

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

**Interview with**  
**Brenda Scruton**

**June 29, 2004**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

Interview Conducted By  
Shannon Applegate

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## Interview with Brenda Scruton

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**Brenda Scruton:** I was born in Hollywood, Florida. And I went to high school there and graduated from there. And I met a young man who was in the service and stationed at Marine Corps Station in Miami and we became friends. And his home was in Las Vegas, so when he got out of the service, which was in 1958, also the year I graduated, he came back home and started working at the test site.

And he came—well, I came out here in 1960 to visit his parents, met them, and went back home. And then in 1962 I came out here with a girlfriend of mine named Linda Bush, and we both applied to REECo [Reynolds Electrical and Engineering Company]. At that time you had to have a security—it wasn't a complete security check but just a brief security check. So we put our applications in and then we took off and went to Disneyland and San Francisco. We had a classmate that lived in San Francisco and we went to visit her. And then we came back and we started working at the test site.

We were both in human resources, or personnel, and she was a secretary to the department manager and I started working as a clerk-typist. I worked doing initially typing exit interviews, so when people would terminate from the company, we would interview them as to why were they leaving—if they had any comments to make about supervision or if they had any problems with management or our work policies or whatever. So I would do that kind of thing. And then as I had said earlier, I went out on loan a couple of places, once with the supply department for about six weeks and then once for a company that was in the forward area.

Working in human resources, I really never made it much past the forward area. I never really went out to Area 12 and the CP [control point] where I know Duane [Lawrence] had worked out in these places, and my husband had worked out in those places too. Eventually I did get out into those areas, but initially I just pretty much worked in the base camp, which was Mercury.

I lived in a dormitory on site. It was Dormitory 103, and I shared it with the girl that I came out from Florida with, Linda, and we lived in that dormitory for a year. And then I got married, and still lived out at the test site, but at that time they had housing for married couples, and they were trailers. And so I lived there for another year, and then my husband and I bought a house in Las Vegas and we moved into that. And I had a baby in 1964. Was off on maternity leave for a little while, then I came back. So I really lived and worked out at the test site for two years.

When I came back from maternity leave, after having Stacy I probably worked another couple of months because—she was born the end of May. Then we—I think, probably in October or November of that year, which would've been in 1964, not all of personnel but the majority of everyone in personnel moved to a Highland location. That was the name of the street. It's still there, but of course none of the buildings—I mean the buildings are still there—that's where we worked for a long time because a lot of it was we were processing in so many people to work at the test site, it was just a better location to accommodate the people that were applying for positions. Now, the only part of personnel that stayed at the test site was—Bob Lunes ran the group—and what they did was they acted as a support agency to the other laboratories that were there, and the other companies. And they did exit interviews there, when people terminated. And they also had a branch of the recreation—all the recreation aides worked under human resources,

and of course they were all out there because the swimming pool was there and all the other recreational facilities.

**Shannon Applegate:** *The Steakhouse?*

Yes. My husband, when I first married him, was in housing, and then when one of the managers quit, they promoted him, so he ended up to be the housing and feeding department [00:05:00] manager. But he also hired in as a clerk and he went up to the department level. And so he was in charge of the Steakhouse for a while.

*Oh, was he?*

Yes.

*So did you get to eat for free?*

No. But it never really cost very much to eat out there. You could eat for seventy-five cents, a dollar-fifty. It was just nothing really. And you know the years that we lived out there, I saved so much money because they gave us subsistence for living out there. We got paid five dollars a day subsistence if you were in Mercury or the base camp, and then seven-fifty if you were anywhere other than that. And so we could pretty much live on the subsistence and just stash away our salary. But I mean the salaries—I think when I hired in, I hired in as a clerk-typist. My hire date was August 10, 1962 and I was a clerk-typist and I made \$1.67 an hour. And then about six months later, I got promoted to a senior clerk. Now, both of those were clerical positions, and I think I got promoted at \$1.75 an hour. And so we were making those types of wages, but yet we were living—I mean our housing was very inexpensive—didn't really cost anything. Food was inexpensive.

*Were those wages comparable to other wages at that time, or were they higher or lower than average, or—?*

Well, when I left Florida, I was working for a company making forty dollars a week, and by the time the taxes were taken out of it, I probably walked home with twenty-eight dollars a week. So when I got here, I thought I was rich. I didn't even cash my paychecks for about six weeks, and then somebody from payroll contacted me and they said, what are you doing with the paychecks? I'm just looking at them. I says, I'm going to send them home to my daddy so I can put them in the bank.

*So you were able to live on your per diem.*

Yes, and we could just save that. The first year at the test site that's what I was making, \$1.67 and \$1.75, because I was a senior clerk for a long time, about I think eleven years. Of course, I made pay increases every year, but that first year, I don't think I was probably making anymore than—well, less than two dollars an hour. And I had saved four thousand dollars in one year. I was going to buy myself a new Corvette, because that's what they cost at the time. But as it was, I didn't do that. Probably a good thing. I probably would've wrapped it around a telephone pole and killed myself or something. So anyway—

*Did you have to pay rent when you lived at Mercury?*

Well, yes, we did, but it was only like fifty cents a day or something, really, it wasn't anything at all. It was so inexpensive to live there. And of course, we ate at the cafeteria. And a lot of people will say, well, what did you do back then for excitement? Living in the dormitory, there were so many girls there, and of course, they had dormitories for men too. And we would get together and have little parties or just get together and go to the movies, because we had a movie theater. It was not a real fancy thing; it was just a big Quonset hut, but they set up a movie theater. No popcorn but we'd go—they showed different movies all the time. And they had recreation facilities and it wasn't—I mean it kept us busy. We had a good time back then.

*Did you make good friends?*

Yes, I really did.

*Was everybody pretty friendly?*

Very friendly, yes. Like I say, most of the dormitories had two girls to each room, and I suppose with the men's dormitories it was probably the same. Some of those people worked together and lived together, and others just lived together. But they worked for the same company, and some of them worked for different companies, because it wasn't just the REECo people that used those facilities. It was all of the people. I mean all the contractors that were out there from time to time. And at one time we were—well, we were the largest contractor. I think when I hired in, we had over six thousand people at that time, which was a lot. We dropped to below a thousand people. It would depend on what was going on at the time. We'd hire a lot of people, we would lay them off. We'd hire people, we'd lay them off. There was a constant—with people coming and going all the time. But REECo acted as a support agency to the other contractors that were there, and what they would do is they would say, well, we want to do an experimental test, and they would get in touch with us and they would say—well, not at my level but [00:10:00] higher-ups, they would say, For this test, we need to hire approximately twenty electricians and we need fifty laborers and we need this and we need that, and we're going to need these people for a period of six months to conduct whatever test we're doing at the time. And so that's what we would do. We would contact the labor unions and the labor unions would send people to us, and of course we would have to interview them quite extensively because these people had to also qualify to have security clearances because—

*I'm going to pause it right here.*

Sure.

*So you were saying REECo was a support to all the other contractors.*

Yes.

*So you would support other contracting companies as part of REECo?*

Yes, that's right. We did our own and so a lot of those people we would hire would be for us. And we would hire maintenance people, construction people, clerical, technical, management, engineers, everything. We would just need to know what it was that we needed. So the departments would complete what we called a personnel requisition for whatever it was that they needed, and then we would contact those people and try to get them on the payroll. But like I said, not only did they have to be qualified for the position they were applying for, but they also had to be qualified for the security clearance. And so you couldn't hire somebody who just got out of prison for killing his mother. You had to be selective, and a lot of times—well, we did run a lot of investigative checks on people because that would be about the only way you could qualify them security-wise to go out there.

*So would you filter first the applications and just go through—?*

Right.

*What would be some red flags that would be filtered out?*

Well, so many—because we would have to have them account for their last fifteen years of whereabouts, so that's very difficult for some people to do, especially if you've moved around a lot—you've been a plumber and a pipe fitter and you've worked in Alaska and you've worked in Louisiana and you've worked here and you've worked there—and we would have to work with those people to make sure that we knew where they were. If they were unemployed between their positions, we needed to know how long were they unemployed, where were they residing at the time. And so we just had to make sure that we had all of that information, because if we couldn't get a security clearance or if they were not qualified for the position that we were hiring

for, then you'd have other problems. Say you have an accident and the accident you have is based on the fact that the person didn't know what they were doing. Well, then it comes back to us: Well, they said they were doing this. We verified they were doing that. So, those kinds of things happen.

But getting back to me, when I worked as a clerk-typist I pretty much just did exit interviews and those kinds of things. Then when I got promoted to the senior clerk, I went to work for compensation and benefits. At that time I was working with employee appraisal forms, because every employee that was management, clerical, or technical, once a year would be reviewed for a merit increase. Sometimes there were no merits. Sometimes there wasn't enough money. But they still had to have that review done on how they were doing on their job: if they needed to improve, what they needed to do to improve. So I did that for a long time.

*Was there a form?*

Yes.

*So there was a standard form. And would you go over it with the employee, is that—?*

Well, no. What we would do is we would send them out to the department managers and then they would pass them on and they would do their own evaluations on their employees. Then they would send them back to us, and then we would have to check them to make sure that everything was made out completely. And if they wanted to promote someone, a lot [of] times that appraisal was also required. It wasn't always just for merit increases. A lot of times it was to qualify them for a higher-paying position. And then we got involved with the budgets because with the budgets you would have so much money that was for merit increases and also for promotions, reclassifications. So I was in charge of that also. And so I did that for, well, a lot of different phases of compensation benefits, because we would write job descriptions on individuals where

we'd have to go out and interview them, find out what they do, to come up with the basic job description, what was required.

*That's interesting. Who did you interview?*

Oh, all kinds of people: management, clerical, technical. We didn't get involved with the craftsmen because the craftsmen always were referred through the labor unions, so the unions basically said, Those people are required to do what they're doing. Then we would have to verify that the union was truthful in sending us those individuals and that they were really qualified for that job. That was another job that I did after the one I'm talking about right now. So anyway, I was in that position for eleven years, but doing a variety of different jobs in [00:05:00] employee benefits.

Then I got promoted to a personnel assistant. Now, that's when I was working directly with the labor unions, and they would send people to us and we would have to qualify them to work in Las Vegas and also the test site, but mostly the test site.

*Weren't there some labor issues with REECo?*

Oh, there were always labor issues, but most of those were handled by labor relations people, not necessarily human resources people. I mean we would get involved because labor relations would say, This is the dispute and we need some information. We had access to all of the personnel records. In our file room, we had two folders on each individual. We had a personnel folder and we had a security folder. So only certain people had access to the security folders because it was of a confidential nature. So labor relations would get in touch with us and they'd say, we're investigating whoever, and then we would have to maybe write a letter to labor relations saying, We have reviewed his personnel security files and we find this is what his background was, whatever was in dispute. So we would assist them a lot

with their jobs. But they were really the ones that got involved with the negotiations when the labor unions wouldn't want to increase wages or benefits or vacation or whatever they wanted to do. It was always the labor relations people that did that. Now, when labor relations people—because they're only effective in their job for so long—they get so involved with labor unions that you had to change those people out from time to time because they just got to know too much stuff.

*Would they get too comfortable, do you think, or what do you mean by—?*

Well, no, I don't think that they would get too comfortable, but they would get to know all of the business agents too well, and then after a while, well, I don't know if I trust that one because he's done this, and you know, Last year they did that and that wasn't the right thing to do, and so every now and then it was good for the company to change out their labor relations and their EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] people, the equal opportunity people. But most of the time, they would end up in personnel, in human resources. That's kind of where all the old EEO people came to—

*Oh, OK, they were put out to pasture.*

Yes, they would come work for us. But you know it was kind of handy to have them around from time to time because then whenever the new ones would come on, then they'd have to [ask], well, what do you know about this business agent? And what about this employee? Well, that person would say, Oh yes, well, I know lots about that. But you had to move them around every now and then because they just got to know—it was uncomfortable for them. I mean you could tell after a while that they just needed to do something different because it just got tiresome over a period of time.

*Was there a lot of confrontation?*

In labor relations? Yes, there was. Let's say for instance if an electrician had a problem with management or whatever, they would go to labor relations to file a grievance against that particular supervisor. And then the labor unions would always get involved with, That person's a good person. He's one of our brothers, and so you had that constant thing that was always going on. Oh yes, they had lots of problems with people.

*Now, there was never a strike, right? But there was—*

There were strikes.

*Were there really?*

Yes, many strikes over the years. In fact, one time I remember—when I was still a senior clerk—when the culinary union walked out because they didn't like their contract, and so they went on strike. But we still had all these other people at the test site that were working there. Now, we're sixty-five, seventy miles out in the desert, and so it's not like they can come into Vegas and go to Wendy's for a hamburger. So what they did was they took all of us office help and we had to go to work in the cafeteria during the strike.

So here I am, in this God-awful big warehouse, and I go in there and I says, OK, what am I supposed to do?

They said, Start peeling carrots.

I said, OK, where's the carrots?

[They said] well, that garbage can's full of carrots and that garbage can's full of carrots.

Well, pretty soon I was orange from here up to here with carrots. But we did that for quite some time. And we had managers making very good money that were pot-washers during the culinary strike. Now, we couldn't take people that were covered by a union and make them do this. All the people that worked in human resources were non-union, so they could [00:10:00]

pull on us to do those kinds of things; of course, they could pull on people in management because they were non-union also.

*How long did you have to do that?*

I only did that for about two weeks. I didn't do the carrots for a long time. I only did carrots for a couple of days, and then I got into the lettuce. And so then they had me chopping vegetables. At one time, they decided I wasn't fast enough chopping vegetables, so I got thrown out of there.

*How many meals did you guys have to make?*

The cafeteria a lot of times was open twenty-four hours a day. But there were only times where maybe you could get things out of the vending machine because basically they were open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. But then you had people that were working other shifts too. I mean we had day shift people, we had swing, and we had graveyard people. So we had to have facilities open all the time in order for those people to be able to eat.

*So did you have to cover any of the graveyard shifts?*

No, I just worked because my regular shift was working the day, so whenever they went on strike, I just worked during the day. Now, my husband he was working in housing at that time, and so they were pulled in to do some of that stuff too. Oh, yes, there were a lot of strikes over the years.

We had people like Martin Sheen. And, oh, the tall—well, he's not really all that tall—Kris Kristofferson; there were others too that would picket the test site at Easter because they just did that every year at that time because they were against nuclear testing. I mean they don't do it anymore, but they would do this every year and then they'd get thrown in jail every year, and then the next year they'd be back and doing it again. So I mean there were always strikes going

on at the test site, all the time. Not so much in the later years that I worked there, but in the early years; yes, it happened quite often.

*Really. What about any other labor strikes within? Like did the miners or the craft people—?*

Yes. The miners always belonged to the laborers' union and they would strike also. All of those unions would strike from time to time. I can't think of any right now that *never* went on strike.

Then as time went on, we established an Office and Clerical Union also.

*Oh, you did?*

Yes, but those people that were in human resources were never covered by a union, but many of the other clerical people were.

*Why weren't you guys covered by a union?*

Well, I think they had decided, because of the nature of the work. We'd get involved in and going back to the personnel folders and the security folders, we had access to that type of information on individuals, and they just thought we should be exempt from the union.

*They'd keep you happy on their own.*

Yes. Right. And it worked out very well for us. I mean I never really wanted to be in a union *per se*, but they did establish an Office and Clerical Union over the years, and now that Bechtel has that [contract], I don't know if that [union] exists or not.

*Did you have an extra security clearance because you were seeing all these—?*

No, I just had the regular Q-clearance, and that's what most of the people had, except for the people that worked in the forward areas. They would have different types of clearances, but working in areas that I never really went to.

*Did you have the files locked up in anything other than—?*

We would lock the files up every night. Well, we had a file room. Way back in the early years, we would lock each and every cabinet, one by one. But as time went on we ended up with a file room, so we would just lock up the whole room every night instead of lock up all those [cabinets]. We had lots and lots of records there, and we got so we ended up with so many records that after a person was gone for a length of time, they would purge the files. I think it was usually like if they were gone five years, then they would pull out those records and they would send them to archives. But then if that person decided they were coming back, then we would have to request those files out of archives. Because it didn't make any difference how many times people came and went, most of the union crafts people did that, because we would only hire them to do certain jobs and then we would lay them off. We always wanted to see their records from before, just in case there was something in there that needed to be talked about with them.

**[00:15:00]** *When you would hire people, did the crafts people know that they were probably only going to be hired for a year and that it was more like a contract than like a permanent position? Or was it just dependent upon the political climate and—?*

Well, I think they knew, and the reason that they knew was because they were all referred out through the different labor unions. And the labor unions, whenever we would call in the requisitions to the labor unions, would know from the business agents talking to our labor relations people or to the people out in the field how long those jobs were for. We'd always say approximate, because you never really knew if things were going to really happen as planned. But so many of the times they did, they knew. But there were other individuals there, like I met a man not so long ago and he says, Well, you must have known my dad. He worked out at the test site for thirty years. And I said, No, I didn't know him. And then when I

saw this young man again, he said, well, my dad, he knows you. And I says, well, the reason I probably did not know him was because he was one of those people that came in in the early 1960s or late 1950s and he never left. He came in and he might've been a craftsman at the time, but he might've worked his way up to be a superintendent or even a manager, and so it wasn't the coming and the going all the time, because a lot of those people, that's what did happen to them. They just got there and they stayed. They never left. But then we had a lot of them that would come and go all the time.

*When you did some of these exit interviews, was it just that it would be an exit interview because they got laid off or—?*

Or they voluntarily quit.

*What were some of the reasons why people would quit?*

Travel, mostly.

*Oh, really.*

Yes, they didn't like traveling to the test site. It's like, why should I spend two hours of my day—one hour getting out there and one hour getting back—when I can get a job in Las Vegas where I don't have to do that? That was the big drawback, was the location of the test site.

*Was that hard for you?*

I only really worked out there for two years—two years and three months, I guess it was—because the part of human resources I was working in all moved to Las Vegas. So I only really commuted—I lived out there two years—so I really didn't commute all that time, I just lived out there. But a lot of people just didn't like the travel. Now, we had buses that picked up people from all over town and took them out there, so they could ride the bus out to work and ride the bus back. But so many of them, didn't want to ride the bus anymore—they might be sitting next

to some guy who'd been digging ditches all day and smelled kind of bad—and it's like, I don't want to sit on the bus with that guy all the way back into town. So I mean you always had people like that. It was funny; they always thought they could do better someplace else. And whenever I moved up the rank for a little bit and I would do exit interviews on people, I would say, *Now, are you sure you think you can do better? And they said Oh, yes, I'm never coming back to this company again. I'm never going to work at the test site again, and nah-nah-nah-nah-nah, whatever reason.*

*And six months later they'd be knocking on your door, You got a job for me?*

*And I would say, well, I thought you never wanted to come back here again.*

*And they would say, Well, life is not real easy out there.*

*So we had a lot of even clerical people that would come and go because they'd say, I can do better than this, and they'd get out there and they couldn't do better. Or things just didn't work out for them the way they thought, or they might've been away from home for a while and they wanted to go back home and get a job. They went back home and home wasn't what they thought it was, and they'd be back again because the pay was pretty good. The travel, the inconvenience of travel, was the drawback, but the pay was better than you could get in Las Vegas, but it depends on how far you wanted to travel to get it.*

*How were the benefits? Were the benefits pretty nice?*

*Well, I thought the benefits—maybe at the beginning they weren't real wonderful but you had to stay there for a long time to get the good benefits. And so many people would come and go all the time or you have the people—and it wasn't only at the test site but people everywhere—were, Oh, I just don't want to go to work today. I'm going to call in sick, and so those kind of people would use up all of their sick leave. And so when they actually *did* get sick, there wasn't anything available to take. Then they had to take leave without pay. And so you had*

those kind of people to contend with all the time. But when I left, I had over two thousand hours of sick [00:20:00] leave on the books that I never used, and that wasn't unusual. There were a lot of people like that. You have the people that are responsible and want to go to work and do the best job they can do, and then you have the other kind of people that, what can I get for nothing? Which usually it's nothing is what it amounts to.

But I think that the benefits were very good. We had vacation leave and you would get eight hours' vacation a month, and the longer you stayed there, you got more. You'd get ten hours a month or fourteen hours a month. It depends on how many years you would put in as to how much vacation you could accrue. And then you had a max of 336 hours. Once you got to *that* much vacation, if you hadn't used it, they would force you to use it because that was the max you could carry into the next year. Lot of times people were so busy, they didn't have time for a vacation, and so they might not take a vacation for a couple years or so. Then pretty soon it was like, oh, you're at that point where you're going to have to take some time because you just can't go any farther with this.

So we had sick leave and we had vacation leave and we had maternity leave. Of course, now they don't really call it maternity leave now, you know, it's just another—

*It's family leave?*

Family leave, of which, we really didn't get into that so much. By the time the family leave came into effect where I was working, I was in a different part of it and it was like I didn't really get into it that much.

But getting back to when I worked as a personnel processor, I worked on the front desk, and so when a person came in to make out an application for employment, that's who they saw. There was two of us that always worked there together. And so we took applications on

management, clerical, technical, craft people, any kind of people, we took applications.

Sometimes we didn't have openings, but sometimes we did and so we would give them—if it was a clerical job or a clerical person applying, we would give them typing and shorthand tests and keypunch tests if they did that kind of work, and then kept their applications on file until we had something available, then we would pull them. But pretty much we just took applications on management, clerical, and technical people at the front desk, and what we did most—the other was to process the craft people into the job so they could go to work at the test site.

*Which position would you be filling all the time? Like was there a position like that, that you just put down people for?*

We had times when we couldn't hire anybody because we weren't really doing anything, and then other times we had so many people to hire, we couldn't possibly get them all hired. I mean that's what it was. It was feast or famine. It wasn't just a steady thing. It was like we would talk, Geez, we're probably going to get laid off because we don't have any work to do, and then something would happen. And what would happen is—there were three major laboratories there. It was the Sandia laboratories out of Albuquerque, the Los Alamos laboratories out of New Mexico, and then the Livermore laboratories out of California. Those laboratories would actually conduct the tests. Well, depending on how much money *they* had, it would filter down as to what *we* had to do, because if they were going to do something, then *they* would tell us, we're going to need all these people, so gear up for it. And so that's what would happen. But if the labs didn't have the money to do testing, then nothing was happening we would go do other things, like clean out the files. Instead of hiring people, we'd be doing other things.

So I did that for about four years and I really liked that job. That was a real fun job. And then they promoted me to employment representative. And so then I was responsible for hiring

mostly clerical and technical people. And the technical people would be like electronic technicians and paramedics and technicians of different types.

*So you hired paramedics? For the test site?*

Yes. We had a medical facility out there. Yes, we hired doctors and nurses and paramedics and laboratory people.

*That's interesting.*

Yes, and so that's kind of what I did in that job, and then I got promoted to the senior employment rep, and so then I got involved with hiring a lot of the management people. And still technical but not so much clerical anymore. Somebody else was doing that. And so when I terminated from the company, which was—actually I think my termination date was like April 26, 1995 but my retirement started like May 1, 1995. And so that was pretty much what I was [00:25:00] doing at that time. We were kind of slow during *that* time and so what we were doing is creating résumés for people and outsourcing, working on trying to—because we knew that the company was not going to re-bid the contract. We knew that people would be looking to get out and do other things. We knew that the end was near. Now, we knew that Bechtel was going to pick up some of our people. My husband, being a department head, stayed on till the last day of December, and a lot of the people in upper management did stay on till the last day of December. That was of 1995. And then they were all gone. So we knew several months in advance that all of this was happening, and so what we were trying to do was get our people placed with other companies, if possible. And so we were doing résumés and we were contacting other companies and asking what kind of vacancies did they have, trying to match up our people to their vacancies so we could set them up for interviews and see if they might get placed someplace else.

*Oh, that's great. So you were kind of acting as an employment agency in a way.*

Right. Because we knew what it was coming down to. And we were also working with people, trying to get their résumés and paperwork together to prepare them to go into other positions with other companies. And so we were busy at the end. In fact, I terminated on a Thursday, and I was back over there on a Friday and a Monday, still working, because I hadn't finished with all my résumés. And they said, when are you leaving? I says, Oh, soon, soon, soon, but I got this stuff I have to finish up.

*So how many years total did you work?*

Thirty-two years and nine months, I guess it was. My husband was there thirty-seven years. And it was a very good company.

*How big was the office that you worked in?*

In human resources, or are you talking about the department? How big was that?

*Yes.*

I think that we had eighty-nine people there. And I'm not sure that that included Mercury. We had a small staff there. I think there was probably about three people at Mercury, and of course the recreation people, but in Las Vegas I think we had eighty-nine.

*In human resources, was there high turnover or did people, once they got into that position, they stayed?*

Most of them stayed because I worked with some of the same people for years and years and years. And we didn't really have a large turnover. You always had clerical people coming and going, but I mean even a lot of the clerical staff stayed there. I think they were happy there. And now when I talk to people that are still with Bechtel and they talk about REECo, they said, It's nothing like REECo. I think we had some really good managers, and you always kind of felt like family.

*Oh, really?*

Yes, you really did. You had that feeling. And I saw one of the girls over the weekend at a party and she said, You know how REECo always seemed like they cared about you? She says, These people don't care about anything. Now, out of our group, the eight-nine that were there when I left, today there's probably only four or five of them there, at the most, out of all of those people. I mean everybody left.

*Did they retire or did they—?*

Well, some of them retired and some of them just got laid off.

*Oh, really.*

Yes. And I mean *I* got to retire because I had been there a long enough time and I was the right age. I was fifty-five when all of that happened, so as long as you fell in that guideline, and I did, so *I* got lucky. Now, some of the people were not as fortunate as I was. But it worked out really well for myself and my husband.

*The culture of the company while you were working there, was it—would you guys joke with each other or was it high stress or was it real formal? What would you—?*

Well, I would think no, we got along fine. We joked, we had a good time, we had parties a lot. Not necessarily at work, but at people's homes. And it was just a close-knit group.

*Would people try to get their kids on board?*

**[00:30:00]** They did, and we always—it's kind of—I didn't like it. I didn't like it because so many times when the managers would ask you to hire their children, it ended up to be a bad experience because the children were not qualified, didn't want to work. And a lot of times the parent would say, You have to take this job. They [the children] didn't want to go that distance to take that job. They ended up getting fired for maybe not coming to work or using drugs or whatever it might be. But it was just a lot of bad experiences with that. And somebody

said to me one time, with my oldest daughter, they said, Well, geez, are you going to get her a job at the test site? And I said, No, I'm not getting her a job with the company at all, because I never really believed in that. I mean there are cases where it worked out good, but most of the time it didn't work out very well. It wasn't a pleasant experience. And now you'd have this person that you got their kid a job and now the kid is getting fired. Now that person's embarrassed that their child got into trouble. And it just wasn't—I mean if I could've written a policy, it would've been on that, because I just didn't think that that should've happened, the way it did so many times.

*Right. Because it opens up a whole can of worms that's difficult to close up again.*

It does. It is. And then the person comes up and says, Well, you hired so-and-so's son. How come you can't hire mine? And so you had that going on all the time too. Now, we did have a program—oh, geez, now I wonder if I can remember what it was called—a scholarship program. So if either one of your parents worked for REECo, you could apply for the REECo scholarship, and if you were selected for the REECo scholarship, then that meant summer employment would be provided to you, and if you could get a job in Las Vegas, you could actually go to UNLV and work there part-time. Now, that program was a good one and I liked that one. I didn't have problems with relatives working, in that respect. We had a lot of those young people that did end up working in Las Vegas, and so they would work for us full-time in the summer and then during the school year, if it was convenient for them and they didn't have any classes on Friday or whatever, then they could come and work for us, and that worked out fine.

*Did you do any recruitment as far as—?*

Oh, I did *lots* of recruitment. More than I wanted to do sometime or other. I mean in the spring and in the fall, we did a lot of recruitment, so we did a lot of travel.

*Where would you go to—?*

Oh, I'd been *everywhere*. I haven't been out of the United States, but I'd been to Florida, I'd been to Georgia.

*Really?*

Yes, we went to Georgia Tech one time, recruiting engineering students. We've gone to Texas, recruiting for radiation monitors and setting up programs for that. And that really wasn't a part of the summer program; that was just an ongoing program. But when we would do the summer recruiting, usually we would be looking for engineering students, computer science students, usually—well, we also recruited from this black university in Georgia. It's called Fort Valley State College. And we would hire those students. A lot of times, we would hire them in clerical positions, and then once they declared their major, then we would hire them into whatever their major was, if it was something that we could use within the company. And if we couldn't use it within the company, there was always the Department of Energy [DOE], who also hired these students from Fort Valley. Or the other companies also, they would hire those students also.

*When you would go to recruitments, did you just have a booth and you just talked to kids, or would you present?*

Oh, well, it was a lot of different ways. We went to a lot of job fairs where we *would* set up displays and pass out applications and interview people there. I mean a lot of them, even in Las Vegas, at the different conventions. But we would go to Albuquerque. We've been to California. We've been to Louisiana. We've been, like I say, to Florida and to Georgia. I went to North Carolina one time. We've been to Texas. We've been to a lot of different—

*Did you like those trips?*

Yes, they weren't bad. I think what was bad about them is we would do it primarily in the fall and in the spring, and we'd have them set up like we might go to University of [00:35:00] Oklahoma on Monday and then interview all day there and spend the night there. And then travel to the next destination on Tuesday and then I'd have an open house that night and then interview all the next day. Sometimes it would be like a week at a time you would be gone on the road. And so you're flying, you're renting cars, you're driving, which is not bad if your luggage gets there when *you* get there but I—

*Did you ever have that happen?*

Yes, I have. I ended up in Georgia one time, and usually when I would travel I would look nice but this time I had on a warm-up suit and tennis shoes.

*It always happens like that.*

I flew into this little airport in Macon, Georgia and I was there and my rental car was there but my suitcase wasn't there. So the first night, I had to interview these kids, I had to apologize for being in my warm-up suit. And then I found a store there, so I went out and bought myself a black dress and black shoes. So I used that the next day. And then my suitcase came in, and then I was leaving the next day. But a lot of times when we would go to Fort Valley, we might stay down there for two or three days because they would also have seminars down there. And the majority of the students that went to that school were black. There were a few white students and there might be a few Hispanic students, but the majority of them were black students. And being an EEO, always involved with that, we would always—I mean if we had eight positions to fill, they wouldn't all be filled with white students. We would try and maybe two white and two black and two Hispanic. We had a heck of a time with Indians, though, American Indians, we

just could not—now eastern Indians, we could get them to go to work for us, but American Indians, we were very unsuccessful with recruiting those people because most of the time they just didn't want to leave the reservation. I mean they might have the education and they might have the work experience that you're looking for, but they wanted to stay with their own people, and they were very difficult. We did manage to get a couple of them on the payroll from time to time, but it was never anything that lasted for a long period of time.

*Did you have specific quotas that you'd have to fill, depending upon the position, or was it like an overall pie chart within the company's employment?*

Well, no, it was by position.

*Really?*

Yes, because we just always tried to do that, and that's how we would select the universities that we would go to. We would get in touch with—once a year we had this conference. It's called Rocky Mountain College Placement Association. That's when the employers would meet the people that worked in job placement with the universities. So we had that once a year, where we had that contact with them, and so we would say, what kind of students are you graduating, and what are their disciplines, and what kind of minority population do you have? So we knew ahead of time what kind of schools we needed to go to to find those types of individuals. And so that's how we set out our recruitment interviews for summer students, and also for other people too, because when we were looking for radiation safety monitors, that wasn't necessarily going to schools but going to locations where these people were working. We went to a shipyard up in the tri-state area, up around Richland, Washington and that area, because we knew that they had those types of individuals there and they were laying off, and so we interviewed people there. And we've done a lot of interviewing of a lot of different kinds of people, wherever. And sometimes we were short on paramedics, so

we'd have to go out and look and try to find them and hire them and get them here in Nevada.

We'd have to go other places to bring them here because there just wasn't enough people here at that time.

*Would you provide for them to move out and all that?*

Right.

*Oh, you would do that?*

Yes.

*Did the company ever withdraw that benefit, or was that just a standard?*

No, they would relocate people. Most of the time with the relocation, it applied to management people. But we would relocate technical people. And engineers, they would fall into the [00:40:00] management slot. We really would not do that for clerical people because we didn't need to do that for clerical people, but we would for management and technical.

*Was there a particular position that was difficult to hire with diversity? Were there just some—?*

Where you couldn't find many minorities? Yes. Yes, there was.

*What positions, do you recall?*

Well, nurses. Now, you could always find nurses' aides, but not really degreed nurses. And we hired nurses that—four-year-degree nurses, two-year-degree nurses. We didn't go any farther than that. I mean you might find people that had worked in nursing but didn't have those types of degrees. And so we hardly ever—I can't even remember where we ever hired a black nurse. We had two Hispanic nurses. And you didn't have a lot of those individuals that were in the medical field at all, I mean paramedics or doctors. I know we had a lady that was a black doctor, and we had probably three men that were black doctors that worked for us. But you know what they would usually do? Because we had to recruit them from other areas too. They would usually get

to Nevada, until they could get qualified for their license to practice in Nevada, and then they would usually leave.

*Oh, OK, they would use it.*

Well, I guess it was kind of difficult for a doctor to take because what we wanted them to do were pre-employment physicals. So if you had a doctor that was happy with doing physicals, in and out, day after day, that was fine, but so many of them wanted to do other things. They were trained to do other things and that's what they wanted to do. But they would come to work for us for a period of time. Of course, we never knew it was just going to be a short period of time until they could get out into the community and learn what was available and what they needed to do to get licenses and then they would leave. But I would say the majority of them at least gave us a year, because it would take that long usually for them to get established doing something else.

*So that was just a tough position to hold on to somebody.*

Yes, it was. I mean we did have doctors that stayed out there for a long time. In fact, our medical director, Dr. Kreisler, Leonard Kreisler, lived in Sun City. I don't know if he's still here or not. Because I haven't heard much from him, and he was a very vocal person. But he might've moved, because I haven't really seen him or heard of him lately. But he was our medical director out there for many, many years.

*Did you ever get a feeling of the—I don't know how to word this—there was diversity at the test site? Did everybody get along, or were there issues due to different ethnic races, and—?*

Well, I think there were always issues. But it's just like this person I saw over the weekend is a black female, and she was always pretty vocal whenever she was working for REECo, and so when I saw her I says, Are you still stirring it up all the time? She says, No, because these people don't care.

*So she'd only stir the pot if people would listen.*

Yes, that's right. But no, I think basically they all got along pretty well. You had union people that were not happy about things from time to time, but I think all in all we all got along pretty well. And they had some of the same managers—I mean probably the whole time I was there, and I kind of hate to say it this way—but now whenever you see an obituary in the newspaper and it was a person that you knew from REECo, if you were to go to that funeral, which a lot of us go, it's really not so much to honor the person that's deceased but just to see who's going to show up there. Because so many of them, they're still in town and they'll still come out and you might not have seen them for many, many years, but it's still like you still know them and they're still friendly and they're still nice and you still like them.

*Yes, that's one thing that I've noticed in talking to people, is that there was such camaraderie and this feeling of—just going to the breakfast where I met Duane [Lawrence], it's like they all just really [00:45:00] enjoy each other, and you look around and go, what a great job! Everybody just really enjoyed each other that much. The other thing that I'm getting is that a lot of people had a lot of respect for their managers because it seemed like they were trying to cultivate people within the group. Did you get that sense?*

Oh, yes, most definitely. We had some of the greatest managers. Our last [general] manager, Dale Fraser, was a wonderful person. He was an engineer with us and worked himself up to become the manager, so he'd worked out in the field and had a good working relationship with a lot of the crafts people because of him working out in the areas. If you've never been to the test site and I keep mentioning these places—

*I have. I took a tour, yes.*

Oh, yes, OK. So that was good. Now, the manager that preceded him, Mr. [Harold] Cunningham, we just all loved him to death. And even to this day—he lives in Las Cruces, New

Mexico [now in Santa Fe]. I went through there about five years ago and we called him, and he wanted in the worst kind of way to get with us and have lunch, but it was snowing and my husband doesn't like snow and he says, I don't care about visiting. I want to get out of here. So we didn't visit him. But just really, really nice people. And the manager that was prior to him, I never was real crazy about him, but a lot of people did like him a lot. And he went up to manage another project that was in northern Idaho. That was it too. Our company would bid on jobs. It wasn't always *here*. We've always been here but we've also been in other locations, in Idaho and Hattiesburg, Mississippi and different areas where our people have been over the years.

*So would you deal with people in those areas too? Would your office deal with that?*

We lost a lot of our people to go to the EG&G [Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier] facility in Idaho. Because EG&G owned REECo, we were always kind of under the same umbrella, but the REECo people, we always kind of thought the EG&G people were just a little bit more technical than we are, and we were kind of construction people and we were just the better group.

*Yes. More fun.*

But a lot of our people left, and that was in 1976. They had a big project going on up there, and we lost a lot of our managers to go to that facility because they really owned the company so if they wanted to take our people, they would offer them the jobs and they would go.

*And I would think if you wanted to move up, career-wise, that would be the wise choice.*

Right, be the way to go.

*Do you recall converting over to computers?*

Yes. Didn't like it.

*Oh, was it painful?*

Yes, it was. I guess during the time that all of that was happening, I think that's when I got my first job in management. And they set this thing on my desk and then it was like, OK, what am I going to do with this? I says, well, I don't need to do that because we have secretaries here that do those kind of things. And they said, Oh, no, well, we're taking the work away from the secretaries and you'll be doing it at your desk. And no, I didn't like that too well, but didn't really do too much other than form letters on the one that I had. So it wasn't a really big deal because once I learned how to do the form letters—it wasn't like I had to do spreadsheets and this and that. It was just pretty much routine, what I had to do with computers. But no, didn't like that at all.

*Yes. So you remembered the days before and then all of a sudden they plunked a computer on your desk. Did you have to do e-mail and—?*

No, because by the time I got ready to go, I mean people were e-mailing, but it was just really getting started at that time, and that was in 1995. And it's just like my husband said,—because they plopped one on his desk too—You know, I have a secretary, I have a staff assistant, and I'm not going to do this stuff. And I says—well, we got to talking about e-mails. He says, Why is it, now, Joe Blow, I don't know him at all and now he's leaving me e-mails which I am expected to return? I mean if I've never talked to this person in my whole life, and he's not even on the same level as I, and he doesn't work for me, and why should I have to respond to his e-mail? Oh, he didn't like the e-mail thing at all. But that was back [00:50:00] when, if you wanted to talk to somebody, you picked up the telephone and you talked to them. And I think we all just liked that better than the e-mail. Of course, if I had to go to work *now*, I think it would be a very difficult thing to do because I [don't] understand how the world is anymore.

*It's totally different, because for my generation, I would much rather send an e-mail than call, and I'm almost intimidated to call people. It's easier to send off an e-mail and wait for the response.*

Yes. Right.

*I was wondering, though, with computers, how they handled the security. Did they still keep the files in the back or did they scan them and put them in electronic format?*

Yes. Well, they were still—I mean even when I left, they were still typing those things and sending them. We would have to give all the information to the Department of Energy, and then their investigators would be the ones to go out and actually interview and pursue the security clearance for that individual. We just had to make sure all the information we gave them was correct. So I don't know. I know right before I left, they were still doing it that way. Of course, in the early years, when we did what they call a PSQ, personnel security questionnaire, I guess it was, we had to type them on the typewriter and we had like five carbons. So every time you make a mistake, you had to correct the five carbons, so it was a real hassle. In later years, they would just do one copy and then make copies of them and things like that, so it wasn't such a big deal. But more than likely, they did do them on the computer and then just print them out, print out the information and send it to DOE. I don't know if DOE would fax those over there or if they mailed them over there or not. You probably need to talk to somebody that worked in REECo security, because they were the ones that did that.

*So there was a whole separate section that just worked with security issues?*

Yes, that was a part of the human resources umbrella. But by that time I was in the recruiting area, all we really did was make sure we had all the information correct and then we would get it on the application. They would take that individual with his application or her application and sit

down with what we called a personnel security processor, and then they would actually finish up and they would complete all the paperwork there.

*So you would just get the initial information and then pass them on to—*

Yes.

*How did advancement work? How would you get promotions? Was it based on seniority? Were there tests you had to take or was it—?*

Well, if you were under the Office and Clerical Union, then some of that was based on seniority. But how we did it in probably the last five years—let's see, maybe even longer than that, maybe seven years that I was there—if we had a position, we would post the position internally for five working days. And it basically said what the qualifications were, minimum salary to the maximum salary, the hours, the days, what the requirements were, and then people bid on those jobs. So whenever they bid on those jobs, they would have to submit a form to us saying why they feel like they're qualified for that position. And then what we would do is we would evaluate all of those. And then we would type up a letter to the person that was trying to fill the vacancy, saying that this job was posted, whatever the title of it was, from this date to that date, and we had fourteen bidders; out of those fourteen bidders we consider four to meet the minimum qualifications for that position, and here they are, their names, and then we would send their paperwork along with them too. And then that individual that had the vacancy would call us in and say, *Set up interviews for us, for these people, and so we would set up interviews.* And then they would base their selection on their interview. The manager then would write us, saying this job was posted, we've had these people to qualify for the job, we interviewed them, and we have selected so-and-so based on whatever. We needed to do that because otherwise if you got involved with [00:55:00] labor relations, somebody says, I bid on

that job and they didn't even consider me and I'm qualified, and so we would have to pull it out and say, Yes, that person did bid on that job but that person did not have the required four years of experience that that job requires. They might've had three-and-a-half years but they didn't have four, so we didn't deem them to be qualified for the position.

*So you had to be meticulous in keeping—because you were being held accountable by the labor unions.*

We did.

*Did you ever have to testify?*

Well, not so much the labor unions, because usually the jobs that we posted were—but not to say that people in the labor unions did not bid on our jobs. They did, and we did consider them. But just trying to use a “maybe” or “for instance,” let's just say for an electronic technician. We could post that job and you might have an electrician or a lineman, somebody that had that type of a background, bid on a job to *be* an electronic technician, and if they met the qualifications, we would say, Yes, that person is qualified. Now that person leaving the union coming to work under the technical branch, might not be a feasible thing to do because that person, working—they might be making thirty dollars an hour and might have vacation and sick leave and this and that—and once we made them the job offer and they understood what it was they were leaving to come to work under that technical slot, they might just say, No, I'm staying with the union. But then a lot of times, the people would put in their twenty years with the union and they were tired of it, they wanted to get out, they wanted to do something else. They said, I don't care about that anymore because I've already established enough time with the labor union to be qualified to get a pension from them. I'm

starting my second retirement here, with this job. So that worked also. So you had those things that did happen.

*Did you have to follow that same procedure for promotions and—?*

No, I did not because when I got promoted—because I was trying to think, and I think when I got promoted to the personnel assistant job, that was in 1974, and I did bid on that job. They had two positions available and I bid on that job and got that job. But then when I got promoted to an employment representative, it required employment experience, and if I remember correctly, because I put in two years and that qualified me, and they just went ahead and promoted me to that position. But when I got promoted to the senior employment rep, and that job was posted and I bid on it and got it because I was there and because it was just the difference of one requiring two years of experience and the other one requiring four years of experience. It was basically the same thing. The job required a degree, which I did not have, but what they would do in those cases is if it was something that was of a non-technical nature—I mean if it required an engineering degree, you had to have an engineering degree. But [for] employment representative, if you had eight years of experience, that would compensate for your degree. It just depended on what kind of degree was required for that position.

*And did you get raises pretty regularly? Was that pretty standard?*

Most of the time, we got them annually. We would have a cost-of-living increase, usually at the first of the year, and then we also got a merit increase.

*So how much would be the cost-of-living?*

Well, sometimes the cost-of-living was only three percent or five percent.

*But then that would be added on to the raise, which is pretty nice. Was that pretty standard, like you could count on that?*

Well, it was, but there were years, when the company wasn't making a lot of money and they weren't doing a lot of things, that they didn't really give a cost-of-living increase. I don't think we got one every year, but most of the years we did. Now, there were years too when you didn't get a merit increase. Maybe somebody wasn't working out as well as they thought they should. Those things happened also, where maybe a person got a merit—we called it a merit increase. Maybe they got a merit increase every year, and maybe that year they had been promoted, so they didn't get a merit increase because they got promoted. I mean they still got money but it was as a result of a promotion, not necessarily a merit increase. And then other times, maybe that person wasn't working out. Because every year the manager would have goals for you to meet, and so maybe he gave you four goals to meet and maybe you only met two out [01:00:00] of the four. Well then, why should you receive a merit increase when you didn't fulfill your expectations? So those things happened too. And then that person would get mad and go to labor relations and we'd start this thing again. It was just a constant thing, going on, going on, forever and ever. And some of it was the same people, you'd get the same people all the time. Oh, yes, I know that one. Been there, done that. We have to deal with this guy again.

But it was very enjoyable. It was a good job. Way back in those years, we were expected to wear nylons and high-heeled shoes and wear nice dresses but I want to think that when I grew up, that *was* the way things were anyway. I mean when you went to church on Sunday, you looked nice. When people go to church now, I can't believe the way they go to church. I mean I just think it's horrible, but it's the difference between my generation and your generation. That first job that they sent me out on—I'll remember it forever because I had on this red-and-white striped suit and I had on about four inches' white pumps—and they take me to this area, when I get out of the car, the dirt goes all the way up to my calf, and I go like, where are my white shoes? And so the man I was working for, he said, I know I'm going to have to get

approval for this, but I'm going to talk to supervision. I really don't think you need to get so dressed-up to come out here in this fieldwork. I think maybe—of course, at that time we didn't wear tennis shoes. Nobody wore tennis shoes. But he says, I think maybe you can wear Capris and shoes.

*What job was that?*

This was when I first started working for them and they sent me out to Area 400. We worked for this company called the Morquest Corporation. That's when I told you I was doing time cards and making coffee and talking to a lot of men and doing very little typing but doing letters every now and again. But yes, that was my first day on that job and it's like, Oh, my goodness, and I'm like, where are the rattlesnakes? It was really out in the desert. So they finally got it approved that I could wear Capris to go to that job. And everybody was very envious that I got to wear Capris because they still had to get dressed up. But I mean that was back when you had a lot of pride in yourself and your job. So many people, I see them and like you go into a bank and the people usually they dress pretty well in banks. But then you have these people come in and they got on sandals and they got on cutoffs and it's like—it's just a different time.

*Different generation, yes. I'm going to change [the disc]—*

[Deleted conversation at beginning of disc.]

*The one thing I was going to ask you was, how difficult was it to create a new job position? Was there a bit rigmarole that would have to be done in order to—?*

Well, not really. Compensation and benefits, that was one of the sections in human resources, and we had analysts there, and that's pretty much what they did. And what would happen is, if you had a position and you wanted to create something new like that, the department level would write a letter to compensation and benefits or to the human resources manager. Then she would—our last manager was a lady, Lavonne Lewis—would give it to Jim Hendricks, who was

the section chief in compensation and benefits. So anyway, they would ask the individual, if it's yourself, what are your job duties? What are you doing? And so you would write up what it is that you're doing. And so then after they would review that, then they would come to wherever it is that you're working and might sit with you two or three days and ask you questions and take notes, kind of like what we're doing now, and then they would establish what level of responsibility they feel this job is. And then what they would also do is they would check with other companies. They might go to EG&G or Department of Energy or the laboratories or to the companies that we worked with a lot, and they might say, We have a person and this is what she's doing and do you have anybody within your organization that does the same thing? And if you do, then what kind of salary structure do you have that person based at and what level of responsibility have you given that individual? Because that would make a difference of what salary ranges. We had people in salary ranges two on up to forty-two. Those were all of our jobs. Now, that didn't include the crafts people because they were all covered by labor unions, but this was the clerical and the technical and the medical people and management, all the way up to the top. And so that's how they would come up with new positions because one of the companies might send back and say, Yes, we have somebody who does that same thing and this is what we're paying them and this is the level of responsibility and this is the type of education we want. And then you might have another company say, Well, we have somebody there too. Now, these two companies, it may not be the same thing, but if you get something like in the middle. And so that's what they would do. They would be in touch with other companies and just really send out the information, saying, This is what we have. What do you have? Can we compare it with anything that's going on?

*So you would talk to other companies, other contractors?*

Contractors. Yes, we would. We did that quite a bit. I remember one in particular where we had—because we had our own travel department within REECo, and whenever I would go out on recruiting I would send an invoice to them saying, I need to go to Birmingham, Alabama. And so they would find me a motel, get me a rental car, get me an airline ticket and send it back. But I remember when they were creating a position within the travel section, that's one of the things that they did, because they had a person there that they really wanted to make more responsible than the job really was. This person had a boss that wanted to promote this individual, and they sent out all these and everything kept coming back low, low, low, and they wanted to make her high. As it was, they had to compromise and just leave her where she was, but they gave her an increase in salary, because she *did* work hard, but they couldn't really make her position any more than what it was because it didn't warrant to be upgraded.

*And then as far as workman's comp goes, how was that handled?*

Well, workman's comp, now that's another section within the human resources department, and they had individuals that worked there that would handle the workman's compensation [00:05:00] claims. Most of the time, it was a result of an injury that had happened. They would get into how long this person was going to be off and how much rehabilitation they had to have before they could go back to work. Sometimes the people couldn't go back to work. I remember a case where, in one of the forward areas, a gentleman lost his arm, and lost his arm all the way up to his shoulder. And there wasn't really any way they could rehab him to put him back to where he was before, so—

*What did he do?*

Well, he was working out in the tunnels and he had an accident and lost his arm. But yet, they wanted to keep him within the company and so they ended up giving him a different position, but didn't give him his original job back because he just couldn't do what he was doing before, with one arm.

*Did they try to keep him with the same pay?*

I think that his pay did stay the same. But that's pretty much what they did. What they would do there is they would try and rehab people to put them into other positions if they couldn't go back to where they were. And they truly did try to help them so that they could still stay within the company.

*Was that regulated by the state or was this just within the company, where the company—?*

Well, I think it was the company, but I'm sure they *were* regulated by the state as far as what they could do. I never really worked in that area all that much. They were in the back of the building. We were in the front of the building. I would see them and speak to them all the time, but as far as getting involved with what they did that much, I didn't. And I don't know if you would be interested in talking to Lavonne Lewis or not, but she was our human resources department manager, and she was the last one that I worked under. Mr. [Leon] Goldsberry was the first one that I worked for, and then several in between, but Lavonne was the last one. And so being the department manager as she was responsible for recruiting, for workman's comp, for compensation and benefits, and then the security and personnel processing. So she has *all* of these sections under *her*. And we, being in recruitment, was a section under her that reported directly to her. She might be a good one for you to talk to because she would be able to answer that question.

*Yes. That's just a personal curiosity because I used to write workman's comp in California, and it's different within the states, and I always thought that that was fascinating that it was more regulated by state than anything else.*

Well, with our group, it fell under the insurance. It was like insurance and workman's compensation were all together under—it was a section together like that. And so primarily what they did was insurance benefits for people. But there were several people that did handle the workman's compensation claims that came into the company, of which we had a lot because of the nature of the work that we did, because the majority of the people that worked for us were craft people and they were always getting hurt.

*Did you ever experience a test? Did you ever witness one?*

No, I never did. Well, when I hired in, they were doing underground nuclear testing. Well actually, when I hired in, there was a moratorium going on, and during that time they were not doing *any* testing. Now, *prior* to me coming on, they were doing above ground nuclear testing, and I wasn't here so I couldn't ever witness any of that. I was there when they did underground nuclear testing. But I never really was *there* where it was being done. We could witness it after it was over on a television screen and see what happened as a result of the test. Because the test site kind of looks like the moon, with all the craters and stuff, and that's the result of all those tests that they've done over the years.

*So you would see them after. Would they bring in a video?*

The only reason I saw them, I went to Sedan crater because everybody goes to Sedan crater, and of course Sedan crater isn't near as big as it was at one time because over the years, with the wind blowing, it's filled so much of it in. And I saw somebody recently that had gone out to the test site on a tour and they said, Oh, they were so disappointed with the cafeteria

because it looked so rundown and it was so this, and they said, Some of the buildings that were out there when we were out there, they're gone now. And it's just not like it used to be and we don't like it anymore. But I haven't been out there in a long time, so I don't know what it looks like, but that's what they were [00:10:00] saying. But when we would go off on recruiting missions, we would always tell people that, The test site is 1,350 square miles big; it's bigger than the state of Rhode Island. And what we do there is underground nuclear testing. Now, when you say that, a lot of people say, I'm out of here. I'm not having anything to do with that. And you would have to respect their wishes. But other people say, Yes, I'm for it. Let's go.

*Would you ever get people that would engage in a debate with you about it?*

Oh, most definitely. Yes, because so many people didn't really understand what the test site was all about until we would start talking to them about the nature of the company and what we do, and then the eyes would get bigger and bigger and, No, I wouldn't want to do that, and I wouldn't want to be there, and nothing to do with it. Oh, most definitely. Yes, there were a lot of people [who] would have nothing to do with us after that.

*Was that part of your job that—it was just part of your job. Did you enjoy engaging with people like that and educating them about the test site?*

I did, yes. Because a lot of times when we'd go off on these recruiting trips, we would take videos, we'd take slides, we took photographs, and all of our display about because we were really proud of where we were coming from and what we were doing. But a lot of times, they didn't perceive us as well as we did. But I thought it was very interesting. But a lot of times, going to the colleges and universities, their instructors would tell the students prior to us getting there what we were all about, and so only the students that were interested in doing things like

that would show up for the interviews. Where we would run into a lot of negative would be when you're out looking for electronic technicians or radiation safety monitors or nurses or doctors.

Those kinds of people were the ones that were like, No, don't want to do that. Don't even want to be around anything like that. But then they would tell us that you receive more radiation on an airplane trip across the United States than you would working at the Nevada Test Site for a whole year. When you go to the dentist to have your teeth cleaned and you have X-rays, you receive more radiation *then* than you would receive the whole year working out at the test site. When you lay out in your back yard and sunning yourself, you're getting more radiation *there* than you would. Because we all wore identification badges and they all had film badges on there. I'm sure people you've talked to have told you that. And those badges would be changed every month. And if ever you'd been exposed to anything, they would pick it up on the badge. But I remember, this was when I was working in Las Vegas and I went out to the test site. We used to have awards when people would receive their five-year or ten-year, fifteen-year awards, and we would give them a nice meal and get up and say nice things about them and get up and present them with these awards for their longevity with the company. Geez, I forgot what I was going to say.

*You were talking about the badges.*

Oh, the badges. So anyway, because of working in Las Vegas, I didn't have to wear a radiation badge. Just had to wear the badge with my picture on it. So whenever I got out there, I went and got a badge, a radiation film pack, they called it, and then put it on my badge. And so we were out there for that day, and then the next day I was scheduled to have one of those follow-up tests because I had had breast cancer. So I had to have a bone scan. Well, what happened was, I still had my film badge, but when I got to the hospital, I took all of that off. You're not supposed to

wear it except when you're working. So when I got in the car, I took my badge off and I left it in the car, and I went into the hospital and I had this test done, and then I went back to work after that. Well, when I got back to work, I'd put that film badge on. Well, when they collected it at the end of the month, they just got real excited because I'd been exposed to this radiation with this test that I had taken. And of course, I knew that, but they didn't know that, but they knew I had been out at the test site, so they were *real* upset about that.

So the people that were in radiological sciences, that department, they contacted me and they said, what did you do when you were at the test site?

And so I told them, I says, I was just in the cafeteria, and I went to personnel, and that's all I did. Why are you asking?

And they said well, because you've been exposed and we're trying to figure out how you got exposed.

And then they went on to say, Have you been to a hospital or have you been to a lab or have you had any medical tests?

And I said, Yes, the next day I had a test. Oh, my God!

*So they're that sensitive.*

**[00:15:00]** Very sensitive, yes. Because when you put it over your head and it hangs right here [demonstrating]—and so it picked up what I had experienced earlier that day. Yes, it did. It was very sensitive.

*That's interesting. Now, when you started working at the test site, did you have a position on nuclear energy or nuclear weapons, or did you not really know much about it?*

I did not know anything about it. I really didn't. I was twenty-two years old at the time. It was my first experience at being away from home. I was so excited about being in Las Vegas, I can't tell you, with all the lights and everything it was just, Wow! And I just knew I was going to work

in a clerical function somehow or another. I mean that's really all I knew. Even though I knew Gary and knew [that] he worked out in Area 12, but I didn't really know what he did in Area 12. And no, I think it probably took me probably four to six months before I realized what I was really involved in out there. But I mean it didn't matter.

*Did your opinion change through the years or—?*

I think so. Well, as I got more years of experience and got involved with different layers of management and knew what the purpose of the company was I could not say anything really bad about the company. I thought it was a great company. And I'm not just saying that because you're interviewing me. I've always felt that way. And this past weekend we got together with a lot of people. One of the men that worked *for* my husband years ago, he retired after forty-four years at the test site, and so we went to a party for him, and so I got to see a lot of people that we hadn't seen in a long time, and they all said, REECo is the best. And we said, Yes, REECo is the best. And they all had to talk about what a good time we had back in the earlier years and personnel. This person that just recently retired, he was really retiring from Bechtel because REECo hasn't had the contract since 1995. And, well, they chose—I guess in 1996 is really when Bechtel took over, January of 1996. But I think everybody was always pleased to work there. If you didn't like working there, you wouldn't be there. You would've left, which people did. Some people, it just wasn't for them. The big problem was the commute. They just didn't like going that far. And I think a lot of people just—even though you would tell them it's in the middle of the desert and it's sixty-five miles from Las Vegas and even once you get to Mercury, the main camp, I mean there's miles and miles to go after that. You'd tell them all of those kind of things. Of course, most people are interested in the salary and so you give them the salary and you give them the subsistence and that's fine, but then it's like they'll come out to interview with

you and then they'll say, Oh, my God, I can't do that. That's far and I've never done that before and I don't want to do that either. Life is too short.

Because a lot of people looked at it, like some people working in the forward area, they would lose three hours of their day commuting.

*When you say the forward area, is that—?*

That's what I'm talking about. Anything past Mercury, going out farther.

*OK. So like when Duane went out to Area 12—*

Duane worked in Area 12 and my husband worked in Area 12 at one time too, and so that's one of the areas we call the forward areas.

*Because that's another hour, right?*

Yes.

*Because he was talking about how he'd have an hour to Mercury and then another hour out there. And then once you were out there, you didn't have a cafeteria, right?*

There was a cafeteria in Area 12, yes.

*OK. But there were some areas that didn't.*

And there was also one in Area 6, which they always called the CP, the control point. That's what the CP meant. And that's where they had all of the buildings that would monitor everything that was going on as far as the tests would go, was at the CP. But they had a cafeteria there also.

There was only three cafeterias, Mercury, the CP and Area 12, that I was aware of.

*When you first moved out, was it hard to be away from home?*

Yes, it was. It was hard. But I think the fact that I brought one of my girlfriends with me, that really helped out a lot. And then I knew Gary from before, when I had met him. And then once we got moved in to the dormitory—because we didn't really start in the dormitory. We got ourselves an apartment in Las Vegas for about three months. But then we kind of got tired of

getting up at 3:30 in the morning to get to work. So we decided the easy way would be [00:20:00] just to live at the test site. But once we were out there and living in the dormitory, two girls to each room and of course we shared shower facilities in the middle and bathrooms and lavatories. And I don't know, I can't remember now how many rooms were in [Dormitory] 103, but I would say probably at least twenty rooms, and each room had two people in it. And so you got to know those people real well because you're living with them.

*Was it easy to get a spot? Was there a waiting list or—?*

No, it was pretty easy because they had five dormitories, and then they also had trailers, and then they had other ones they called Quonset huts. They were really little buildings that were made out of cinder blocks, and people lived in those too. But I think most of the time, those were men that lived in those. I think the dormitories—they tried to keep the girls in the dormitories instead of putting them out where—because the men were there.

*Was it pretty safe? Did you feel safe?*

I always felt safe, yes.

*Really? So you could walk around there.*

Oh, yes, at night we would walk around all the time. The only thing that would make you not feel safe is the mountain lions and snakes and scorpions.

*The critters.*

Yes. Tarantulas. One time I saw this thing, I thought it was a black cat, I really did. It looked like a black cat was just moving. I said, *what is that?* And it was a tarantula. I mean this thing was that tall [indicating size]. It was big. Yes, it was.

*No! It was as big as a cat.*

It was. It was big.

*I couldn't handle that. I couldn't handle the scorpions.*

We had a mountain lion that would eat out of the garbage can. In the dorm we lived in, our room was right on the very end, and there was two trash cans right at the end, and we had a door that went out. Well, there was a door at that end and a door at the opposite end, and in the middle we had our little lounge area and there was doors there. Like if the gentlemen came calling, we could meet them in the lounge area down there. They were not supposed to come in these end doors. But anyway, there were two garbage cans down here, and you could hear the mountain lions come down and want to eat out of the garbage cans.

*Oh, how funny. See, there are things you don't think of unless you're there, and then you go, Oh, I'm in the desert.*

Yes, really. Oh, it was quite a change from southern Florida. Fort Lauderdale. I left Fort Lauderdale to come out here in the middle of this desert.

*It was air-conditioned?*

Well, we had swamp coolers. We didn't even really have air conditioning then, no.

*Was the swamp cooler just horrible or—?*

No, it wasn't bad at all, because there wasn't a lot of humidity and those swamp coolers work pretty good unless the humidity gets real high.

*It's just that they smell sometimes.*

Yes, they had to change the filters on them a lot. And as years went on, too, they did have air conditioning units put on them.

*Yes, I went to Arizona State, and I lived in a little cinderblock studio with a swamp cooler. It would freeze over and it'd get the ice block, and then it would just smell like mold. So I lived in that for about a year.*

Yes, we've recruited at ASU [Arizona State University].

*Did you really?*

Yes.

*So you got some Sun Devils.*

Yes. We went down—I think we interviewed there three years. We didn't really get as good a response out of that school, though, and I think the reason is because it's such a large school. There were so many students there and they had so many employers coming in there because of their population that—we did hire four students that I can remember from ASU that came back a couple of years to work for us. But we got so after a while we started going to other schools because we just had—it's easier to get what we wanted going to some of the other schools, just because they weren't as big. Schools weren't as big.

*Right. When you lived at the test site, were you free to go anywhere, or were there restrictions?*

There were restrictions, yes.

*So you couldn't just get in the car and drive out—*

Well, there's security guards all over the place, so you could get in the car but if you came across an area that you were not supposed to be in, then the security guard would tell you to turn around and go back. Because at that time I had a "1" on my badge. What that meant was I could be in Mercury. I couldn't be in all those other places.

*So that was it.*

Yes, that was it. Now, as I got into other positions, then they would put it on our badge where we could go anyplace, but there are some areas where you can't go. You have [00:25:00] to have a reason to be there. But whenever we got into recruitment, when we were doing a lot of recruiting, when I was in those positions, we could go to different areas because we had that number on our badge. That's what the security guards would look for, how many numbers you

have on your badge would tell them what areas you were allowed to go into. Those security people were not REECo people. They worked for WSI, Wackenhut Securities. So they had the contract there, so it wasn't like—was no favors done. They just knew that's where you could go and that's where you couldn't go, so you either did or you didn't.

*Did you take tours of any of the mines?*

Yes, I have been in all the mines.

*Oh really?*

Yes, and I've been in several underground facilities there that really aren't mines. But I went underground one time where they have a train underground.

*What was your impression then?*

That's when they first started talking about Yucca Mountain and storing the nuclear waste, and so it was very interesting, I thought.

*Yes. Well, is there anything that you'd like to add, anything that popped up that you think would be interesting or—?*

Well, not that I can think of. When I knew you were coming, I was just really trying to think of what I did in the positions that I was in and things that we did in those jobs. And the company treated me very fairly and I think I got exactly what I deserved. I loved doing the recruiting part because I got to talk to people all the time and that was fun. It was just hectic sometimes when you had a lot of positions to fill and you have to do it in a big hurry. I always kind of liked to have a little bit more time. But I really enjoyed it. It was good experience.

[End of interview]