

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN JEFFERSON

July 5, 2013

1 PROCEEDINGS, JULY 5, 2013:

2 MR. BARR: This is Jim Barr. It's July 5th, 2013.
3 I'm northwest of Central City, interviewing John Jefferson.
4 And, Mr. Jefferson, do you want to introduce yourself and
5 kind of give a little background on you and what you have
6 done and that sort of thing?

7 MR. JEFFERSON: Well, I was born and raised on
8 this farm except for two years with Uncle Sam. That's
9 another interesting thing, how I ended up being where I was
10 at. But my parents were Frank Jefferson and Anna Jefferson.
11 And they were -- my mother was Danish. Her folks came from
12 Denmark. And my dad was English. He was from England. And
13 they -- how they got together is kind of interesting. And I
14 don't know if we want to get into the details of that
15 because it was very interesting. I had a lot of letters
16 that they wrote to each other, stuff like that. Made it
17 real interesting.

18 MR. BARR: Very good. Did they meet here in
19 Nebraska or somewhere else?

20 MR. JEFFERSON: Yes, they met here in Nebraska.
21 And dad was born up at Madison County and then I don't know
22 how they -- I can't remember just exactly how they come
23 there to get together, but they did. Anyway, they were
24 married a little over a year and then I was born, come
25 along. And I have two sisters and two brothers -- or the

1 two brothers, John and Dale is my other brother, and then
2 Joanne and Lola is our other family.

3 I was always interested in water. Something about
4 water and land was the bread and butter for this nation. I
5 feel that we've got to take care of it. I've got to stop
6 and think a little bit about what I'm going to say.

7 MR. BARR: Sure.

8 MR. JEFFERSON: But I was on the Soil Conservation
9 Board and we weren't doing anything, like I said earlier.
10 We weren't accomplishing anything and so I think Dayle
11 Williamson and Herman Link, from out around Sodtown I
12 believe Herman Link was, and we all got together kind of and
13 decided that we had to do something. And, of course, then
14 one thing led to another. I kind of backed out just a
15 little because I was farming and I was milking cows, feeding
16 hogs and irrigating all at the same time and I had to kind
17 of back out just a little because I was busy as all get out.
18 And I don't know how I got the work done nowadays. I really
19 don't.

20 But, anyway, they formulated an NRD and there was
21 quite a bit of question on how many NRDs we should have.
22 And it wasn't exactly an easy thing, especially down in the
23 southeastern part of the state. Those soil conservation
24 districts had a lot of investment in equipment and they had
25 a lot -- it was a little bit upset over just exactly whether

1 we should absorb each other or whatever. And after --
2 finally they realized that we were in the same shape as they
3 were in, you know, but we weren't able to get the money like
4 they were. I don't know how they done it, but they did.
5 Had revenue for getting things done. They had terraces, a
6 lot of terraces and they had equipment to put up terraces,
7 which was really of value in that area.

8 MR. BARR: What sort of projects did your
9 conservation district try to do?

10 MR. JEFFERSON: Well, our conservation district,
11 we had the gopher machine and the tree planter. That was
12 basically the two main things we had. The gopher machine
13 was, we had a lot of gophers in alfalfa fields and we had to
14 kind of imagine that. We had different types of bait we
15 used. It was kind of a planter, looked like just a single
16 row corn planter, only we had a tube that went down
17 underground and the tube was probably four feet long or
18 maybe even longer than that. But we did have trouble with
19 it because guys would want to turn with the thing in the
20 ground and you can't -- that didn't work. And we had to
21 keep pretty close watch on it.

22 MR. BARR: When they formed the natural resource
23 district, were you one of the early board members?

24 MR. JEFFERSON: I was one of the first board
25 members. And we had a gentleman in the area here. What was

1 his name? He was a working fool. But for some reason or
2 other -- Alfred Bader was his name. And he always talked
3 about his money and I told him, well, listen, Alfred, tell
4 you what. I know where there's a guy you could adopt. And
5 he just -- he didn't go for that at all. And I don't blame
6 him. But Alfred was -- he kept me in his organization.
7 He -- every meeting we had for organizing things like that,
8 why I ended up being vice chairman of the NRD and -- which I
9 was for a while. And then a man by the name of Herman Link
10 over at Sodtown, he was out checking his center pivot and
11 died of a heart attack. And, boy, I had to learn about my
12 Robert Rules. I'll tell you that caught me pretty much
13 shorthanded, and so I was then on the NRD Central Platte.
14 We hassled about the name of Central Platte. But here again
15 a little giving and taking you would accomplish something,
16 you know. You had to think positive, but yet on the other
17 hand you want to think about the negative things, too.

18 I think I was chairman for eight or nine years and
19 a chairman can only function about so long. I mean, any
20 organization, the -- you run out of things, you run out of
21 ideas, you run out of a whole bunch of -- and you run out of
22 zest.

23 MR. BARR: Yeah.

24 MR. JEFFERSON: And so I demoted myself. The
25 organization in the NRD was rules and regulations and I

1 forget just -- that's been a long time ago. But, anyway, I
2 formulated this committee and they sat down and wrote out
3 some rules and regulations. And then that took me off the
4 board, which I was struggling with. You know, you kind of
5 got light-headed and you just kind of floated around. But
6 they always -- you know, some of the guys like Carl Gangwish
7 and George Wittison and -- there was George Wiser, but he's
8 dead now. Goodness sakes, I could name quite a few of them.
9 Have to stop and think. But they were really helping me
10 out. I mean, you know, they gave me the backbone that I
11 needed. And I was then chairman for -- or I was on the NRD
12 for about eight or nine years, or maybe longer than that.
13 It was longer than that. It had to be longer than that.

14 Anyway, a gentleman ran against me and he was an
15 environmental gentleman which I have to respect for. But
16 all he would do is draw pictures at board meetings and they
17 didn't think too much of that. And they came back and said,
18 John, we'd like to have you back on the NRD board. And I
19 said, no, let's start a young gentleman in this deal. I
20 have served my time. I said, let's get a young fellow
21 started. And so they said, well, who do you have for
22 suggestions? I say, Kize, what was his name? (It) might
23 have been Ed, Ed Kize. Anyway, the thing that is
24 interesting about it is his dad, Ed Kize called me one night
25 and talked me into running on the soil conservation board

1 years ago and so I thought, well --

2 MR. BARR: Here, return the favor.

3 MR. JEFFERSON: -- I'll return the favor. And
4 he's doing a really good job. Ed is doing a real good job
5 on the NRD board. And I backed out. And then I had a gal,
6 John, you need to be on the county board. I say, I just --
7 I don't know as I need that job. And she was really
8 persistent about it. In fact, the night of the election
9 after the first of the year, she called and she says, John,
10 the courthouse will be open so you can register. And I
11 says, well, that's kind of putting it to me good. And so
12 that's what she -- here I am, still a county supervisor. I
13 was chairman for a couple of years. We had a gentleman who
14 was up -- was chairman and I don't know, he had problems
15 with money or I do not know. But, anyway, he hung himself.
16 And so I had to take over his position. And Herman Should
17 was his name, I believe. Anyway, I took over. They gave me
18 that job and I had it for about two years, and currently,
19 why, a man by the name of Yugert up at Grand Island, Roger
20 Yugert.

21 MR. BARR: Back on the NRD you had some real
22 interesting times there; I take it, during the regulations
23 and all of that.

24 MR. JEFFERSON: Goodness sakes.

25 MR. BARR: Anything in particular you'd like to

1 mention? Was there some significant opposition? I know you
2 had a board member that was a little disruptive at some
3 point.

4 MR. JEFFERSON: Very much so, very much so.

5 MR. BARR: Was that about the same time?

6 MR. JEFFERSON: It was in that same time. I --
7 here again, you know, you've got to be a man of give and
8 take. I mean, you've got to be able to use your head just a
9 little bit and a little common sense to function in an
10 organization. And it was a challenge. I never looked back.
11 I felt like we accomplished as much as we can. And they say
12 never look back, always look forward. That's what I tried
13 to do.

14 MR. BARR: It seems like the river basin above
15 Grand Island had a lot more intense problems than the river
16 and the basin downstream where you live. Do you have any
17 things in particular about this downstream section that was
18 different or particular that you'd like to mention?

19 MR. JEFFERSON: There was a lot of -- in the
20 uplands needed to be some dams put in to stop the silting or
21 washing and the water come down in a big gusher, when you
22 get a big, heavy rain, and it would flood the town out. It
23 would get -- the town would be underwater. So that was a
24 thing that was a problem. And then I say to Ron (Bishop)
25 and Milt (Moravec), I says, what's the chance of making a

1 bypass through Central City, south of Central City. And so
2 Ron and I and Milt went down on the north side of the Platte
3 River and we walked it. We actually got out and walked it
4 to see whether or not there was a way we could get the water
5 to the Platte River, because the Platte River is pretty --
6 it's flat to begin with and you've got to go several miles
7 before you can get water into it. And this is what -- now
8 the bypass is west of Central City about five miles. And we
9 had to -- what the heck they call themselves. Anyway, we
10 had to leave so much water in the Wood River project. And
11 Wood River come through Central City and here again it
12 flooded out and everything. So with this bypass and it
13 really -- the first year, why, I had a guy that says it's
14 never going to work. John, why do you even want to spend
15 the money on doing something like that? I says, well, you
16 watch and see. It's going to work because I talked to the
17 engineering of it and I had kind of an idea. I had to
18 visualize it, is what it amounted to.

19 And so we sat down and we -- I read the elevations
20 of it, you know, tried to get, you know, a pretty good idea.
21 And we worked out a pretty good deal there. It really works
22 nice. And the first year we had, it run bank full and it
23 never got to Central City like everybody thought it was
24 going to get to. And I got a couple guys right now that
25 will vouch for me. They says, you should make that named

1 Jefferson, your diversion. I say, no, no, no, no, no. I
2 don't want any more names on anything than needs to be.
3 They may do that after I'm dead but I'm not going to go for
4 it now.

5 MR. BARR: Sure.

6 MR. JEFFERSON: It really worked great. And then
7 I was off the Central Platte NRD but they were having
8 problems at Grand Island. I say, well, why don't -- I can't
9 remember who I talked to. It might have been Dick --

10 MR. BARR: Mercer?

11 MR. JEFFERSON: Dick Mercer, that's who it was.
12 And I says, why don't you try and work a diversion in that
13 Grand Island area and get that -- I never did get involved
14 in it because I had enough to do with my county supervisor
15 job. So, anyway, that's -- and today, why, I'm getting to
16 where I hate to say this, but probably -- I got Parkinson's
17 and it's just gotten to where I am a handicapped guy. I got
18 a different car than what I had because it's a lot easier to
19 get in and out of it. And so it -- my life has been
20 interesting. I'm 82 plus young. I'm not old, I'm young.
21 And I always say every morning when my feet hit the floor, I
22 says, hey, hey, hey, I got another day. And so that's the
23 way I live. Think positively and I don't know what more I
24 could add to it.

25 MR. BARR: Well, I was just going to ask you,

1 looking back on how the natural resource district, both the
2 Central and districts throughout the state have developed,
3 how did that work out in relation to what you might have
4 thought of as you were forming them? Have they come out the
5 way you would have thought, or better, worse, different?

6 MR. JEFFERSON: No, not really. They didn't come
7 out the way I figured they would. And it didn't make any
8 difference to me really. Interest in my own real close
9 area. But as far as the others, southeastern part of the
10 state, I guess maybe I mentioned it, was pretty well off and
11 they had a lot of equipment for terracing. And they didn't
12 go for it. It took a lot of -- they weren't very sure of
13 that. And -- but when it got to the state legislature to
14 vote on it, to have NRDs, what was the senator? Kremer.

15 MR. BARR: Kremer, right.

16 MR. JEFFERSON: Senator Maurice Kremer. And he
17 and I were kind of like buddy-buddy. He would call me and
18 I'd call him and, you know, he would ask questions of what
19 do I think, beings I was chairman of the NRD or soil
20 conservation, why I -- it came down to the day of the
21 voting. And we had a man by the name of -- anyway, I'll
22 probably think of it later on, but anyway Senator Kremer
23 came out of the chambers there and he says, John, I'm just
24 going to throw the towel in. I say, Senator, you worked on
25 this thing long enough, stay with it. I says, go back in

1 there and say we're going to go with it. And they took a
2 vote and we won by one or two votes. It passed by one or
3 two votes. Have to stick your neck out once in a while.
4 And so I says, Senator, you've been working on this a long
5 time. Don't throw the towel in now. Let's keep running and
6 going. We put a lot of time in it. I know he had put a lot
7 of time into it. And that's about basically what I have to
8 offer you.

9 MR. BARR: All right. Well, the other question
10 that I have -- you know, we have kind of thought about is,
11 past in Nebraska, and as you had mentioned earlier there had
12 been an effort to see if it would develop in other states.
13 And I guess I'm asking your opinion of why it may have
14 happened in Nebraska and what may be lacking in other states
15 that it didn't happen.

16 MR. JEFFERSON: I think it's more or less on the
17 form of government that the other states had. Some of them
18 had a two-party system where as Nebraska doesn't have that.
19 We have what you call --

20 MR. BARR: Unicameral?

21 MR. JEFFERSON: -- Unicameral. You help me think.
22 I know what it is. But, anyway, you know, the rest of the
23 states just didn't -- it just didn't seem like it would work
24 for them. Ron (Bishop) went to several different states
25 when they were having their conventions and had a program

1 lined up for them, or, you know, present a program for them,
2 for the guys in the other states. And I think it was about
3 four or five other states that he visited and he come back
4 and he says, John, I think it's a hopeless case. And I
5 says, well, that's a possibility. There are different
6 states have different ideas and they had the same darn
7 problem that we did. And they're still having problems.
8 They have flood problems and they have -- you know, it's one
9 of them things that is ongoing. That is for the next
10 generation to figure out. So, got any other questions?

11 MR. BARR: Well, I don't know if -- one thing that
12 has struck me is from the downstream side of the Central
13 Platte, it's kind of an urban river corridor. And from
14 Grand Island up it's a lot of irrigation and stream flow
15 problems. The corridor from Grand Island to Columbus is
16 kind of different. Do you want to make any comments about
17 how it is and what you see as maybe in the future of this
18 corridor?

19 MR. JEFFERSON: Well, groundwater, you know, has
20 nitrate problems. And we had a nitrate program for that.
21 The underground water flows with -- parallel to the river.
22 That I found out. I had -- what was the name of that
23 gentleman that came from Lincoln?

24 MR. BARR: Vince Dreeszen?

25 MR. JEFFERSON: Yes, but there was -- Delores,

1 help me out. Who was that guy that comes out here?

2 MR. BARR: Deon Axtell?

3 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah, he was in on that, too.

4 DELORES: With that water project?

5 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah. Anyway, he was a sharp man.

6 I mean, he was on top of the --

7 DELORES: The one with the University?

8 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah. He was on top of it. And

9 his wife was in the same field, worked in the same field.

10 MR. BARR: Roy Spalding?

11 MR. JEFFERSON: Huh?

12 MR. BARR: Roy Spalding?

13 MR. JEFFERSON: Roy Spalding, you're right. And
14 he was on top of everything. He come out here and he says,
15 John, I'd like to have a couple, three acres. And I say,
16 well, didn't talk to the wife which I probably got in kind
17 of high water on that as it was her garden spot. I
18 volunteered that spot. And he comes out here and I'll tell
19 you, they put down wells like you can't believe different
20 levels. They had little squeeze pumps and they had a tube
21 every foot come up to the surface. And it would take the
22 level where the most nitrate was at and where -- and we got
23 to use the ethanol as a carbon. Ethanol is a carbon that
24 feeds on microorganisms or oxygen. And they injected
25 ethanol for I don't know how many years and then they

1 decided maybe we could use some other source. So they tried
2 to use vinegar. That didn't work. Vinegar had too much
3 acid in it or something and it didn't work too well. But we
4 had a system here, you go on the computer. You had a spoke-
5 like wheel and every other spoke was a well. And in the
6 other side of the -- or the other end of the spoke he was
7 injecting and the other side he was taking it out. And this
8 worked back and forth. And I thought maybe it would work
9 down here at Central City. But I couldn't make any headway
10 with the city council. They was going to have to invest
11 some money and, well, I could understand. There was
12 probably a reason why it wasn't. They weren't as
13 knowledgeable about what was going on. But it did go down
14 to Wahoo. They pulled it out and they went down to Wahoo.
15 And I don't know how it is now. I don't know whether it's
16 in existence. I do not know. But that's where --

17 MR. BARR: What was the general finding from that
18 study?

19 MR. JEFFERSON: Well, you know, my parts per
20 million was 40 parts per million here and they still are,
21 because I got too much stuff above me, and I got reverse
22 osmosis and I got enough equipment to try to get the nitrate
23 out of it if I can. But, anyway, what was I talking about?
24 I lost my train of thought.

25 MR. BARR: The study that Roy Spalding did and

1 what they might have found out.

2 MR. JEFFERSON: Well, you know, it was -- mine was
3 40 parts per million and they could lower it down to zero
4 within about three to five days. It really worked good, it
5 really did. And it surprised me. I just couldn't believe
6 that it would do that. But it did. As a fact of the
7 matter, I think I've got a complete analysis of everything
8 they done right down here on the bottom shelf. It's a book
9 about half to three-quarters of an inch thick. In some ways
10 you've got to be -- Dr. Roy Spalding, he had an attorney
11 type, he would write it up. And you've got to -- you know,
12 they use a different language than the rest of us do. Not
13 that they -- nothing against them, but anyway I should get
14 that out and let you look at it.

15 MR. BARR: Well, I don't want to make this too
16 long, but if there's anything else you wanted to mention
17 about NRDs or anything in particular, conservation, anything
18 -- how is conservation being conducted today versus 50 years
19 ago or anything like that.

20 MR. JEFFERSON: There's no comparison. And we
21 hired -- me and about five other gentlemen hired Ron Bishop.
22 I don't know if they ever told you how they did that, but we
23 had quite a few applications. And we started interviewing
24 them, gee whiz, probably around 6:30, seven o'clock, and we
25 hired Ron in Grand island at the federal building. It's

1 tore down now. We hired him at about three o'clock in the
2 morning. Boy, my eyeballs were sagging.

3 MR. BARR: Sure.

4 MR. JEFFERSON: But, anyway, we hired Ron. And
5 Duane Chamberlain, he had a voice that just rattled, you
6 know. And he was the one that recommended Ron. He was down
7 there at Omaha at the --

8 MR. BARR: Papio?

9 MR. JEFFERSON: -- Papio, yep, and he was out
10 there and we hired him from there. I don't think we ever
11 made a mistake.

12 MR. BARR: Well, that lasted quite a while. Just
13 last week was his last day, I think.

14 MR. JEFFERSON: I know. I was up there. I didn't
15 get to the banquet but I got there a couple other times.
16 And Ron and I kind of grew up together. Let's put it that
17 way. He had a way of -- we had -- in Merrick County we had
18 some guys up in the northeast part of the county and they --
19 if you get the right guy, the rest are golden. It's just --
20 I don't know why it is, and I told Ron, I says, now you're
21 kind of young. And I says, are you sure you're going to be
22 able to handle them guys? Because they are pretty
23 persistent, because I dealt with them before. And I don't
24 know whether I said, you're kind of wet behind the ears,
25 Ron, and I says, I don't know if you -- you think you can

1 handle it? He says, I'll be able to work it out. And I
2 say, well, that's what I want to hear. And so we have made
3 several trips.

4 The Mid-State project was going on about that
5 time, too. And him and I went down, or went to Washington,
6 D.C., and told them to, what they called it, deactivate the
7 Mid-State project, which was, I thought, myself, would be a
8 good project. But there were a lot of people that didn't
9 like the Mid-State project. And probably the biggest thing
10 about the reason why that was, was because it had been going
11 on an awful long time and nothing got really accomplished,
12 but here again maybe a lack of leadership. I don't know
13 why. I didn't attend the meetings and that's probably the
14 reason why. If you're interested in something like that,
15 you should attend those meetings and put your two cents'
16 worth in at least maybe. And so we went to Washington,
17 D.C., Ron and I did, and we discontinued the use of it or I
18 forget -- deactivated it or something. You're really
19 picking my brain here.

20 MR. BARR: Well, I don't want to --

21 MR. JEFFERSON: That's all right. It needs to be
22 picked once in a while.

23 MR. BARR: Okay.

24 MR. JEFFERSON: But I've had an interesting life.
25 And I've been interested in it all my life. You know, if

1 you don't take care of this land, this is the bread and
2 butter of this nation. You know, it started out with George
3 Washington or somebody. He said that the country that takes
4 care of its land is going to survive, and I believe that.
5 That's just the way it is. You know, times will change and,
6 man, I sold the farm to my son. And my dad, before -- split
7 the farm -- or we had a half-section here, and he gave the
8 south half to Dale and Joanne, that's my sister. And I had
9 -- I was with Lola. And, of course, right now the price of
10 land is unbelievable, ridiculous.

11 And I say, Lola, we got to get together and figure
12 out a price, what they want, because Brian, my boy, wants to
13 buy it. She says, that's the best news I heard in a long
14 time. And I says, well, I'll come up and we'll sit down and
15 figure out what we've got to have for it. And she says --
16 she just sat there, didn't do a thing. Finally, I asked
17 her, I says, well, what's your appraiser think it should be?
18 And I think it was \$800, wasn't it?

19 DELORES: \$800?

20 MR. JEFFERSON: For land.

21 DELORES: More than that. Not 800.

22 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah, it was way more than that.

23 Anyway --

24 DELORES: Land is going for 10,000 around here.

25 MR. JEFFERSON: But, anyway, it might have been

1 around \$10,000 an acre.

2 DELORES: No, no, it wasn't that.

3 MR. JEFFERSON: \$5,000, \$8,000, \$9,000.

4 DELORES: I think it was around \$5,000.

5 MR. JEFFERSON: Anyway, she says, well, that's the
6 starting point. I said, well, I don't know whether Brian
7 would go for that high a price. But I'll tell you what. I
8 says, this quarter we're on here, the north half of it is
9 real good ground. The south half of that quarter is nothing
10 but alkaline. So I took half the price of that -- and added
11 that to the other and that's what we ended up with.

12 MR. BARR: Yeah.

13 MR. JEFFERSON: And it was real agreeable with
14 Brian, with Roy, and it was agreeable to my kids. And so
15 we're on the way. Of course now it's going to take him 30
16 years to pay for it.

17 MR. BARR: Yeah.

18 MR. JEFFERSON: But, anyway, that's what we
19 accomplished.

20 MR. BARR: Well, unless there's something else, I
21 just thank you for doing this. Do you have anything else?
22 One more shot? That's fine.

23 MR. JEFFERSON: Sure don't think of anything.

24 MR. BARR: Okay.

25 MR. JEFFERSON: I can tell you a little bit of my

1 life with Uncle Sam.

2 MR. BARR: Sure, go ahead.

3 MR. JEFFERSON: Well, I went -- I waited for the
4 draft. And, you know, I went in in '53, in April of '53 and
5 got out a little over, about three days longer in '54. So I
6 took my basic training --

7 DELORES: Are you sure it wasn't '52 you went in?

8 MR. JEFFERSON: '52, you're right, thank you. And
9 I took my basic training down in Fort Leonard Wood,
10 Missouri, and they stuck me into mechanics school. I had a
11 little experience in mechanic work here at home and so I
12 took the mechanic work there in Fort Leonard Wood and they
13 sent me to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to continue working with
14 heavy equipment like tanks and armored vehicles and stuff
15 like that, tracks. And rumor got out that we had to
16 graduate and we would all be going to Korea. Well, when the
17 orders come down, my name and another man by the name of Roy
18 Strole of Sidney wasn't on there. What in the world were we
19 going to do? We kind of stood around and waited for the
20 other orders and finally they send us to a CBR, chemical
21 biological radiological warfare. And I didn't like that
22 school at all.

23 MR. BARR: Was that in Denver, by any chance, at
24 Lowry? No, probably not. You were in the Army. I went to
25 a CBR school at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, so I just

1 was curious.

2 MR. JEFFERSON: I think it was some place in
3 Texas, yeah. I ended up being in the atomic bomb and I
4 hoped to gosh that that thing is in North Korea right now.
5 I'll tell you, I'm kind of concerned. I watch the news very
6 close because here they are, flushing around with that
7 atomic bomb and nobody really realizes that an atomic bomb
8 will do.

9 MR. BARR: You were at a test --

10 MR. JEFFERSON: I was at a test. I was 4,000
11 yards from ground zero and --

12 MR. BARR: What was that like?

13 MR. JEFFERSON: No clothes, no protection. I
14 still have the wounds in my hands. I still have the wounds
15 in my arms. My blood vessels, I could even see the blood
16 vessels. I could tell when my heart was beating. I hope to
17 gosh that Mother Nature keeps these kids educated on what is
18 going on. I am concerned about it but, you know, I had a
19 gentleman -- I go to museums once in a while, on occasions,
20 and they have interesting programs. So I was down there. I
21 forget what it was about. Anyway, after the program was
22 over I had a gentleman come up to me, and it was Bill Marsh.
23 He had a doctor's degree and he come up to me and he says,
24 John, you're going to live for a long time. And I say, am
25 I? And he says, yeah, they are finding out that the

1 radiation you took you could live a lot longer.

2 MR. BARR: I'll be darned.

3 MR. JEFFERSON: I say, well, I don't know as I
4 want to live that much longer. You know, a man is worth
5 about so much and then after that it's downhill, you know.
6 My health now is kind of -- I take enough pills to -- I'll
7 tell you, a survivor. My pills are keeping me alive, I
8 think.

9 MR. BARR: Did they ever tell you what sort of
10 radiation amount you took in that test?

11 MR. JEFFERSON: That was kind of interesting.

12 DELORES: Tell him, when it was all over you
13 walked towards where it went off. You had a thing in your
14 pocket.

15 MR. JEFFERSON: We had dosimeters, you know, and
16 we started walking towards the bomb and we got to where we
17 had our Geiger counters with us and we were supposed to be
18 able to find our way, you know. If a Geiger counter started
19 getting too high, well, you better back off, and so we did.
20 We went along and watched it pretty close and all of a
21 sudden, man, oh, man, we were in a hot spot. I mean, it was
22 at the head of the Geiger counter. And we thought, well,
23 turn right around and go back the same way we were. And it
24 was just as bad.

25 MR. BARR: It was going with you, then?

1 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah, well, we found out the
2 fallout was coming down. That's what we come to the
3 conclusion.

4 MR. BARR: Did you have any special clothing?

5 MR. JEFFERSON: All I had was a pocket, had a
6 micro- -- of some sort.

7 MR. BARR: Dosimeter or something like that?

8 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah, but they confiscated that.
9 I think they knew we were overcharged with radiation. And
10 so -- and I couldn't ever prove it. I thought I would get
11 some compensation from the VA, but they denied me from the
12 day go. And I got a letter here -- where is that letter?
13 Is that underneath there? Is that under here? I got that
14 letter and I framed that son of a gun right now. Put it in
15 a frame. On that bottom shelf is a book that's about yeah
16 thick. They finally admitted --

17 MR. BARR: This letter confirms that you were a
18 participant of Operation Upshot-Knot Hill conducted at the
19 Nevada test site in 1953. And the enclosed scenario
20 provides a description of your participation in activities
21 based on available military records. And this is --

22 MR. JEFFERSON: They finally admitted it but, you
23 know --

24 MR. BARR: They said the maximum doses are much
25 higher than the doses that were estimated in previous

1 radiation dose assessments, provide the -- yeah.

2 MR. JEFFERSON: Down there on that bottom shelf,
3 Delores, is a real thick book on this water project out
4 here.

5 DELORES: There is?

6 MR. JEFFERSON: Yeah.

7 MR. BARR: Just back to this, it said the reported
8 doses are based on worst case parameters and assumptions,
9 not all of which --

10 MR. JEFFERSON: Who is the name of that guy that
11 was -- anyway, he was Muslim?

12 DELORES: What?

13 MR. JEFFERSON: Was it Muslim?

14 DELORES: What?

15 MR. JEFFERSON: That was with Dr. Roy Spalding.

16 DELORES: Con?

17 MR. JEFFERSON: Con, that's his name.

18 DELORES: Con, I don't know. That's what he went
19 by. He was from Pakistan.

20 MR. BARR: Okay.

21 DELORES: Most of them that came were from other
22 countries. We had China men. We had Japanese. We had some
23 from India. But Con was here the most.

24 MR. JEFFERSON: I was picking corn across the road
25 when that --

1 DELORES: No, that was a China man.

2 MR. JEFFERSON: Chinese, he was from China. No,
3 was it China? I guess it was. Anyway, I had a six-year-old
4 corn picker combine, 403, and I picked corn, you know. He
5 says, what are you doing here? I said, well, I'm combining
6 corn. I'm taking the corn off the cob. Well, he says, I'd
7 like to ride around with you some time. I says, you wait
8 until after dinner and I'll show you how we combine corn.
9 Show you where we came from. I kind of -- I thrown in a
10 couple of corn husks and hooks, put it in the combine. I
11 says, well, this is where you start. I handed him this
12 here. What is that? He had no idea what it was. And I
13 says, well, that's where we started from. I mean, we picked
14 corn by hand and we shelled it by hand. Or not by hand, but
15 by a sheller, spring tooth there. But, anyway, so he got a
16 course about corn from the day we started.

17 MR. BARR: Yep.

18 MR. JEFFERSON: Those people come over here and
19 they seem to think -- they see these big machines and big
20 combines and now we're worse than ever. I mean, my word,
21 this equipment you got nowadays, they got more in the air
22 than I got in the ground. But I sold all my equipment to
23 Brian and --

24 DELORES: Pile of junk.

25 MR. JEFFERSON: Huh? Now it's iron.

1 DELORES: No, it isn't iron. Some of it is usable
2 but you know how it is.

3 MR. BARR: Sure. Well, thank you for doing this.
4 Appreciate it.

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