

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH CARRUTHERS

BY ABBY JOHNSON

EUREKA COUNTY

LESSONS LEARNED VIDEO PROJECT

held in

CRESCENT VALLEY, NEVADA

April 21, 2011

1 MS. CLANCY: This is Gwen Clancy. I'll be  
2 videotaping this interview. It's April 21, 2011, and we are  
3 in Crescent Valley, Nevada. Okay, Abby?

4 MS. JOHNSON: I'm Abby Johnson, the Nuclear Waste  
5 Advisor for Eureka County. We're taping in Crescent Valley,  
6 Nevada today for the Eureka County Lessons Learned Video  
7 Project. And, we are interviewing Joseph Carruthers.

8 Joseph, when did you first come to Crescent Valley  
9 and why?

10 MR. CARRUTHERS: Roughly, about 17 years ago. I  
11 had lived in the Virginia City highlands before that time,  
12 and for various reasons, had decided to locate and had always  
13 wanted to live out more in the outback in Nevada, and had  
14 been in this area at one time and gone to the hot springs and  
15 had seen some of the terrain and the other country around  
16 here, and had come across an article or an ad for some  
17 property that was for sale. So, had explored that and got  
18 into it, and that's how it started.

19 MS. JOHNSON: Can you look at the map and show us a  
20 little bit about where Crescent Valley is, and where we are  
21 on the map?

22 MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. Crescent Valley itself, on  
23 this map, here's Interstate 80, is roughly 20 miles south  
24 into the Valley, and the town itself is located right here.  
25 I, myself, I live across the Valley at the base of the Dry

1 Hills roughly in this area.

2 MS. JOHNSON: Joseph, so how did you first learn  
3 about the Yucca Mountain Project?

4 MR. CARRUTHERS: That was actually when I was in  
5 the Reno area, and at that time, I was showing in art  
6 galleries and things, and I had heard a little bit about it,  
7 but at that time, I met someone who was from Citizen Alert.  
8 And, that's how I really first came across it.

9 MS. JOHNSON: And, then, when you were living here  
10 in Crescent Valley, when did you first hear that the rail  
11 line might go through Crescent Valley?

12 MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't recall the exact moment  
13 that I heard about it. I think Susan had probably come home  
14 and told me something about it, at that time, Susan Fye.  
15 And, at that point, yeah, I started really thinking about  
16 what should be done.

17 MS. JOHNSON: So, can you talk a little bit about  
18 your reaction to the government's plan to build a rail line  
19 through Crescent Valley?

20 MR. CARRUTHERS: Okay. You know, on my personal  
21 level, I really didn't have any positive thoughts for the  
22 most part on it. It seemed like a lot of money to be  
23 spending of taxpayers' money. It seemed like a very risky  
24 thing to be doing, the more I was looking into it, because I  
25 had heard about the trucks and trains for transportation over

1 a very large period of time, 35 plus years. And, so, yeah, I  
2 had definite concerns.

3 MS. JOHNSON: And, then, I think I met you at the  
4 time that the Department of Energy had started to release its  
5 Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the whole project,  
6 including the rail line, but also the repository itself, and  
7 we had some informational meetings up here, that kind of  
8 thing. Can you talk about what you recall from that period  
9 before the EIS hearing took place, and what your involvement  
10 was?

11 MR. CARRUTHERS: My approach was on it, after I had  
12 heard about what plans were being implemented, was to try to  
13 find out where the community was at on it. I obviously, and  
14 my personal opinion was against it, but I felt the community  
15 had a voice or say in it, too, before I stepped forward any  
16 further with anything.

17 I had gone over near the post office and set up a  
18 table with two clipboards, trying to find out how many of the  
19 people in the community would want this rail line to come  
20 through, and the ones who would not. And, fortunately,  
21 overwhelmingly people were opposed to the project. At that  
22 point, realizing that, I went ahead and took further steps to  
23 form a committee to try to tackle the problem.

24 MS. JOHNSON: So, that was the Beowawe/Crescent  
25 Valley Nuclear Waste Awareness Committee?

1           MR. CARRUTHERS: That is correct, yes. Yes, we had  
2 finally come up with a name, it's a bit of a mouthful, but  
3 yes, that is correct.

4           MS. JOHNSON: And, then, I know that leading up to  
5 the December, 1999 Department of Energy hearing, which took  
6 place right in this room, you and the committee were involved  
7 in some public awareness activities. You did some signs and  
8 different kinds of things. Can you talk about that?

9           MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. I felt that if the  
10 Department of Energy was going to be coming here and we were  
11 having a meeting, I wanted them, before they reached the town  
12 of Crescent Valley, to have some sort of an idea of where we  
13 were standing. And, so, at that point, I had gathered some  
14 other folks together and we put signs together with various  
15 statements, and that was starting up near Beowawe, and we  
16 posted those from about Beowawe to the Town of Crescent  
17 Valley.

18           MS. JOHNSON: We hear you had Bob Halstead, the  
19 Transportation Advisor, and one of the things he recalled  
20 from the meeting was seeing one of your signs.

21           MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

22           MS. JOHNSON: I believe it was a two-headed miner,  
23 is what he said.

24           MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

25           MS. JOHNSON: And, then, getting to the hearing

1    itself, I recall that it was a very long day, and this was  
2    standing room only.  What do you recall from the day itself?

3           MR. CARRUTHERS:  Well, I myself, I was very  
4    pleased.  I was a bit taken aback, due to the demographics  
5    and the politics and things of the particular, you know, area  
6    and all.  I didn't really know what to expect, but I was very  
7    pleased with how many people showed up, and how many people  
8    were concerned to express their viewpoints.

9           MS. JOHNSON:  Let's move on to the next question.  
10           Joseph, the people that showed up at the meeting,  
11    what were they like?  Where were they from?

12           MR. CARRUTHERS:  Well, mostly local people within,  
13    you know, a fairly large circumference, mileage-wise, but  
14    mostly people who live here, retired people who are on fixed  
15    incomes, families and ranching.  So, the ranchers and also  
16    miners, because of our large gold mines, and people of course  
17    employed in those areas.

18           MS. JOHNSON:  Let's move on to the next question.  
19           Can you show on the map where the rail line was  
20    proposed to go?

21           MR. CARRUTHERS:  Yes.  Up here is Interstate 80,  
22    and along 80 here near this 80, and off down near Beowawe,  
23    which is located right here, there is an existing rail line  
24    that goes this way.  That rail line was supposed to be a spur  
25    that was to come off roughly near Beowawe about right here,

1 head south towards the Town of Crescent Valley, roughly about  
2 a mile and a half outside of town, and would continue south  
3 heading towards Carico Lake Valley, which is down this area,  
4 and would continue on from there to either Monitor or Smokey  
5 Valley, and then on to Yucca Mountain.

6 MS. JOHNSON: Now, wouldn't that rail line,  
7 wouldn't that cross some of the big mining projects that are  
8 going on in Crescent Valley?

9 MR. CARRUTHERS: That is absolutely correct, yes.  
10 Down south here just a little ways, a few miles, is the large  
11 Cortez Placer Dome Operation that Barrick now operates. But,  
12 yeah, that would definitely would have disrupted their  
13 operation because they're all through the outlining valley  
14 down in here, and have many different things going on. So,  
15 yes, it would definitely be a disturbance to their operation.

16 MS. JOHNSON: And, then, as I recall, there's  
17 people who live within the town site of Crescent Valley, and  
18 then people like you that kind of live a little bit farther  
19 to the east.

20 MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

21 MS. JOHNSON: Can you talk about the--I recall  
22 there was some conversation about disruption of activities in  
23 the Valley if the rail line would go through?

24 MR. CARRUTHERS: Sure. There would be a variety of  
25 different things that would come about that would disturb or

1 alter people's way of life. Crescent Valley itself, anyone  
2 who owned property anywhere near this area, or in the town  
3 itself, because of the close proximity of only a mile and a  
4 half, or even closer in some cases, obviously their property  
5 values would devalue.

6           Also, even in my case, say, because I live out here  
7 in the Dry Hills and Crescent Valley is here, there's a road  
8 that goes from here to town, of course if I were to go to  
9 town, I would be sitting and waiting probably on the rail  
10 line, in pretty close proximity to the waste itself that  
11 would be sitting on the trains. But, anyone else, ranchers  
12 or anyone else it would effect, too, because they have  
13 grazing, they lease land for grazing throughout all these  
14 areas. So, any of these areas all the way to Yucca Mountain  
15 would be affected, and the ranchers would feel the impact in  
16 a big way.

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

18           Joseph, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
19 was a very large document.

20           MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, indeed.

21           MS. JOHNSON: And, this is just one volume of it.

22           MR. CARRUTHERS: Right.

23           MS. JOHNSON: When you reviewed the document, what  
24 did you find and what didn't you find?

25           MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, you know, for one, yes, like



1 you said, it's one of many, you know, and as you can see--you  
2 know, like I said, one of many, that's a lot of expense and  
3 printing and everything else for the taxpayer. But, the  
4 thing that concerned me, getting back to the issue, is as I  
5 was reading this, the transportation issue in particular  
6 really disturbed me, what I was finding, how little was fully  
7 addressed, the amount of waste that was going to be shipped  
8 over a large period of time, not just by rail, but on the  
9 highway and interstate systems, meaning that you're sitting  
10 in San Francisco or you're sitting in Chicago, wherever you  
11 may be on the interstate, in rush hour traffic, one of my  
12 questions is well, how comfortable would anyone be sitting by  
13 a semi with a huge cask of spent nuclear fuel in it.

14           Also, was addressing, because of, you know, in the  
15 last few years with terrorism on the rise, and in some of the  
16 meetings, was asking about cask safety. Now, they had done a  
17 lot of research and studying to try to make the casks safe,  
18 but the one question that was raised, and I also had raised  
19 it I believe at the time, because of terrorism, what if  
20 someone did have, let's say, some sort of device they could  
21 launch a rocket towards one of the casks, could it be  
22 penetrated? And, the answer was yes on that.

23           So, I felt right away, how could this possibly be  
24 safe and, you know, in any numerous amount of scenarios, in  
25 wrecks or anything else, but that in particular did raise a

1 large question, because terrorism isn't just an external  
2 problem. We have terrorism within our own country of people  
3 who are dissatisfied with the government.

4 MS. JOHNSON: And, that was before 911?

5 MR. CARRUTHERS: And, that was before 911, that's  
6 right.

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

9 Joseph, one of the Environmental Impact Statement  
10 meetings was in Las Vegas, and I was at that meeting. But, I  
11 believe that you were participating remotely from Elko. Do  
12 you recall that experience?

13 MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. When I was in the meeting,  
14 the EIS meeting in Elko that they held, I did speak there.  
15 It was fairly well attended, and what I had read was mostly  
16 the standing governor at the time, Kenny Guinn's comments  
17 that he had written. And, I had also, towards the end of  
18 reading that, I had put in some comments of my own, which I  
19 was shut down basically, and the next speaker was brought up  
20 at that time.

21 MS. JOHNSON: How did that make you feel?

22 MR. CARRUTHERS: I felt a bit isolated, you know, I  
23 felt a part of the process, you know, I didn't really feel it  
24 was fair. You know, I felt I had something to say, and when  
25 I had something to say, I was shut down, so not very

1 comfortable.

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

3 So, when you were talking to the Department of  
4 Energy in Elko, other than talking about what Governor  
5 Guinn's position was, what did you say?

6 MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, the comment that I had made  
7 was from something I had overheard, and some other various  
8 comments I had heard from people from out of state. And,  
9 that basically came down to one comment that I had overheard,  
10 was basically if we throw enough money at this project in  
11 Nevada, she will spread her wings, and that really hit me  
12 kind of hard. I thought it was rather harsh and uncaring,  
13 and I've got to admit I took a bit of offense by it. And,  
14 that's why I brought that up at the EIS and explained it.  
15 But, as soon as I did that, that's when I was cut off.

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

17 In the spring of 1999, the Nuclear Regulatory  
18 Commission held a public meeting in Beatty because they were  
19 proposing to change the radiation standards that would apply  
20 to the Yucca Mountain Project.

21 MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

22 MS. JOHNSON: And, I know you attended that  
23 meeting. Can you tell me about that meeting and about your  
24 trip down south?

25 MR. CARRUTHERS:

1 MS. JOHNSON: And, I know you attended that  
2 meeting. Can you tell me about that meeting and about your  
3 trip down south?

4 MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah. It was, you know, a bit of  
5 a journey, one I felt important, because it was so close to  
6 the site. And, I know also that a lot of people most likely  
7 from that area are supportive because it would bring them  
8 jobs and income. But, at the same time, I felt that people  
9 ought to know the position of the people up north, that we do  
10 not support it.

11 So, I did add comments at that time. I think one  
12 of them was mistaken because when I did read the comments  
13 after they came out, there was some comment I guess I'm  
14 setting the record straight, something about me saying  
15 something about nuclear well. I have no idea what that was.  
16 Maybe it didn't come out right. But, anyway, the meeting was  
17 okay. I didn't feel it was as well attended or as much  
18 support as they had had up north here in Crescent Valley.

19 So, I felt I wanted to move a little bit beyond  
20 just that meeting. After the trip, I had gone down to  
21 Tonopah, which is also near the site, you know, and the  
22 bombing range down there where a lot of nuclear tests had  
23 been conducted. I had first gone out near the post office  
24 and was asking some people, you know, about how they felt  
25 about it and different things, and got pro and con on that.

1           After that, I went down to the Tonopah High School,  
2 and was given an opportunity to speak in one of the  
3 classrooms. That went fairly well in the sense that a lot of  
4 people understood what I was presenting, you know, and the  
5 position and the problems that could arise from such a  
6 project. Of course, there were a couple of individuals who  
7 were pro on the project, because I feel that probably their  
8 family or someone was involved. But, all in all, I must say  
9 it went really well.

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

11           Joseph, you know that throughout all of this,  
12 Eureka County did not take a formal position on the Yucca  
13 Mountain Project?

14           MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

15           MS. JOHNSON: What's your opinion of that?

16           MR. CARRUTHERS: My personal opinion is I felt it  
17 was in the best interest of the County to be opposed to it.  
18 I know the DOE was offering them a large sum of money, if I'm  
19 not mistaken, a million plus dollars perhaps to start, I  
20 could be wrong, but I believe that's the figure. And, I  
21 couldn't really figure out why they wouldn't take more of a  
22 stand, you know, pro or con on it.

23           I didn't really see long-term physically, or any  
24 other way, that it would be beneficial to the County, and I'm  
25 still a bit mystified by them not taking a stand on it.

1           I felt that as the state and our governor had taken  
2 a stand and was opposed to it, beings that we're all one team  
3 and we're one state, they should have taken a position to be  
4 opposed to it. I still hope that they will come to that  
5 conclusion at some point.

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

7           We're not quite sure what the future of Yucca  
8 Mountain will bring, and if the project is revived, there is  
9 a possibility that the Carlin rail corridor through Crescent  
10 Valley could become again a possibility, a real possibility.  
11 What would your reaction be to that, and what would you do?

12          MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, once again, I would have to  
13 get the committee active again, you know, both that and full  
14 action. I'd also want to start pulling outside resources,  
15 the media, activist groups, awareness groups throughout the  
16 country, because this isn't just a local problem here. This  
17 will affect any state that has a nuclear facility or has ways  
18 or has trains or on rail and highway systems, because all  
19 that spent nuclear fuel will be on the road and rail lines  
20 for years to come.

21          MS. JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

22          MR. CARRUTHERS: You're welcome.

23          Well, here we are, and it's April 2011, and this  
24 has been going on for some time, and many things have shifted  
25 and changed along the way, and the political landscape, as we

1 know, in this country changes radically as well. And, with  
2 the ongoing energy problems and crisis and need for new  
3 energy, there's talk of building more plants, which will  
4 generate more waste, which means more storage and  
5 transportation and costs and all of this. So, this is not a  
6 problem that's going away. We need to find alternative ways  
7 to create energy, whether solar or wind or any other numerous  
8 amount of things that we can work on.

9           In my opinion, we need to go a different route, and  
10 because the politics at the time are most likely going to  
11 start pushing for more plants, so I'm hoping there will be  
12 more public awareness to shift away from that.

13                   (End of interview with Joe Carruthers.)

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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 this matter.

Dated at Aurora, Colorado, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2011.

s/ Mary Chevalier  
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