

ABBY JOHNSON'S

INTERVIEW WITH LEONARD FIORENZI

EUREKA COUNTY, NEVADA

YUCCA MOUNTAIN LESSONS LEARNED PROJECT

held in

EUREKA, NEVADA

May 17, 2011

1 MS. CLANCY: All right, the tape is rolling. This
2 is May 17, 2011. We're in Eureka, Nevada. This is Gwen
3 Clancy operating the camera and being the videographer for
4 this interview. And, the interviewer is Abby Johnson.

5 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Abby Johnson. I'm the
6 Nuclear Waste Advisor for Eureka County. This is the Eureka
7 County Lessons Learned video project, and today we're
8 interviewing Lenny Fiorenzi, who is the Chairman of the
9 County Commission and formerly was the Public Works Director
10 for Eureka County for many years.

11 Lenny, you were the Public Works Director for
12 Eureka County for many years. Can you tell us a little bit
13 about your background? Have you always lived in Nevada?
14 What have you done with the County?

15 MR. FIORENZI: I was born in Idaho, and I was
16 raised here in Eureka. I moved here when I was about four.
17 I went to work for Eureka County in '72, and I became Public
18 Works director in '79, and then retired from county service
19 in '04.

20 MS. JOHNSON: And, part of your job as Public Works
21 Director was overseeing the Yucca Mountain Project?

22 MR. FIORENZI: Yes, I was the County Coordinator, I
23 guess you could say, for that project.

24 MS. JOHNSON: Can you tell me what sorts of things
25 you did, or how the program ran?

1 MR. FIORENZI: We lined up meetings, and kept the
2 Commissioners informed of the project, and then after a
3 couple of years, I worked with you on the project.

4 MS. JOHNSON: When did you--do you recall when you
5 first became aware of the Yucca Mountain Project overall as a
6 citizen of Nevada?

7 MR. FIORENZI: No, not really as a citizen. When I
8 was the Public Works Director, I became involved with it
9 right after the lawsuit with I believe it was Nye County--not
10 Nye County--it was Inyo and Esmeralda, and the County got a
11 letter from the Federal Government saying we could
12 participate.

13 MS. JOHNSON: Did the people in Eureka have much
14 reaction to the proposed Yucca Mountain Project?

15 MR. FIORENZI: The people here in Eureka itself in
16 the northern part of the County, they were just, most of the
17 time, they'd talk about the downwinder stuff about it, and
18 ask questions about that. And, the people in the Crescent
19 Valley area were opposed to it.

20 MS. JOHNSON: What do you recall from the early
21 days when Eureka County became an affected unit of local
22 government, and the meetings that the County went to? Did
23 you go to some of those meeting with the other counties?

24 MR. FIORENZI: Yes, I remember making quite a few
25 trips to Vegas, meeting with the affected units of local

1 government, they called themselves.

2 MS. JOHNSON: And, what did they do?

3 MR. FIORENZI: Mostly argued about money.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Did you also go to DOE meetings, the
5 Department of Energy held meetings on technical issues and
6 oversights and overviews, and things like that?

7 MR. FIORENZI: Yes, I attended some of those, too.

8 MS. JOHNSON: What was your reaction to those?

9 MR. FIORENZI: Mostly, it was over my head. It was
10 pretty technical, what I remember of it, the state meetings
11 was. I didn't get much out of them.

12 MS. JOHNSON: Now, you toured Yucca Mountain a
13 couple of times, I think.

14 MR. FIORENZI: Yes.

15 MS. JOHNSON: As the Director of the County's
16 Nuclear Waste Program. What were your impressions from your
17 tours of Yucca Mountain?

18 MR. FIORENZI: A lot of money went in that hole,
19 and it was kind of impressive to look at.

20 MS. JOHNSON: Did you go in on the train?

21 MR. FIORENZI: No, we walked.

22 MS. JOHNSON: Okay.

23 MR. FIORENZI: I didn't go in on a train, I don't
24 remember that. I think I walked on both. I can't remember a
25 train.

1 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. Did you have to put steel toed
2 boots on and the glasses?

3 MR. FIORENZI: Glasses.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Yeah. And, then, did they take you
5 to the top of the mountain, too?

6 MR. FIORENZI: Yes. And, we looked around, and I
7 didn't see nothing.

8 MS. JOHNSON: Let's move on to the next question.

9 Lenny, one of Eureka County's primary concerns with
10 the Yucca Mountain Repository Project has been transportation
11 impacts. Can you talk about that a little bit?

12 MR. FIORENZI: Yeah, we've got up at the other end
13 of the County, is IAAD, and then we've got 278 and Highway 50
14 going through the County, and a long distance from anyplace,
15 we was always concerned about the transportation issue, of
16 wrecks and going through here and not letting us know about
17 it, or keeping us informed, and having staff to maintain all
18 of our safety issues.

19 MS. JOHNSON: And, you were the Emergency
20 Management Director--is that the right term?

21 MR. FIORENZI: Yes.

22 MS. JOHNSON: For Eureka County at the same time
23 you were Public Works Director. So, switching hats for a
24 minute, can you talk about some of the responsibilities of
25 being a first responder?

1 MR. FIORENZI: Yeah, we didn't have any training
2 for anything of that--for the radioactive material. We had
3 no training in it. It's a specialized endeavor, I guess you
4 could say, and we was really concerned about trying to bring
5 people up to speed, and as first responders, where to put
6 them, where to station them. I-80 is 90 miles from here, so
7 it's a real problem to try to cover all of the state routes
8 and federal routes in the county for hazardous material.

9 MS. JOHNSON: Does Eureka County have any
10 professional, as in paid emergency response personnel?

11 MR. FIORENZI: No, it's all volunteer.

12 MS. JOHNSON: So, that would be a big burden on the
13 county to try to respond with just volunteer capacity.

14 MR. FIORENZI: Yes.

15 MS. JOHNSON: Let's move on to the next question.

16 Lenny, could you show us Eureka County on the map,
17 and orient us to where the highways are and the railroad is
18 and where the proposed Carlin Rail Route corridor might be,
19 just so we can kind of see on that big map where things are?

20 MR. FIORENZI: Eureka County is in red, the
21 boundaries of Eureka County are in red here. The Town of
22 Eureka is right here in the southern part of the County, and
23 Highway 50 goes through it and goes over towards Austin and
24 Reno. 278 comes out of Eureka and goes up to Carlin, way up
25 out of the county here someplace, I can't see it, but it goes

1 up out of the county, into Carlin. And, Crescent Valley is
2 right here. And, the rail route comes from Beowawe right
3 here, I guess, right in here, this is I-80 also going through
4 Eureka County. And, then, it doesn't show the railroad on
5 here, but the railroad comes right through Beowawe here,
6 wherever Beowawe is, right in this area here, right there is
7 Beowawe. The proposed route comes from here, down to right
8 alongside of Crescent Valley up over this Cortez Mountains,
9 and then I believe it comes up over by Tonkin and the Bowman
10 Ranch, and then comes out of the county over here into Lander
11 County in this area here, someplace by the three bar ranch, I
12 believe is what it did.

13 MS. JOHNSON: Can you--I recall many years ago, you
14 and John Bowie and I tried to drive the rail corridor. Can
15 you talk about that experience a little?

16 MR. FIORENZI: Yeah, it was an all day session. We
17 couldn't--we tried to drive the entire route from Beowawe to
18 the County line, and we couldn't do it because there wasn't
19 no roads and the mountains were rough, and so we spent all
20 day trying to get as close as we could to it, and it was
21 quite a task.

22 MS. JOHNSON: I recall we couldn't find a way
23 through the mountains.

24 MR. FIORENZI: Right.

25 MS. JOHNSON: Where the rail line was proposed. We

1 had to go around into Grass Valley on traditional roads.

2 MR. FIORENZI: Right.

3 MS. JOHNSON: The County never took a position
4 either in favor of or against the repository project, or the
5 Carlin Rail Corridor. Do you know why?

6 MR. FIORENZI: My memory says that there was a lot
7 of people opposed, and some people were kind of up in the air
8 about it. We was getting funding on it and trying to work
9 with them to do the best for the citizens of Eureka County,
10 so remained neutral and just tried to keep everybody informed
11 of the process of the project.

12 MS. JOHNSON: Let's move on to the next question.

13 Lenny, Eureka County is one of ten "affected units
14 of local government," under Section 116 of the Nuclear Waste
15 Policy Act. Can you show us on the map why we are an
16 "affected unit of local government" under Department of
17 Energy's interpretation?

18 MR. FIORENZI: Yeah. We, down at the south end of
19 the County right in this area, we border Nye County, and
20 that's where the repository is located in Nye County, so that
21 made us an affected county designation.

22 MS. JOHNSON: As it turns out, the county, as an
23 affected unit of local government, has transportation
24 concerns, and also some issues related to potential releases
25 from a repository if something went really wrong, airborne

1 releases. Is there anything you can recall from your days
2 growing up in Eureka related to the above ground or
3 underground atomic tests?

4 MR. FIORENZI: Yeah, the former Commissioner, LeRoy
5 Etchegary (phonetic), he used to tell me about they'd go up
6 on top of the summit right here by Eureka in Pinto Summit,
7 and they could see the flashes of those bombs going off down
8 here in northern Nye County, and there was a lot of concern
9 about what they called the downwinder syndrome, about the
10 wind bringing radioactive material into Eureka County from
11 the Atomic testing that was done.

12 MS. JOHNSON: They're still, as in the newspaper
13 today, looking for people who were exposed.

14 MR. FIORENZI: Yeah.

15 MS. JOHNSON: To get cancer screenings, and stuff.

16 The Japanese disaster, which has occurred in the
17 past couple of months regarding the potential melt down of
18 the nuclear power plants has made a lot of people think again
19 about nuclear power and about the storage of nuclear waste.
20 At the same time, the Obama administration is on a path to
21 close out the Yucca Mountain Project and eliminate all
22 funding for the project. At the same time, some people in
23 Congress are trying to revive Yucca Mountain. What's your
24 view of what's happening and the future?

25 MR. FIORENZI: Well, I'm kind of glad that the

1 Yucca Mountain itself is dead, because I, if something goes
2 wrong underground, I don't think they were going to be able
3 to get in there and take care of it once it goes bad. After
4 that Japanese stuff, that was all on the surface, and they
5 can't manage it, so I don't know how they're going to manage
6 all this stuff that's underground.

7 MS. JOHNSON: And, it's so long-lived, too.

8 MR. FIORENZI: Right.

9 MS. JOHNSON: It goes on for--beyond our thinking,
10 really.

11 MR. FIORENZI: Right.

12 MS. JOHNSON: Let's move on to the next question.

13 When you were underground touring the Yucca
14 Mountain experimental facility, there was a heater test and
15 could you talk about the heater test and what you saw and
16 what they were trying to do?

17 MR. FIORENZI: They had a, when we were underground
18 there, they had a, I think they called it an alcove, I guess
19 it was a tunnel the size of what they were going to use to
20 store their radioactive waste in, and they had some type of a
21 heater in it and they were heating up the rock to see what
22 the reaction would be to the rock. And, this picture that
23 I'm looking at here is a digital readout, and it's got the
24 temperature of the canister and how much money they spent on
25 it, and how many hours the heaters worked, and total amount

1 of electricity used, I believe, on the heater. It was pretty
2 impressive to look at. A lot of work and time went into it.

3 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, Lenny, for your time.

4 (Whereupon, the interview with Mr. Fiorenzi was
5 concluded.)

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TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing has been transcribed by me to the best of my ability, and constitutes a true and accurate transcript of the mechanically recorded proceedings in the above matter.

Dated at Aurora, Colorado, this 23rd day of June, 2011.

s/s Mary Chevalier

Mary Chevalier
Federal Reporting Service, Inc.
17454 East Asbury Place
Aurora, Colorado 80013
(303) 751-2777