because there probably wasn't the right kind of medicine or doctor available. So it would be pretty easy for a kid to say to hell with the whole thing, it hasn't treated me fairly. That is the sort of thing I hear today and it's almost incomprehensible to me because I can't understand. In those days—as an example perhaps of what I'm trying to say—is that we did everything we could to dress neatly and to keep ourselves somewhat clean. We wore butch haircuts and that sort of thing. And now in contrast, and in a time of just fantastic affluence, we see—I see—young people, and old people also, I mean people of all ages who make themselves totally, utterly ridiculous. They look filthy, and of course this is not everyone. But it is a kind of a sign of the time, to use a worn-out cliché.

And so I have come to grieve for my country. It's very difficult to take a young kid, seventeen, eighteen years old, and tell him all his life what a wonderful country that he lives in, and then live to be eighty years old and see what your country has become. And you can only

grieve. You can't really feel good about it. And as much time as I spend on it, I don't really know the answer. It seems to be a kind of—as Oswald Spengler said, history is biology. I guess the seeds of our own destruction, it has been said many times, are sown within us. They mature at a rate, in a kind of a speed that's predictable. And certainly there are wiser people than I am that have predicted that it would happen.

For many, many years I was an atheist, an agnostic; I paid little or no attention to it. But one time, in my mind, there was something that forced itself upon my thinking, and that was the simple fact that the further we got away from the teachings of our [00:05:00] Savior, a man erroneously called Jesus, the more trouble we got into. And I see that we have almost abandoned His principles and His teachings. We, my beloved United States, has come to torture people. It's killed people in the most hideous, destructive sort of way. And we do all of this under the pretence that we're doing some good in the world. How one stretches his imagination to encompass that kind of a belief, I simply don't understand it.

Where was we?

Tell me a little bit about your education. I'm surprised, actually, that you've read Spengler.

Well, you shouldn't be.

No, I guess I shouldn't.

One of the things that bothers me a little bit about academia is that somehow or another, once they have assumed that they have certain numbers or letters behind their name, that they are in effect beyond reproach; that they are the sole recipient and caretakers of all intelligence. That's not really so. I have known a good deal of Ph.D.s, for instance, and I enjoy them. Some of them are quite intelligent. Some of them are just incredible bores. So the desire to know, the desire to learn is perhaps innate. It probably is innate. I think we are largely what we inherit. If that wasn't

so, if socioeconomics was the criteria by which, and the environment was totally all we judged people by, then I couldn't own a ranch and my cattle and have married a lovely Mormon woman in Utah [wife Annette Garland]. I would've been confined to that socioeconomic situation in which I found myself originating in. And that's just not the case.

So the desire to know and the desire to learn is, as I say, perhaps natural with us. The single greatest thing that's, I think, given to Man is his ability to print and to read, to pass that information. Information and truth of all kinds is absolutely a priceless thing to have. The human mind, so we are told, can absorb some seven trillion bits of information, but we use so little of that. That's a tragic thing. And reading and understanding, how could you go through life without reading? Perhaps not being totally devoted to the reading of the works of Shakespeare or Milton or Thomas Wolfe, who came from where I came from, I wouldn't want to ignore those people that wrote and have written so very well.

So my education, in the formal sense of the word, is when I was thirteen years old my dad—and I'd been kind of kicked around from my aunts to uncles to, you know, wherever—and my dad took me to a Presbyterian boarding school for the poor kids, when I was thirteen years old, and he left me there. He said—I can remember well, he said, *Son, this is the best thing I can do for you*, and he left. He was a great man in his own way. He had this terrible weakness for that good old corn whiskey. But he left, and I've taken it since from there. I managed to graduate from high school, probably two reasons. I could play football pretty well, and they figured I'd get killed in World War II, so they gave me a diploma. They didn't figure it'd make any difference.

And that's the extent of formal education. I came home from the war and everybody said, well, you've got to go to—you can go on the GI Bill and go to school. So [00:10:00] I went to a

small junior college in western North Carolina, supposedly to catch up on some credits. But I figured I should drop out and give those professors a chance to catch up. They just were really behind the whole thing.

So then I hitchhiked out to Las Vegas and went to work in a gambling house. Now that in its way is a form of education.

Yeah. I'm learning that quickly.

Yeah. I went to work as a shill for \$6.00 a day in a gambling house, and then would do various errands and chores. Might be interesting for me to tell you this, but one of the things I did when I worked for the Golden Nugget right after it was first established—well, as a shill. But I would do all kinds of errands for them, including picking up the boss's girlfriend and taking her shopping.

Who was the boss?

Well, there were several. Guy McAfee was kind of the originator of the Golden Nugget. He was an ex-policeman, captain in charge of the police force in Los Angeles who was requested to leave the Los Angeles area; I think that's sufficient. He brought a cadre of other people with him, and they opened the Golden Nugget.

And one of the things that I had to do—in those days we dealt with silver dollars. Silver dollars in our right hand and checks in our left hand. Silver dollars were not really something that people thought an awful lot of. They were heavy and so most people actually preferred paper. But I would take this cart. It was a flat cart like you'd see in the big shopping centers. Not a basket cart but the big cart you roll. I'd take that and go up the street a block to First Street—on Fremont Street this was—and then I'd cross the street at the red light and go over to the Nevada Bank which was on the corner. I'd go in and they would load up that cart with silver dollars. And you know I'd have, I have no idea, but there'd be twenty or thirty bags of silver dollars. I'd pull

that back out into the street, go across the street, and back down into the Golden Nugget, and nobody ever thought a thing about it. I had no gun, I had no protection, didn't need any.

That was the kind of world it was then. And it was a better world. People thought more of themselves, thought more of their country. It's a country, a time that I'd prefer over what I see now.

This is back when Vegas was really a small town.

Right, it was more of a railroad town in those times. The dam had been built there and it had had an uproarious time during the dam when they built Boulder Dam. And then it had kind of died away and become a sleepy little railroad town again.

You would've been there around late forties, early fifties?

I came to Vegas in 1946. I hitchhiked all the way across the United States from North Carolina. And you could do that in those days. I didn't worry about who picked me up or anything like that. Nobody ever bothered me. Just conversation and, well, this is as far as I go, you got out, stuck your thumb out again, and kept going on down the road.

That's great.

And so after I broke in, in the Nugget, Benjamin Siegel was doing the Flamingo; that was an interesting time in Las Vegas. He didn't like to be called Bugsy; he liked to be called Benjamin Siegel. He was a tall, good-looking Jew. He had been in charge of the Garment Union in New York, so he was picked because of his good personality to come out.

[00:15:00] At that time there was really only two hotel-casinos on the Strip. One was the El Rancho and the Last Frontier. They were just glorified motels that they had attached a casino to them, and a dining room. And you could go out and eat in the evening. If you went to the dinner show, it was expected that you have a meal, but if you went to the late show, you could go in and

sit down and buy a drink and watch the show. You could watch Frank Sinatra if you chose to; which I didn't, incidentally.

Really. Not once?

Not once. He was just not my favorite person. He sang very well, but I didn't care for him. I don't know if you ever heard Les Paul of Les Paul and Mary Ford. They were my favorite. I would always go see Les Paul and Mary Ford. He was a tremendous guitar player and she had one of the most beautiful voices of any woman I think I've ever heard. And so, you know, that's a personal preference.

I partied, raised my share of hell, of course, much to my regret; on some of it, I wished I hadn't had. But, you know, you don't waste a lot of time on that kind of stuff.

Sure. No. How long were you in Las Vegas?

Off and on for ten years. I didn't ever go back after '56. For one thing, drugs, which were pretty well unheard of in Vegas, you would see a junkie here and there but you didn't pay any attention to them. But then it became ever more pervasive. And then pretty soon you had hustling broads all over. They had a whorehouse out at Roxie's, or Four Mile, it was called, and it was owned by the sheriff, Glenn Jones [sp]. He kept a really nice town, he didn't let hustling broads on the street, and if they did he would go and have one of the deputies or somebody would go to them and say, Listen, lady, that's not the way it is. So the next time we catch you here, you know, it won't be the same way as it is now, whatever they said.

So it was a nice, clean little town. There was no drugs. I spent an awful lot of time out on the Colorado River fishing and on Lake Mead fishing. It was wonderful, beautiful fishing. Incidentally, they had water in the reservoir at that time. And then came, you know, the advent of the bombs.

Did you see?

Oh yes.

Tell me about that.

Well, they would announce that they were going to drop a bomb from a B-29, for instance, and that you'd probably be able to see it from Las Vegas. So I lived in a little housing project down in North Las Vegas. I had gotten married then and had a couple of kids, I guess. And so I got up on top of the roof and watched the B-29 go over and then watch them drop the bomb; watched it explode and watched the cloud go up. It was a really beautiful, clear day.

But I worked [then] for Benny Binion downtown, and they would announce, In the morning we're going to have an atomic test, at a certain time, and they'd tell you the time. The first thing you'd see was the flash, so it'd be about four o'clock in the morning somewhere. You'd see this brilliant flash, like lightning. And then you'd count, one, two, three, four. About four-and-a-half seconds, you'd feel the tremble. The glass doors would weave in and out and the earth would shake and we'd say, well, that's another one.

But the significant thing about that, if the weather changed, they would call it off. In other words, if the wind changed in any direction whatsoever, except straight north [00:20:00] towards Utah—or northeast towards Utah—then they shut it down. They didn't hold it. Which sort of puts the light to the fact that they didn't know what the hell they were doing to the people up here. Because they did know what they were doing. You can't tell me that people like [J. Robert] Oppenheimer, who had already tried to say, this is bad stuff, and others, you know.

But at the same time, you must consider sort of the mentality of the time. I call it the "toxicity of victory." Sometimes it's almost better to be the loser than it is to be the victor because the victors are given the option of writing history and that makes liars of them, first

thing, number one. The other thing in the toxicity of victory is that it gives you a kind of a hubris that you neither deserve nor is in effect good for you; nor is it good for the way you see things.

So here we had tended to carry over from the war the expendability of human beings as we did in the war. But that expendability goes to the individual himself who tells himself, I am expendable because of my love for my country and the innate virtue of my country. All of which are wrong. We went through that, and that's what made the whole atomic testing thing with the guinea pig humans possible. I guess that's why I wanted to do something for the Downwinders if I could at one time. It was a deliberate, inhumane, terrible thing to do. And you know we did it deliberately.

What have you done for the Downwinders?

Well, unfortunately I could do very little except to join with them and meet with them on several occasions down in Cedar City. And come to know more intimately well the horrors of what had happened to them; the people that had died, and the simple fact that the milk that my children were drinking in Las Vegas came from up around Logandale, I guess, and up in that area. It was loaded with strontium-90. And so, you know, Becky, my youngest daughter, who grew up drinking their—and her baby drank the milk, and she has a thyroid problem. Now it isn't anything that we get excited about or have tried to sue anybody or even want to. But nevertheless there's always that agonizing question, what will that problem develop into and why did we need to do that? I don't think we learned a whole lot, to tell you the truth. It was an exercise in flexing our atomic muscles as much as anything else.

Where in the hell was we? We were talking about something.

We've kind of migrated a little bit, but that's how these happen. The good stories come from, you know, the different wanderings. We were talking about Downwinders and how you were in Las Vegas. After Las Vegas, after '56, where did you go from there?

I went up to Montana, and that's a whole new story in itself. Got up there and really fell in love with Montana.

I can imagine.

I love to hunt and fish and be in the mountains and pack horses, saddle horses, the whole thing. North of the little town where I had settled was a huge chunk of ground. There was the Bob Marshall Wilderness area and then there was some surrounding ground [00:25:00] called the Lincoln backcountry. The little town was named Lincoln. So I went to work for the [U.S.] Forest Service for a really great guy by the name of Lawrence Olsen, who was a true forester. There wasn't any after him. They all died off then. But anyhow, he gave me some work while I was getting my business going there in the little town of Lincoln.

What business?

A store. General merchandise: tools, chain saws, fishing tackle, clothes, anything that we could sell to make a buck.

But he was a true forester. As a result of that, he was relegated to a small position where he stayed until he retired. They wanted him out of the way, because they were going to develop this beautiful, progressive Forest Service that had gotten beyond the realm of just being a caretaker. Well, the results were disastrous. I learned for the first time that to seek government solution is to invite disaster. When they decided to build a series of roads, a whole complex of roads into that beautiful country that had grizzly bear, pure cutthroat trout, elk, wolverine, Canadian lynx, the whole thing was still there, and they were going to destroy it. So that old line

in Shakespeare come back to me, and I don't even quote it right but it says: to take up arms against a sea of wrongs. That's not verbatim. But anyhow, I decided then and there that this was one of the last pieces of beautiful country left intact, and God damn it, they weren't going to tear it up. I didn't care what it took. I didn't care how long it took. I didn't care what it cost me. I didn't care what people thought. They weren't going to tear up that piece of country with their damn bulldozers. They came so close to getting it done that I tremble to think about it. But they didn't. And finally, after coming to know some senators and congressmen on a first-name basis through my efforts, eight or ten trips to Washington, D.C., we finally got it into wilderness.

What year was this that they finally—?

Seventy-one, I believe.

OK. So it's fairly early on in the whole environmental legislation.

It was the original de facto wilderness area to be added to the wilderness system, over the objections of Wayne Aspinall, who was a tremendously powerful congressman who I got to know and come to respect after a time. I met him—they wouldn't let me go talk to him, people in the Wilderness Society—but I met him in the hallway of Congress and tried to talk to him, and he said, Young man, he says, I'll kill your bill in committee or I'll kill it on the House floor.

So with big tears in my eyes, I went over to see Mike Mansfield who was the majority senator. I walked into the office and Peggy, his secretary, said, Cecil, what's the matter with you?

And I said, I just talked to Aspinall.

She says, Wait right there. I'll go get Mike.

So she went and got Mike off the Senate floor. They were arguing the Vietnam thing. And he came in and we sat down in his office and he said, Cec, what's the matter?

And I said, well, I just run into Aspinall and he told me, he said he would kill my bill in committee or on the floor.

And he leaned back and he had a little bit of wry grin on his face, after talking a half-an-hour, no hurry, and he leaned back and he said, Cecil, he says, you go back and tell the people of Montana that we'll get that bill. He said, Mr. Aspinall will want something one of these days, and when he does, we'll be there.

[00:30:00] Well, you know what that was, or I know what it was.

Tell me.

They wanted to take water from the west side of the divide in Colorado through the mountain and that's what it cost.

The Colorado-Big Thompson Project. Got it.

Yeah. So that's what it cost. So without knowing it, I was playing big-time politics.

Yeah, you were. Right in the thick of it.

The president of the Wilderness Society called me one time and he said, Cecil, he said, we can get your wilderness bill through but, he said, I don't know whether you're willing to pay the price.

I says, what is the price?

So they made the price that if we would allow oil exploration on the wildlife refuge in Alaska on the North Slope, that they would let the—and I said, No way. You don't do that. Ain't no way.

And, you know, it didn't—it never has, so far yet, you know.

So I never intended to get into it like that. All I wanted to do was save a good place to hunt and fish. A beautiful place.

Is that what brought you to Montana in the first place?

No, I went to Montana because my father-in-law owned a summer home up there and the fact that I wanted out of Vegas. I simply didn't want to be in Vegas anymore. I could go to work almost anywhere. I opened the Sahara. I had worked in most of the—I'd been there and watched the metamorphic process from a small town to a gambling town. And quite frankly, getting back to biology again, I think that each of us as an organism, as a human, nonetheless are controlled by things that we don't fully understand. But one of the things that I do understand is I'm not well off in a big city. I really hate cities, and that's a prejudice that's hard to explain. To me they're just simply disasters waiting to happen. We knew in those days that Vegas didn't have enough water. We knew that. We talked about it. It was in the newspapers. And yet prior to that, when they had allocated that amount of water for Southern Nevada, everybody said what the hell do we need that kind of—? We don't need that much water.

As opposed to the Los Angeles model which thought bigger, bigger, bigger; there's always going to be more people, so we need more water, we need to plan ahead.

Yeah. And so we knew all of those things. But you know the mindlessness of what they are doing there, in my opinion it is New Orleans in reverse. New Orleans drowned and Las Vegas will starve out, sooner or later. I just heard Patty [Patricia] Mulroy [General Manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA)] the other day say that they had to have the water. They talked about all of the conservation measures they were doing. When I spoke I said if there's one thing that running cattle will teach you, it's carrying capacity. A cow has to eat every day and drink every day. If you have so many that they can't eat every day and drink every day, then you're in an extremely precarious deficit situation. And that's what Las Vegas is. Now they come up with all their generosity and magnanimity and they say, we're going to take care of you.

There's one thing that I learned in the gambling house that I never forget. When somebody says they're going to take care of you, watch them.

That means they're going to take something from you, is that what you—?

Well, just watch them.

Yeah, they're going to take advantage. So what are they offering? I mean we were talking about that a little bit before. Tell me what the relationship is between Las Vegas and here. What are they asking for?

Well, there's very little relationship between here and Las Vegas. We don't have a golf [00:35:00] course in this whole valley. It's one of the longest valleys in the world. Far as I know, we don't have a swimming pool. And yet I think we live—I don't think that we're living without or we're deprived or anything like that. I think we live really pretty good, normal, healthy lives. We work in our garden, we take care of our cattle, we put up our hay, we raise our children, we try to send them on to better schools. Some of us go to church; some of us don't.

Why is Las Vegas targeting this area?

It's simple. I've told my neighbors for twenty-five or thirty years, someday some large city, megalopolis, whatever you want to call it, will draw a circle around the area, and they say, we are here, and the water is here. They didn't really choose us because we were anything exceptional or they wanted to hurt us particularly. Just the water is here and they are here. They have the money. They say, we deserve the water because we have the money. We can buy it. All of the other things simply don't count. I think that they go and they look at the Strip today, they look at all of the glitter and the glamour and all of the excitement that prevails or is supposed to in Las Vegas. To me it's a disgusting spectacle of human depravity. And they say this is all justified. One lady down there said, We have more people working on one floor of a

hotel than there is in all of Snake Valley. Well, I kind of thought that that's what the Constitution of the United States was all about: not to deprive those who are smaller of the right to justice and fairness. And in the final analysis, it is also a morality issue. Who is to say, or who would say, that it's correct to take the water from your ranchers and your farmers—people who produce food—and give it to a casino, gambling, sprawling megalopolis like Las Vegas has become? A monstrously hideous thing of sprawl, of filthy air, of congested traffic. Their social problems must be horrendous. Their police problems, which they practically didn't have at one time, must be out beyond the stratosphere. Why? Why wouldn't the residents of Las Vegas just simply rise up and say this is enough? Well, I tend to believe that the residents of Las Vegas are a particular kind of person, having worked there. That that kind of an atmosphere, that kind of gambling environment, the whole aura, whatever, atmosphere surrounding Las Vegas—

The whole aura of the city.

Yeah, tends to, in fact, do the same thing as victory did to the United States after World War II. It simply gives them a hubris, a belief in their invincibility, and a belief that they really don't have to be right or moral, that it doesn't matter anymore. And that is simply the harbinger of their own destruction.

Do you see a connection between the mentality that saw this area as empty, and that it was OK for the wind to blow this direction during atomic testing, and the way they're treating this same area over the water issue? Is there a relationship or a connection between them?

Yeah, we're not unaware of that. During the MX [Missile Experimental] was a classic example—

Tell me about that.

Of people looking at a map and saying, well, that's a vast, empty wasteland, so therefore.

[00:40:00] There is one ingredient, though, that we should discuss with the Downwinders. The people of this area, of the Great Basin and of Utah, were extremely patriotic people. They had an almost blind—it was a blind belief in their government, of the infallibility of their government. They trusted it to, of course, to their tremendous sorrow and expense. And you know that hasn't died away yet, that kind of blind trust in government.

Where does it come from?

Well, for one thing, you must understand the Mormon migration. If they hadn't have martyred Joseph Smith, there wouldn't, in my opinion at least, be a Mormon Church today. But they were persecuted and they did have martyrs. And that's the basic ingredient. You stiffen people's back, you increase their resistance, and to the point that they'll die. And they did. A great many of them died for what they believed in. And that occurrence is too soon in our minds here. It doesn't escape me either, and I'm not a Mormon. But my wife is a fifth-generation Mormon. That doesn't escape me that that patriotism, it's inseparable from Church and State. It's inseparable, it's almost incomprehensible. But somewhere in the equation, it is a basic catalyst that holds people together, a kind of a cohesion that they feel is necessary. And in fact it is necessary for people to be successful as a group. There must be cohesion. One of the whole symptoms of the terrible state that the United States finds itself in is that total lack of cohesion. You couldn't do World War II today. Where would you get those kind of people who had that kind of an attitude towards their love of their country and so forth? So absolutely, the Mormons put up with it.

Now we were somewhere else on this conversation.

MX missile. That's where we were going before I interjected.

Well, my introduction to the MX missile was I was sitting in there in my chair in the evening, reading to my daughter, and the radio was—we don't have a TV here in this house. I was listening to the radio and someone came on and announced that they're going to build a huge missile complex somewhere in the United States. And instantly, without even thinking about it, I hollered to my wife, They're going to build that damn thing right here.

How did you know?

Well, from just the question you ask is the answer you get, is that they all look here at this area and say, well, there isn't anything there, we can do essentially—. And what few people there are, are contaminated with this incredible patriotism and so we can go do what we want to do. It came as just an incredible shock to the military. The military mind is an extremely strange mind. It develops concept of viewing reality beyond what you and I can understand. And they were saying, hey, this will really be good for you. This really will be. We'll pave your roads, we'll, you know, the whole thing. But part of their demise, of the demise of the whole thing was that there was a number of people who had given up that euphoria of: the government is infallible. Our government can do [00:45:00] no wrong. They remembered the atomic testing. They remembered the people who died because of contamination.

[Telephone rings]

[00:45:21] End Track 3, Disc 1.

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

Well, speaking of low-flying Air Force aircraft, I have to tell you that when my dad was stationed out at Hill [Air Force Base], because my dad's retired military, but I was prohibited, under no circumstances was I to marry or involve myself with a military guy, or go in myself.

See, even the military mind has some virtue.

Yeah, well, my dad was basically—he didn't last long. He was like the Forest Service guy. He was one of the true pilots; that's what he was, was a pilot, and he never got promoted. Never did. Because he just wouldn't, he couldn't compromise. So tell me about the military mind—that's where we left off—and the MX missile and the view of this area.

I think—and I'd be the first one to admit that I don't fully comprehend the military mind—but somehow or another, coupled with the fact that they believe, that they are willing to lay down their life at any given time for their country and for their people, the people ought to reciprocate by somehow or another acquiesce to all of their requests and that anything is justified to allow them to defend this country. And that's wrong. As a matter of fact, the Founding Fathers of this country never believed that either. They were the ones who said that the civilians—they made the president the commander-in-chief, a civilian, not a military man, for the simple reason that they had enough sense to realize that if you unleash the military indiscriminately and without restraint upon the population, then what you have is the inevitability of war. Because obviously, they can't do all of this, build all of these aircraft, have all of these things. Once built, they have to be used somewhere. And so we have justified some of the most ridiculous bullying that the world has ever seen. I mean take the Noriega thing in Panama; the little island down there that we went in.

Grenada. Right.

Yeah, Grenada. And how many other little—? Why did we bomb Croatia? Why? I have never heard a reason yet. I've never heard a good reason yet. And so the amazing thing about it is that the military developed a kind of a pride in the fact, and they wear ribbons on their chests that says, I was in Grenada, or I was in Panama. Bullshit! They weren't in Bastogne. They weren't in Italy; through the campaign in Italy. They never have fought a decent adversary. They have gone

in and bombed from, what, twenty-five, thirty, fifty thousand feet, where they were untouchable. I mean it's nauseating. The human mind, not only the military mind but the human mind is capable of diluting himself beyond almost anything that you can understand. It is that relative gyroscope of the mind that remains stable in the most of us that has to temper, that has to say to the rest of the world stop the damned insanity. Then when you develop a whole myriad of myths by which you force those myths upon society, upon the thinking of individuals, you constantly barrage them with literature, with sound, the old propaganda thing from one [00:05:00] beginning to the other, from the time they're born until finally you have a population that no longer can even imagine the horror and the peril that faces them. They can't even see any longer. So wrought up in their pursuit of an ever-increasing amount of materialism and luxury.

I'm going to stop you for just a second.

[00:05:34] End Track 4, Disc 1.

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

I'm just taking off in any direction I want to.

That's the point. None of this is ever going to be sequential. Good stories don't come in sequence. They kind of develop via the context that they occur.

Well, the MX was a real challenge in a lot of ways. I would rather fight ten MXs as opposed to one Las Vegas. Las Vegas is truly scary, and I can put it quite simply: Money is power, and power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. But anyhow, it was a military pork barrel, basically, and I think the military knew this all along, because there was three or four different ways that Russia, who was our arch enemy at the time, could've determined where the missile was. So it had nothing to do, once again, with the true—what it would have done—I traveled with a general who had been a former member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [William

Fairbourne] when he retired, and he was a very interesting person and he was violently opposed to the MX. But we traveled together through Montana and through many other places to speak against the MX. Incidentally, I traveled practically all over the United States at someone else's expense. They would just send me an airline ticket and say come, we'd like to have you speak. I was in Washington, New York, all of those places, none of which I wanted to be at. By and large, to be anonymous and to live on my ranch and to take care of my cattle and raise my hay and love my grandchildren, that's what I want to do. But I do these other things because, again, to take arms against a sea of wrong.

But anyhow, getting back to my friend the general, to show you what a hideous thing this truly was, I said, Bill, how in the— Bill Fairbourne. And I said, Bill—we're sitting in the back seat of a car, someone else is driving us through Montana. We could see the Aurora Borealis up there, the Northern Lights. It was a beautiful night and I think there was a kind of friendliness between us in which we really could just talk. And I said, Bill, why would the military propose something that, if in fact it was ever struck by any enemy combatant, we were bombarded, it would lay a belt of poisonous cobalt all across the United States, one of the most productive farm areas in the world? Why would we do that, put that in jeopardy?

What did he say?

He said, It's not to protect the United States. It's to protect Israel.

And it was like turning a light on. And if you can envision the time and the circumstances in the world at that time, it made perfect sense.

Early eighties. Early 1980s? Late seventies, early eighties?

Annette Garland: Eighty, eighty-one.

Cecil Garland: So, you know, I've never forgotten that. I think that's essentially part of the problem. But the problem was at that time, not to convince the military that what they were doing was wrong. You could never do that. For instance, they would've gone out here in the middle of this valley and they would've built a railroad that they would've had to haul material out of these mountains. Quarry rock and haul it out of here because this valley floor would never support a million pounds of train and cargo. So they would've had to build this thing throughout the entire valley and all the way around and over the pass into Ibapah and into the other part of the Great [00:05:00] Basin. I mean I don't have words to describe the stupidity of this whole thing. And yet the military, left to its own devices, would've never killed it because they will march right down the line supporting it, although in their heart they don't believe it and in their mind they don't believe it. Humankind will do almost anything to perpetuate itself in the damn little old stupid government jobs they've got, including murder.

And the basis of this is to say to this area, the Snake Valley, we'll develop your area for you. Is that what they tried to sell it on?

Well, they promised roads and small military villages that would bring civilization to us sort of thing, none of which impressed anyone here that I know of. So once again—and my wife Annette said to me, You're going to fight this thing.

I said, I am not. I have fought my last fight. I don't want to fight anymore.

And she said, No, you're going to fight this thing.

So I did the Bill Moyers show, I got to be friends with Governor Scott Matheson who was a wonderful man, and the rest is sort of history.

So you fought in Montana for that wilderness area—

Well, there was two battles in Montana. One was with the Anaconda Company over the mining development. Briefly, it amounted to mining, dumping sludge on a creek up there called Alice Creek. And Meriwether Lewis, when he went up Alice Creek, he said of the valley, *This is the most beautiful valley that we have seen in the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains.* They were going to take and build a gray, sterile, toxic sludge across that creek and dam it up. It would've never had life in it again or never grown anything again. And I'm not against mining. I'm just against doing that kind of stuff. So the good people of Montana and myself, we fought them right down to the wire, and we stopped it. It was drama at the very end, but it was beautiful drama.

The thing about the MX is it was so expensive, it could've never been built, or completed. And what you would've had was a ruined valley with hideous scars on its mountains. As they progressed, they would've said, *For reasons of security, you can no longer live here.* They would've said, *Because of the radioactivity, we think you should move.* So two good reasons why they couldn't leave us here, and if they'd have needed more, they would've found and spun out more reasons to take this over. Not many people know, but the military at one time envisioned a military area large enough to start at Mountain Home [Air Force Base], Idaho and go all the way to Las Vegas.

All through the Great Basin.

You bet. The whole thing. They had a name for it and they had—the only reason that they didn't ever introduce it into Congress to do this was finally somebody had enough sense to tell them, this ain't going to fly. People are not going to put up with it.

Well, I have just a couple more questions. How familiar are you with Edward Abbey's writings?

Well, I knew Ed Abbey pretty well.

I wondered if there was any similarity because what I'm hearing is—

Annette Garland: We've got all his books.

Cecil Garland: I liked Ed Abbey.

And you knew him.

Yes, I'd met him on several occasions, and he'd been out here. You know, he was one of those people that just had that marvelous ability to think, and then to set it down so [00:10:00] that you liked what you read. I haven't read all his books, but what I did read I liked, in spite of the fact that he was an anti-grazer of the first order, you know. But one of the stories I like about Ed Abbey was that he was being interviewed by a Utah citizen, a writer, a paper or whatever, and he asked Ed, he said, Ed, if you ever hit it really big and you wrote a book that was making you rich, or words to that effect, what would you do with all the money? He thought a while and he said, Oh, I'd probably buy a cattle ranch.

Something ironic in that statement. That's great. Well, he's an environmentalist. He's always been considered to be a classic environmentalist, but what I'm hearing from you is that you also have this environmentalist bent or perspective. Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

I am an environmentalist. I'd be the first to admit that we've put cattle in places where we shouldn't have cattle. But at the same time, I think that, and here again it's power corrupts, and the environmental movement has gotten to be incredibly powerful. When I was one of the beginning people in the environmental movement, I could not envision the extent to which they have become powerful. And power corrupts. So now, while you have a great many really good, true environmentalists, you have an awful lot of organizations who have become bureaucratic in their outlook, whose primary concerns is their own promotion and self-perpetuation. If they have reason to criticize the cattle industry on the public lands, that's one thing. But don't try to tell me that you cannot run cattle on the public ranges if you do it carefully, with consideration. Because

I know better. I've been doing it for thirty-five years and I can take you and show you a healthy range.

So oftentimes these things become important to them because it's a measure by which they can extract from people money and letters on cue. They say, send money and write letters. And it's easy enough to see—well, the wild horse thing was a good example. Now I knew Velma [B.] Johnston who was Wild Horse Annie. Velma Johnston was a Nevadan lady whose husband run wild horses along with a bunch of other orangutans. And she saw the terrible way that they handled the horses and how the horses would hurt themselves and so forth. Being a very kind, reasonable person that she was, which is not what she was ever conveyed to be, Velma Johnston said hey, we oughtn't to do the things that we do to these wild horses. They're beautiful. They're really not beautiful. They've got big heads, they can eat out of the bottom of a barrel and never take their eyes off of you, and big old broom tails and they're hard to ride. They're dangerous damn things, they hear a helicopter and they'll go plumb crazy. But, you know, they're part of the West and so forth. And she was saying, let's treat them better. That's basically all she was ever saying. Some doctor lady in Maryland got a hold of the whole idea and promoted it to the children on TV and so forth and made a lot of money out of it.

And so we have organizations today that are environmentalists only because they are self-proclaimed environmentalists. They don't really do environmental things. A good [00:15:00] example, in the battle over the Lincoln backcountry, I had to go to a major national wildlife organization. I looked the guy right in the eye—and I had a Ph.D. professor from the University of Montana with me—and I told him, I says, You leave us alone. We don't need your help. We don't need your criticism. We're out there on the front line trying to save habitat for wildlife, and you're joining the very people

who would destroy it. His name was Tom Kimball and I looked him right in the eye and I told him exactly that.

Who was he with?

Wildlife Federation. I told him, Your little slick publication that you send out to the kids will elicit funds in perpetuity, I'm sure. You just keep on doing that. But you leave us alone.

It's an interesting split or fragmentation between the agencies the publics sees, because they see the pamphlet from the Wildlife Federation. But you and the Ph.D. that was with you were the people that were actually doing the work.

Yeah. We fought up there tooth and nail for ten years. And the Sierra Club never came out on our side; never gave us a good word. But after we had done, we were held up as a paragon of good environmentalists and wilderness advocates; that everyone should emulate that which we had done.

But you did it. It had a natural genesis. It had a local—it was you guys in Lincoln doing this for Lincoln town.

Well, the thing about those people up there, the whole scheme of things was a shock to them.

You know, we tend to be creatures of crisis; we don't do anything until the situation provokes us so that we almost have to. And here's the Forest Service who, unannounced except to themselves, are saying that we are going to change from simply an organization that just caretakes to an active, proactive, timber-selling organization. And the people didn't realize that; they didn't realize the implication. They didn't realize that the area that most of them held in awe and revere was in true peril. It was going to be destroyed. It damn near was destroyed. The head logger up there told me himself, he says, I'll be fishing in Hart Lake within a month

and I won't walk to get there. I said there got to be some way. And I found what that way was.

And your pathway sounds like it's been through legislation and local community action. The way that you protest and have stopped these actions has been to go to the government, is that correct?

Right, exactly. But you can't go alone, because in one of Robert Ardrey's books he talks about in Africa and he says a lone baboon is a dead baboon. The thing I had to realize, and I did realize this, that never expect constructive government to emanate from those who are supposed to be constructive governors. It'll never happen. The only way that our form of a republic will ever work or has ever worked is at the insistence of people who are informed and care. It won't work any other way. It will evolve into what we have essentially today, is a congressman—I think it was P.J. O'Rourke who wrote the book *The Parliament of Whores*.

I'm familiar with that.

And while he was attempting to be humorous, he was right on the money. They've all sold out. The people have let them because of atrophy—atrophy in government is that death knell, it is that harbinger of death in government, and that's pretty much what we have today, is [00:20:00] congressmen and senators whose primary concern is keeping themselves in office, and they'll sell their very soul to do it.

What was that phrase that you used before, toxic—

Toxicity of victory.

Toxicity of victory. I want to make sure I remember that.

So here we are today. And the thing you have to understand about what we're fighting with the water battle today is that it's quasi-government; and my quasi is half-assed. The whole SNWA

[Southern Nevada Water Authority] is quasi-government, and the government is quasi-SNWA. But the thing that's really scary about Las Vegas is the incredible amount of money they have and the pervasiveness, the far-reaching tentacles of their power, all the way to Washington, D.C., right into the White House. And don't ever doubt it one little bit. A friend of ours—I won't tell you who her name is because that wouldn't be discreet—but she is in government and she says, I am only four shoulders away from the top man, and they are putting a damper on anything that the government agencies might do or say that could be considered adverse to this whole project.

Do you see a parallel between this and what happened in the Owens River Valley in eastern California?

Oh yes. The tragedy here is that the fragility—and I don't use that word lightly. I don't know as I even particularly like the word “fragility” because the desert in a way is not really, truly fragile. But when you consider what we have now, it's fragile. The desert really don't give a damn if it doesn't have anything growing on it. If it never gets another rain, it'll just blow. It'll just get up three to five thousand feet in the air and settle down somewhere. It doesn't really care. So it's up to we humans to really care, if we choose to preserve a way of life. If we choose to say that Las Vegas or any other megalopolis has the right to destroy the valleys that surround it in order to maintain an affluent green center to that, that they have a right to denude and destroy and desertify all those things that surround them—

And here again, to expect leadership from government is the greatest fallacy. It destroys government. It is only the people, in a single voice, that can rise up and say, this is vast injustice, this is vast immorality, and damn it, Senator, damn it, Congressman, damn it the whole bunch of you, listen. Then things will change and only then. This is what we in Snake Valley have made a

valiant, continuous, day-and-night effort to do; to tell other people, not only is this going to happen or happening to us, it is you who are next.

One thing that I said the other day, Patty Mulroy said that once the drought had hit, that they took all their plans and put them through the shredder. Now the lethargic agencies in the Utah government don't seem to have the understanding, the desire, or the ability, or the energy, to take all of our previous estimates of water involved in this valley [00:25:00] and go in and do the scientific work necessary, which is basically drill some wells to find out where the water is and what the recharge is. Now they are proclaiming and was willing to, at the fifth of September of this year, willing to make an agreement with Nevada which was an absolutely disgusting, obscene, horrendous thing. It made no sense in terms of what is needed to protect the aquifer and the way of life in Snake Valley. Made no sense whatsoever. I don't think that there was particularly any particular individual in the state of Utah who was corrupted by money or bribery or anything like that. I simply believe it was a sort of a lethargic attitude: that if we get along with those sweet folks over in Nevada, let them have the water, that will end it and we can all go back to our coffee breaks and become lethargic again. Here they are, violating the public trust, abdicating their authority for which they are hired and paid good money to administer these resources, turning their back on the people; that in itself is a form of corruption.

It's an interesting mindset.

The state of Utah and the Department of Natural Resources given to administrate simply does not know, nor can they know, what the resources of this valley are. Two things have occurred, and I keep reiterating, being redundant, repetitive, in their face, saying two things have happened: drought, unrecorded, unparalleled, one in five hundred years or maybe one in a thousand years, that we have all endured, reduced the levels of the lakes to 50 percent, which

Patty Mulroy is well aware of, I'm sure, and the exponential growth of the use of the water in this valley by the ranchers and the other people themselves. Why would that remain static? I have gone from 200 acres to 300 acres of—or thirty acres to 300 acres, or pretty close, in land. I've bought some irrigation equipment that's terribly expensive but very, very efficient.

[Telephone rings]

[00:28:08] End Track 2, Disc 2.

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

Mr. Garland, is there anything else? Anything else you'd like to say in reference to the water, the Nevada Test Site, the nuclear testing, or the MX missile?

I think that in all the battles that I've been in, it was never a battle at any one time for my own personal gain. They always cost me money. I figure that good government costs money. It costs time, thought, energy, desire for good government. And so every battle that I've ever been in, I chose to be there and I knew it would be expensive, and that wasn't ever a deterrent. I think if people want good government, they have to understand that. They have to understand that government will become lethargic, that's it's a soft, cushy job, and that the people you elect undergo a metamorphic process. When they first get back to Washington, D.C., they are overawed with what they see and they have this tremendous desire to serve the people. Within about six months, a metamorphic process has completed itself and they view the people as the enemy. Unless they're shaken out of this, unless that's removed from them—and therein is what Thomas Jefferson said so many times, and the Madisons, our form of government can only exist because an informed public insists that it continue. And others have said, going all the way back to one of the Caesars, that once the government, the people of a country learn that they can vote for themselves largesse from the federal treasury, then that government becomes a kind of a form

of democracy which is once again on its way to becoming a totalitarian government. Perhaps the final thought with regard to government and why all of this comes about is that humankind probably don't do anything more hideous and harmful to themselves than to create a bureaucracy to cure some ill, real or imagined, only to find that the bureaucracy is a greater problem than the original problem.

[00:03:12] End Track 3, Disc 2.

[End of interview]