

**FORREST S. CUCH**

**Salt Lake City, Utah**

**An Interview by**

**Danielle Endres**

**17 December 2008**

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**THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH FORREST S. CUCH ON DECEMBER 17, 2008. WE ARE CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW AT THE STATE DIVISION OF INDIAN AFFAIRS. THE INTERVIEWER IS DANIELLE ENDRES.**

**DE:** This is Danielle Endres and I'm interviewing Forrest Cuch. And we are at the Division of Indian—the State Division of Indian Affairs Office at his office.<sup>1</sup> And it is December 17, 2008. So can you give me your full name with the spelling please?

**FC:** Forrest S. Cuch, F-O-R-R-E-S-T. Initial S, my middle name. Last name is Cuch, C-U-C-H.

**DE:** Okay, and your current residence?

**FC:** 900 South—you mean address or just Salt Lake City [Utah]?

**DE:** Ah, Salt Lake City [Utah] is fine.

**FC:** Okay

**DE:** And then how long have you lived at your current residence?

**FC:** [edited draft states that Mr. Cuch has been in his current residence for two years.]

**FC:** Oh, I've been here eleven going on twelve years now. [This refers to length of time in Salt Lake City.]

**DE:** Okay, and your occupation.

**FC:** Director of Division of Indian Affairs for the State of Utah.

**DE:** Great. So in this section I'll ask some background information on you and that will—then we'll move to nuclear waste in the next section. So your birthplace and your birthday.

**FC:** Roosevelt, Utah, 1951.

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<sup>1</sup> Forrest Cuch is the director of the Utah State Division of Indian Affairs, which the Utah State legislature created in 1953 under the Indian Affairs Act. The Division serves as a liaison between Utah Indian Tribes and the state government.

**DE:** Okay, and then what brought you—and do you have any siblings?

**FC:** I have, let's see, a half brother, two half sisters and one full sister.

**DE:** Okay.

**FC:** Okay and then my father remarried, so I had a half brother and a half sister also.

**DE:** Okay.

**FC:** But we didn't live together, so this first group—five of us—were closer.

**DE:** Okay. And then what brought you to live in Salt Lake City [Utah]?

**FC:** This position with the state.

**DE:** So had you been in Roosevelt, Utah before this?

**FC:** I was teaching at Wasatch Academy. I was director—I was department head for Social Studies for three years and this job became available. And actually I was planning to semi-retire and we were living back east. We had a home on the east coast at the time. And so I was planning to semi-retire there. But I learned—I got a call and people encouraged me to take this job. So I ended up coming back out here.

**DE:** And you've been at this job eleven years then about?

**FC:** Going on eleven years. Actually, going on 12 years. I began this job in 1997.

**DE:** Long time to put off retirement. [laugh]

**FC:** It's fifteen years with my own tribe, and then six years with my ex-wife's tribe. And then I taught school three years, and then I've been here eleven going on twelve years.

**DE:** And what are—what's your tribe and your ex-wife's tribe?

**FC:** I'm a member of the Ute Tribe—Ute Indian Tribe headquartered in Ft. Duchesne, Utah in Northeastern Utah.

**DE:** Okay and your ex-wife?

**FC:** She was a Wampanoag from the Wampanoag Tribe in Aquinnah, Massachusetts.

**DE:** Okay, so is there anything that you want to share about yourself that you think might be relevant to your experiences with the nuclear issues that have occurred in this state?

**FC:** Well the important thing in my life has been that my folks were very smart. And they saw that I was struggling in the public schools, and so they sent me to a high school, a private high school, Wasatch Academy in Mt. Pleasant, Utah. And that has made a difference in my life.

**DE:** Great. So can you talk a little bit about your family life or any major events that you think have shaped who you are.

**FC:** Well, like I said, I had very smart parents. They raised me so that I could appreciate both worlds, the Indian world and the non-Indian world. They raised me in the—my father was a Sun Dancer.<sup>2</sup> So we were raised in the Ute-Shoshone Sun Dance tradition. We also attended sweat lodge so we were sweat lodge practitioners. And then I was also raised Roman Catholic Church—in the Roman Catholic Church. So it was like I had religion in Indian culture and religion in the dominate culture. So I had a chance to adapt at an early age to society. It's still a struggle though because when I entered the public school system I was still um—I was shocked. It was a different world there. Much harder, much more challenging than what I had been exposed to. So it was a struggle. But that's the most important thing that stands out.

**DE:** So can you explain a little bit more what it means to be a Sun Dancer?

**FC:** Yeah. That's probably our most sacred ceremony, and that is—it has different interpretations. So there's no one correct interpretation. For me it was always a dance of

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<sup>2</sup> The Sun Dance is a traditional ceremony that various American Indian tribes, including the Ute Tribe, practice. The Sun Dance, a 3-4 day fast without food and water, generally involves dancing, singing and drumming, and praying.

gratitude and appreciation for everything that I've received in my life. And it also teaches you to appreciate everything in the here and now. For example, it teaches you to appreciate the little things, which are really big things like water, fresh air, food, shelter and most of all family. And also your extended family, and your tribe, your people. And it helps you understand how we're a part of the world, part of the universe. So it's a very deep, very complex dance. But it's one that teaches appreciation and gratitude for the moment.

**DE:** Thank you, I'm going to pause.

[PAUSE]

**DE:** Alright, you also mentioned that you had a struggle when you got to the school system. Can you elaborate on that?

**FC:** Yeah, we—we learn differently. Indian kids process information differently. So... We don't pay attention to detail a lot of times so we need a lot of work in that area. And being placed in large classrooms is a real disadvantage to us. So my folks were smart and they placed me in a private school where we had small classrooms with very dedicated teachers. And they caught me up and I was able to graduate. And even though I scored low on my college entrance exams, I was able to attend college and graduate. The important thing was that I was given skills to adapt and graduate. Not just go to college but to actually graduate. And I did later, in later years take courses in graduate school. And I would have completed the program, but there were changes in my home life and with the tribe that caused me to not complete the program. I have graduate training but I haven't completed it.

**DE:** So can you tell me a little bit about any ethical influences that you have?

**FC:** Yeah, going to a private school you're exposed to a variety of philosophies and beliefs. It's a lot more rigorous and so you see the—you're exposed to liberal as well as conservative principals whereas in the public school system, in Utah especially, you're basically exposed to conservative values and beliefs. And you don't see the other side of the story. So it was a good exposure for me to meet and attend school with students from all over the world and to see the value of diversity and the value of dialogue and debate. So I'm much more broad in my perspective. You can't call me a conservative nor can you call me a liberal. Sometimes I'm liberal; sometimes I'm conservative on issues. I'm a fiscal conservative. I believe in tight reigns when it comes to management of money, but I also believe strongly in preservation of the earth, caring for the earth. And I also believe that it's good business. I value fairness. And I really think that you really have to examine issues closely. You cannot attach labels so quickly. And I think that's the mistake a lot of people make in our state and country, but mainly this state. It tends to be far too conservative for me.

**DE:** Can you give an example of something that doesn't get closely examined?

**FC:** Well the nuclear issue, nuclear energy. We've gone the spectrum of slapping down the Skull Valley Goshutes but now we're entertaining these building studies to construct seven—possibly seven nuclear plants here in Utah. So that to me is, it's not only hypocrisy, it's outrageous. It's—to me it reflects people who lack information. They're too quick to judge and they don't examine issues. It also suggests that people jump to conclusions here. Just because you store nuclear spent [fuel] rods, does not mean you have to jump into the nuclear industry or vice-versa. I was essentially opposed to the concept of storing nuclear spent rods until I heard the testimony of numerous scientists

from the University of Utah in particular. And most of their presentations indicated that it could actually be stored safely, to which I come to see that that was a wonderful business opportunity for Skull Valley Goshutes. [PHONE RINGS] It didn't mean an endorsement of the nuclear industry whatsoever, [PHONE RINGS] in my view, but some people took it that way. So I had to stay—[PHONE RINGS] Working for the governor, I had to stay neutral on the issue. But— [PHONE RINGS] But in the end I simply did not think that it was damaging to the earth especially due to the fact that nuclear energy is a reality of most communities east of the Mississippi [River]. And this was information that most people weren't exposed to prior to this time. I heard complaints about the fact that Skull Valley Reservation was so close to Salt Lake City [Utah]. And they kept saying "Oh it's only 35-40 miles" and that was a lie. I went and checked it myself. It's over 65 miles to Skull Valley from Salt Lake City [Utah] and that's from, well, like the airport. You get out to the airport and from there on it's about 60 miles. So it's—people were really unfair and the information that was exchanged about that. I happened to live in Massachusetts for six or seven years and I happened to know that there's a reactor that is within a short distance from the metropolis of Boston [Massachusetts], and that's the Seabrook reactor.<sup>3</sup> And that's not very far. I mean that's within twenty miles, 15-20 miles I believe, I'm not sure. But it's certainly much much closer than Skull Valley. And that was spent rods; that's not a reactor. You know what I'm saying. I mean to me there's was an overreaction on the part of—Utah is—what really bothers me is it really has a 'the sky is falling,' you know, reaction to things. It's like a reactionary to many—so many things. And that's because they lack so much information about things and have leaders who are

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<sup>3</sup> The Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant is located 40 miles north of Boston in Seabrook, New Hampshire. Seabrook is currently operated by the FPL Energy Group.

overzealous in their reactions, and they pretty much brow beat the common people here in the state so people become sheep to these—to these leaders who just seem to be reactionary to everything without really studying what the issues are, unless of course they have a vested interest. Then it's different. So I've seen this state turn around from one of slapping down the [Skull Valley] Goshutes for even considering the idea. "How dare you in our own backyard?" And then turn around and entertain the possibilities for even more exposure to dangerous levels of atomic energy and waste. So especially considering the fact that we have a socially acceptable organization, Energy Solutions, that keeps wanting to raise the level of waste from hazardous to nearly nuclear.<sup>4</sup> And it's such a hypocrisy to me. I think that's what stands out the most about the Skull Valley situation there. And so my education and my experience was directly contrary to what Governor Levitt and what everyone else was saying. I just kept shaking my head saying, "Don't they understand there's another world out there? That France has been operating on nuclear energy for decades and they have been able to store it safely. Don't they know that most of the communities east of the Mississippi rely and most products are manufactured using nuclear energy?" I mean, wake up. You know, I was always told you need to gather the facts and no one was gathering the facts at that time.

I would think if people are so concerned about their health and radioactivity etcetera, they ought to be concerned about particles and the pollution in the air in Salt Lake Valley. That's certainly a far more serious situation here. And they ought to be concerned about the emissions that are coming from the coal firing plants—power plants in our state. And, of course, there's so much politics and money involved in that. They're

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<sup>4</sup> Energy Solutions, formerly Envirocare, is a low level nuclear waste storage facility located in Clive, Utah. Energy Solutions accepts Class A waste. They have been petitioning to begin accepting Class B and C wastes, which are 'hotter' than Class A radioactive waste.

not about to even consider that. And the idea that you can have clean coal-burning plants is a fiasco also. I heard the good side of that and then I heard the bad side of that and I've come to realize that that's a joke. We need to be pursuing alternative sources of energy with rigor, not in a mediocre fashion or as something we can do in our spare time. This needs to be taken seriously.

**DE:** So you mentioned several times that there were fairness issues. Who...

**FC:** There were what?

**DE:** That there were fairness issues, that it was unfair. Who was it unfair to?

**FC:** It was unfair to the [Skull Valley] Goshutes. It was unfair to Leon [Bear], the chairman of the Skull Valley Tribe.<sup>5</sup> He was vilinized as the bad guy, the person who wants to expose Utah citizens to waste—nuclear waste. And there have been far more bad guys that have endangered the health of Utah citizens far more than Leon Bear. You have the atomic energy experimentations. You have nuclear bombs in Nevada, the [Nevada] Test Site. Then a lot of the fallout was entering Utah and a lot of people were exposed to the fallout and consequently died of cancer—various forms of cancer. And they certainly were far more dangerous than Leon Bear. The originators and the operators with Envirocare and now, Energy Solutions are far more dangerous to Utah citizens than Leon Bear. The owners and operators of Magcorp<sup>6</sup> that were dumping tens of thousands of gallons of waste from chlorine gas into the air—and they've been doing that for some thirty years—are far more dangerous than Leon Bear. But these people are never spoken about. You know, you don't hear anything about them. They get away with it. And they make millions of dollars in the process. [A female voice whispers: "Thanks."] And that's

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<sup>5</sup> Leon Bear was no longer the chairman of the Skull Vally Tribe at the time of this interview.

<sup>6</sup> Magcorp, US Magnesium, is a magnesium chloride plant located in Rowley, Utah.

not fair. It's not fair that some people in this state get paid hundreds of thousands of dollars not to grow crops while my brother and I barely can't—we lose money raising hay to feed our horses. Some of these are very wealthy people that are getting paid by U.S. Department of Agriculture. So there's lots of unfairness you know.

**DE:** So can you talk about the role of sovereignty and in relationship I think to this unfairness that you're talking about or just in general to the Skull Valley situation.

**FC:** Well sovereignty is like freedom to the American citizens who talk about fighting and dying for freedom. American Indians have fought and died for sovereignty.

Sovereignty existed here before the Europeans—Euro-Americans ever entered this continent. Indian nations were governing themselves and they had the full authority to do so. And the colonial governments dealt with Indian nations accordingly because at the time they had to. The Indian nations were strong enough militarily to defend themselves and to wage costly wars against the colonials. And so the sovereignty that Indian people enjoy today was brought about as a consequence of war. In the State of Utah alone there were over 150 battles fought between all the tribes and the Mormon settlers. This was a bloody confrontation. People would have you believe otherwise but it's not true. There were lots of bloody confrontations here. One of the largest military encounters in the United States was the Bear River Massacre. And although it was in southern Idaho—just over the border—it involved Utah American Indians, the northwest band Shoshone.

So sovereignty nowadays comes about as a result of war, which is based at the end of those wars, and then people surrendered certain rights in return for agreements in exchange for land. Certain services were guaranteed by the U.S. government in exchange for peace and for those lands. And those services range from education to housing to

health. And those agreements are still in force today because those treaties were considered international instruments of law and they are binding to this day. They have an international connotation because they are dealing between different nations. And Indian nations are nations within the U.S. nation. So that's what kind of makes them kind of distinct in that respect, but they are nations nevertheless. And so tribes are very protective of that sovereignty. And it's important for people to understand that because most people only see sovereignty as applying to city, county, and state governments. And they don't see how it applies to an Indian tribe unless they get a history lesson about the military confrontations that took place not only in this state but throughout this country. And only then do they seem to understand how sovereignty applies to Indian tribes. We're not like other groups. We have a political relationship with the U.S. government not a racial one. It's a political one based on solemn agreements. Okay. Our people are referenced in the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution as being—having sovereign qualities. So we are different. We're not like other ethnic groups. And the Indian people are very protective of that because we don't want to be swallowed up in the mire and in the context of the great American melting pot. Indian people want to retain their identity and their culture. They don't want to be mixed in with other minorities either. Because they would lose their identities just as sure under the minority context as they would under the dominant culture context. Indian people are very protective of their identity. Even though we are very oppressed and would seem to suffer low self-esteem—which we do—our heritage we hold high.

**DE:** So you mentioned that if people don't get this history, that they may not know about this sovereign relationships. I know that you were a teacher, and of course have gone through the school system. Do you think that's taught enough?

**FC:** No. That's why there's so much ignorance. That's why people going all the way to the U.S.—not to the U.S.—but our own state legislature lack that history—that information. If they had that information then they—there would be—they would have more understanding of our plight, our situation.

**DE:** And then returning to the Skull Valley controversy, do you think that that lack of information or the sovereignty issue came up in that controversy or did it not?

**FC:** What I meant to say also, and this touches on that, is...almost—I think all of the Utah tribes, I'm pretty certain, all the Utah tribes opposed the idea of storing nuclear spent rods on Skull Valley Reservation. They opposed the project, but they stood solidly behind the Skull Valley Tribe's right to make that decision. So, although they didn't like the idea, they stood behind the sovereign rights of the Skull Valley Tribe to do so. And that's very important to be pointed out. Is that the tribes, once again, they value sovereignty. And they stood by Skull Valley all the way through this. They stood by the right to Skull Valley to exercise their authority.

**DE:** So did you start becoming aware of the nuclear waste or other nuclear issues in Utah as a result of your position here [Utah State Division of Indian Affairs] or had you been aware of these or become involved or known about them before?

**FC:** Well I was aware of some of the, of course, the Nevada Test Site controversy. I was aware of that. I was aware that nuclear energy—or nuclear reactors for energy was controversial especially due to some of the accidents that were occurring, Three Mile and

that, to name one, and several others, the one in Russia, I forget the name of it now. So I was aware of the controversies surrounding nuclear energy. But I didn't really become familiar with the Skull Valley project until I took on this position.

**DE:** And what was your role in this position in relation to that controversy?

**FC:** Well it soon became known to me that I needed to not have a role [laugh] because I had to support the Governor's position on it, which was to oppose it. But that put me in a very difficult situation because I saw the hypocrisy that was going on and it was very difficult to do that—to sit and watch these folks being tore up about this—tore to shreds over this issue. When I—In the end, I really in some ways supported them, in the end. But I was basically—I had to operate from a neutral posture and not allow myself to get pulled into the controversy.

**DE:** And so why did you have to support the governor? Is that because your office is under his...is it...

**FC:** Yeah I'm appointed by the Governor.

**DE:** Oh okay. So do you have any sort of responsibilities towards Utah tribes or even towards the Skull Valley tribe in this office?

**FC:** I have a responsibility to be fair to present both sides, in other words, to be a professional. And that's what I've tried to do as much as possible. And I need to mention something. When I first started this job, we had a conference. And in that conference, this—the question of the Skull Valley storage proposal came up to me and they actually asked me what my position was on it. And being new to the position I didn't realize that it was so controversial. And I said well I think this issue needs to be examined and needs to be some—we need to hear from these people. And of course my boss jumped right up

and came running over to me and said afterwards “Forrest, don’t speak to that issue, you know the governor opposes it, so you’re going to have to [laugh] be careful there.” So he cautioned me about that. And I still thought to myself, “Well what’s wrong with discussing it?” You know, it doesn’t mean I support it. So I got my first lesson in government and the power structure and how it works that day. And I didn’t and still don’t have that much respect for that part of government. You know I think there always needs to be dialogue no matter who’s in charge. No matter who makes the rules, there needs to be dialogue. So I’ll always stand by that position that everyone deserves a fair say, a fair shake. And we need to closely examine policies to see if various kinds of programs, businesses, projects are harmful. And if they are—if it’s proven that they’re harmful, then policy needs to be made accordingly. But if they’re not as harmful as they turn out soon to be, then people need to be fair. That’s it.

**DE:** So can you speak a little bit about a controversy that occurred within the Tribe about the Skull Valley Proposal. My understanding is that certain Tribal members were opposed to the waste storage and the tribal council I guess was in favor of it.

**FC:** My understanding is that there were about two-thirds of the Tribe that supported the proposal and about one-third who opposed it. The one-third was vehement—vehemently opposed and they generated a lot of support from the liberal community here in Salt Lake [City, Utah] and within and out, without this state. Some of the groups, national environmental people would call upon certain leaders of this other group, as spokespersons for the Tribe. And, um, if you go by number, then you have to understand the hypocrisy there. If we elected a president, then he becomes the president of this country. We can’t continue to question that. After the election is over, it’s over, right?

Same applies to the Tribe. If the Tribal government makes a policy—it might not be a popular policy, I might even oppose it—but that’s the law and people need to honor that. And I saw a lot of people not honoring that when it applies to Indian people, majority rules. It was almost like a double standard. It only applies to white people, but with Indians you can circumvent and undermine their auth—the authority of their leaders. And I don’t think that was fair. That indicates to me some dehumanization there. That really becomes the issue in our state, when it comes to American Indian people. There’s a dehumanization that occurs. In other words, we’re basically ignored until we come up with something controversial and then of course we’re deemed good or bad based on whether it suits the interests of the dominant culture. If it doesn’t we’re villainized—we’re the bad guys. We’re the people heathens again. [laugh] If it supports the general public, which it rarely does, we’re heroes. But once again it rarely—these issues rarely support or benefit the dominant cultures so usually we’re the bad guys, villains.

**DE:** Yeah. So you talk about the double standard and getting kind of framed as the villains. Who applies those double standards or those frames?

**FC:** Oh the legislature, the governor, the agency heads, heads of agencies, elected officials, city and county commissioners, mayors, non-Indian legal authorities.

**DE:** And do you know why they do it? Or have a speculation?

**FC:** Mostly self interest and ignorance, lack of information a lot of times, and just follow the crowd, or for their own vested self interest. I mean, Governor Levitt made the comment “Over my dead body.” And...I will always—I always wondered what he would have thought if he—if the issue became popularity—or popular. If Leon was able to win most people over in popularity and it did become a reality, then what was the governor

going to do? [laugh] I mean I just saw an overreaction there by everyone. “How dare you Indians make money?” And the underlying factor to that was it’s not so much money as it is power. If you have money, you have power. So the message to Indian people was “Don’t get too big for your pants. Don’t get too big for your britches ‘cause there’s no room for you at the top. Only certain people can have power in this state.” That was the message to some of us who understand business and government to some extent.

**DE:** Did you have any sense of how other tribes in this state reacted to this controversy? I mean you said before that they opposed the project but supported and stood behind the tribes because—behind Skull Valley because of sovereignty.

**FC:** Well most of them took the position their leadership did, opposed to the project. But my guess is that if they were exposed to more information about the project—the details of the project, I would say a fair share of them would have changed their position and said “Hey, if I were in their shoes, I would have supported the project too,” you know. They weren’t given—they weren’t exposed to a lot of the details—no one was really. But I happen to know that the agreement would have resulted in millions and millions of dollars going to a small band of about a hundred and twenty individuals. And it would have made them very wealthy people overnight.

And why can’t they? Why can’t American Indian people be wealthy? Everyone else gets an opportunity to do that. And if the state’s not going to allow gaming, the opportunity for some cash flow, then they need to open some other doors up. And in this case, the message was: “You cannot gamble in the state of Utah and you cannot engage in projects and businesses, lucrative businesses, that will make you powerful, economically and politically overnight.”

**DE:** So why is gambling not allowed in the State of Utah?

**FC:** Because congress—Indian tribes report to the U.S. Congress not to state governments. And the state governments under the U.S. Congress when they passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act they put in a clause that recognized state's rights that basically said that Indian tribes can game unless a state prohibits it by constitution or by statute. And so they kind of provided a clause there, a way out for tribes—for states to prevent it. And the State of Utah prevents gaming statutorily so. That's the name of that.

**DE:** Oh okay so is it until the state allows it, tribes wouldn't be allowed to do it.

**FC:** Right.

**DE:** Yeah. I always wondered about that 'cause I knew tribes in other states were able to do it. I didn't know that.

**FC:** Right

**DE:** So what do you think about the kind of end solution to the PFS? I mean it was stopped by I think it was the Department of the Interior ruling. A lot of people argue that the Governor's lack of support for the project also meant that it didn't ultimately happen. What's your opinion on that?

**FC:** There should be an investigation on that.

**DE:** Can you elaborate?

**FC:** I think that the truth should come out about that. My guess is that certain people pressured the Bureau of Indian Affairs to reverse their position on this issue. And the Bureau of Indian Affairs had no right to reverse that position. They had ruled on it, they were—they had honored the lease. They should not have been interfered with by people outside their branch. And so that's an example of politics, their big time politics. And I

don't think it was fair. I mean we still have the problem, we still have this problem.

They're still having to question whether to go forward with Yucca Mountain<sup>7</sup> or not. We still have the nuclear spent rods problem. Um, and we have an obligation to this country. We're part of the United States of America. We have an obligation to do our part too. Every state does. So, I'm not saying I'm for nuclear spents. I'm not. Just, again, I think the whole thing needed to be dealt with fairly. If the state citizenry voted against it, and they knew all the circumstances about it, that's different. If they were well informed about the dangers, not the perceived dangers based on rumor and innuendo, but the actual facts involved, and if they still voted it down, that'd be different. I would honor that, but that wasn't the case. Utah citizens were not given that information, correct information about that. So...

In the meanwhile our state engages in pollution, wide-spread pollution through fossil burning coal plants that are operating throughout our state. And I think that we're responsible. If we're going to talk environment, this state does not have a very good track record when it comes to environment, clean air, clean water, and things like that. I mean we've polluted some of our biggest waterways, Utah Lake. White people, their homelands—original homelands were Utah valley. White people, their livelihood was to eat the cutthroat, the Bonneville cutthroat trout, in that lake. And that lake has been polluted for years; it only supports trash fish now. But yet those very people in that area screamed the loudest when it came to nuclear storage proposal about keeping their environment clean. [Laugh]

**DE:** Interesting. [Laugh]

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<sup>7</sup> Yucca Mountain High-Level Nuclear Waste Repository

**FC:** So there's a lot of hypocrisy in our state. Most leaders are bent on sweeping it under the rug. I believe we need to talk about it 'cause that's the only way to heal, you know. And I'm not saying I'm perfect. I'm saying when I make a mistake I feel much better when I talk about it. That's all I'm saying.

**DE:** So what do you mean by heal through dialogue?

**FC:** Well I don't think anyone has all the answers, do you?

**DE:** No. [Laugh.]

**FC:** So, someone's gotta be wrong. But if they're wrong, let's talk about it. Maybe we'll learn something. You can always change policies. You can always change our minds. You know what I'm saying?

**DE:** Yeah.

**FC:** Things are not written in stone, but you have to be careful when they are, have to be real careful when they are. And we're violating some environmental written-in-stone laws right now when it comes to the earth. And I think...In a couple of years—the Mayans say by 2012—the earth is going to be cashing in on it so, overdue [laugh] retribution for the harm that we've caused it. And it's not going to be a pretty sight. [laugh]

**DE:** Doesn't sound like it. [laugh] I don't want that day to come. [laugh]

**FC:** But you know people are saying—the spiritual people are saying the creator and the universe are always willing to cooperative if we—if we're willing to do the same. I mean we can change our minds too. We need to be dialoging and we need to be changing our ways and our policies as well. I mean, who said we can't? Who said we have to keep killing one and another in Iraq and Afganistan and other parts of the world? And who

says we have to continue to pollute the earth? You know we don't have to keep doing these things. We can elevate our consciousness and say we're not going to do that anymore. We can bring our boys home and start teaching them to live non-violent lives in society instead of promoting more and more violence, which we're basically doing throughout the world. We're contributing to a lot of this. A lot of the violence throughout the world is being contributed to by our own mentality. A lot of the harm throughout the world and on the earth is being contributed to by our mentality here at home in front of our fireplaces and over the television. A lot of the horrible things that are being promoted are over the television: marketing, salesmanship, harm to the earth at all costs, you know. Someone does you wrong, get even, you know. And the quicker the better. We're promoting violence everyday. So we've become a real egotistical world. We've forgotten about the spirit and the heart. So...And yet this state, among many others, including the Bible belt, does such a good job at promoting themselves as the best of—the best people in the world, the most moral. I just, that hasn't been my experience. [laugh] I don't see any difference in this city [Salt Lake City], in this state [Utah] and any other parts of the country. There's just as much violence, probably more per capita. We drink as much booze and we have as much and we have a higher rate of prescriptive drug abuse than any part of the country. Certain parts of the state, I won't mention any, have a rampant pornography problem. So you know I just see a lot of hypocrisy. People need to start talking about these things and healing. I mean I don't—I don't wish ill will upon my brethren, White brothers and sisters at all. I see them becoming very unhealthy as a consequence of not talking about these things. Sweeping things under the rug and operating out of denial. They're fooling no one. I mean even Indian people see the

hypocrisy. We see the greed, the selfishness. And I always tell people, “you know we’re good people; we just have trouble making money. We don’t know how to do it very well. We’re great in the healing arts and we’re great in art, creative arts, you know, we’re great. But we don’t make good businessmen.” And that’s a generalization I’ll defend. There’s only a few, we have a few. I’ll defend that, that we have a few. [Laugh.] But we—I’ll also say we have many who really struggle when it comes to making money. It’s a quality that has to be developed. And we don’t have it yet. But we’re learning. I’m not so sure we should learn, judging by what’s been happening to our economy right now [interviewer laugh]and some of the horror stories that are coming across. You have—more recently we learned of a fellow who promoted a ponzi scheme or a pyramid scheme to rob people of about, what was it, fifty billion dollars. My goodness, that’s, that is absurd. That is down right ridiculous. It is so—that is so evil, so wrong, It is beyond description. That someone would do that to other people. Rob them of their retirement, their whole financial futures. It’s just ludicrous, beyond my imagination how someone would do that. But we have people in this world who are doing that right now.

**DE:** It’s a little disconcerting...

**FC:** Very disconcerting.

**DE:** to think about, yeah.

**FC:** I think American people should be ready to start marching in the streets and start putting people in jail. We need to have a Theodore Roosevelt, you know, because a lot of people in this country are not taught about The Gilded Age. The Gilded Age was a period in which—it was a growing up process for our country. And it was right around the 1880’s and it didn’t end until the end of the Roosevelt administration, Teddy Roosevelt.

He had to put a lot of wealthy people in jail that were in both in business and in government. Corruption was rampant in both sectors. And he held fast and said, you know, "If we catch you violating the law you're going to go to jail." And he did. And he stood up against some of the most powerful men in this country in both government and private sector. And he put this country on its course for success. Because our country, the greatest thing we accomplished was the creation of the middle class. And that middle class proved Karl Marx wrong. The advancement of communism was stopped dead in its tracks, and it was realized that the United States has the largest middle class. And that middle class is living comfortable lives. It's the most wonderful contribution this country ever made. And then when our boys went and fought in World War II, that was another great legacy that I'm very proud of. And that was an evil war. It needed to be fought. It wasn't a Vietnam and it wasn't an Iraq affair. This was a serious war that needed to be fought. Some wars are justified, some are not. So I know a little bit about history. So I have some appreciations and I have some resentments about what's happened in the past and what's happening now. To me we haven't really learned anything.

In essence, I want to share this with you. What I see is I see the American Indian people oppressed to this very day. The oppression has not ended. It didn't end back in the previous century. It's continuing to happen here. Just in a different way. We're not shooting people anymore but we're not giving them survival skills, so they end up shooting themselves, or dying prematurely, or endangering themselves through alcohol, substance abuse, careless behavior. The kids are not being educated. And there's other ways of destroying a race. You don't teach them their history, true history. So that's been happening here in our state. It's unfortunate it's not there.

**DE:** So how is the oppression different now? I mean you said that they're not being taught history and that there's...

**FC:** Well they're not being shot. It's not overt violence, but it's covert. If we don't teach people to fish—In other words a long time ago, you take away the fish, people starve. Nowadays there's a previous federal policy, let's give Indian people fish, but we never taught them how to fish. You see what I'm saying. It's an analogy to that. And we kind of taught them how to bait the hook, but not really how to fish because some of them didn't learn to throw the bait and hook in water and the line. They just learned in bits and pieces, so that's why we haven't become very successful in a dominant world. We haven't become successful businessmen. Anyway. And so the federal policies basically failed and the state policies failed the American Indian people. I have not seen one program really work for our people and that's really unfortunate.

**DE:** Yeah that is, that's very unfortunate. So a little bit back on the PFS proposal, with the decision being made, what are the consequences you see for the Skull Valley Tribe with that decision that they're not allowed to take the nuclear waste in?

**FC:** They're very—they were isolationists back then and they've become even more isolationists now. They don't work with our office. They distrust us as a consequence of that. They want nothing to do with us even though some of them like me personally and think that I'm a fair person. That experience has hardened them. And they have basically withdrawn and they want nothing to do with anyone else. So they...And it could lead to more dysfunction in their government in their operations. And I hope not. We're reaching out to them and continue to reach out to them. But I certainly empathize with them and their situation.

**DE:** So I'm going to shift here a little bit, but still on the nuclear waste. Who do you ultimately think is responsible for the full nationwide nuclear waste situation?

**FC:** Well, it's a—we need a federal policy. We need a national policy on nuclear energy and management of nuclear waste. That's a federal responsibility and state governments need to be involved in that dialogue in the discussion of it, especially if we benefit from any of the energy that's generated. Now right now we're benefiting because a lot of the products manufactured in the East were manufactured with nuclear energy. So we're already benefiting in some ways. Some people don't realize that.

**DE:** And do you think that the federal government is taking responsibility for the nuclear waste situation or...?

**FC:** No, they have basically avoided it and they've been trying to get the Yucca [Mountain, Nevada] facility approved, but I don't think they've completed the consultation process earnestly. I don't think they involved enough state leaders, or governors, etcetera in that process. So consequently it's been held up. It's been controversial; it's been held up now. My understanding is the Obama people want them to hold up on that, and they probably will scrap that plan. But I simply believe that the discussions need to continue on this. If there's going to be nuclear energy, we need the policy to govern that. We also need a policy to govern the management of waste. It goes along with it. And so—otherwise let's not have it. If we're not going to have it—if the policy is no nuclear energy then that needs to be applied across the board to every state in the country. No nuclear energy. But I also think that by the same token we need to examine fossil fuel pollution that's occurring in this country. And that's—And I don't mean it to be down on my state regarding the coal-fired plants—coal-burning plant, but I

also think that they need to be—they're responsible for some of this pollution and there needs to be discussions about this. And I don't think those people should be penalized for what they've done. They've—I think that there has to be a reasonable approach to moderating the amount of pollution occurring in our country. And I think there needs to be a—what do you call it? There needs to be a sequential transition from fossil-burning fuels to alternative energy. But it needs to be done in a way so that it doesn't harm business and industry. These people have a livelihood. They need a living. They're good people. But they need to be developing alternative sources of energy. And they need to be conscious that they're harming the earth right now. So as long as people are striving to do the right thing that, you know, for the environment, I think that's good. I think they'll be rewarded. The universe will reward them. But right now our country is operating in denial about a lot of things and we're continuing to do destructive things to the earth. And I think we will be rewarded accordingly, unfortunately. So that's the other side.

**DE:** Yeah. So three themes that I think have come up over the course of our conversation have been fairness, hypocrisy, and the value of history. Would you think—agree that those are kind of themes that came up?

**FC:** Sure

**DE:** Can you speak a little bit more into those? Or are those kind of general themes that you often see even outside of the nuclear context? Or do you think they're more specific to the...

**FC:** Well what we're talking about here is life, preservation of life, and the quality of life. And that's really what it comes down to. I would like to see our country become less destructive and violent. And I would like to see them develop policies of fairness—

policies of fairness to man and fair to the earth—fairness to the earth. And I think if we follow that—those policies, we will improve the quality of our life and we will sustain it. Okay. So that's the way I see it. And I don't see us doing that right now. I don't see anyone looking at what the situation is right now except for president-elect Obama. I mean this is new to me that we'd have some leadership like that, enlightened leadership. I'm still adjusting to it. So I guess I need to rephrase that. Right now it is being addressed by president-elect Obama. And I'm just catching up to that effect—to that fact. And I feel wonderful about that. I think it's an opportunity; I think there's hope for the future. But that's really what I was talking about in the past, is the need for someone like senator—president-elect Obama to address these issues. And I think they will be addressed. So I think that there's hope for this country 'cause our country does have good people. There's good people. We just haven't been electing the right ones lately. And I think we're paying the consequences for that. And that's the way it works. You know, there's a cause and effect principal in this world. You know, we have to pay our dues sooner or later. You cannot do things and not expect an effect or impact. You have to be aware of everything you do. I'm learning that myself in my own personal life. It's just the way it is. So you cannot be mean to someone and say, and unfair to someone and say, "I didn't do anything," and smile and get away with it. And that's what our state's been doing and our country in some ways. We've been doing that. We've been lying to ourselves, deceiving ourselves. You can't get away with that forever. You can get away with it for awhile, but you can't get away with it forever. Sooner or later you're going to get called.

[laugh]

So I think it was very symbolic the other day when the Iraqi news reporter pulled off his shoes and threw them at President Bush. [DE laughs] To me it was very symbolic. And it was like, you know, “You can beat down our army and beat down our people and everything, but there’s one guy that’s going to go for your head.” [laugh] “I might not hit. I might not get you but you’ll know that someone was unhappy with you.” So I thought it was great. But I think, ultimately, he’ll—things will catch up with him also. I really believe in karma, I think it’s a principal—it’s a spiritual principal that operates. And people need to be aware of that. Do good to others ‘cause sooner or later it’s going to catch up with you. And there is justice in the world. It just takes a while. I don’t know if I answered your question or anything.

**DE:** You did. I thought it was... Thank you. And I’m about done with my questions for you. So is there anything you’d like to add maybe that I didn’t ask you about or any closing comments that you have?

**FC:** Uh, I had a sociology professor. He was my favorite professor, mentor, and friend. He said something one time, he said “You know” he said, “Sometimes enlightenment”—well—“Enlightenment will develop in places that are the most oppressed.” And it’s my hope that enlightenment will awaken here in the State of Utah among our people, and that that enlightenment will spread to all people because right now I view our state as one of the most oppressive to Indian people. We’re really marginalized. We’re invisible. We don’t count until something goes wrong and then we’re the bad guys. Our culture, our beliefs are put down as... You know we’re really viewed as savage people but yet our history is contrary. If you really examine history, there are numerous savages. There are savages in every race and every group. And savagery is not limited to the American

Indian people if you truly examine history. You'll realize further that savagery is being committed to this day. Some of it in our very own military and that's really unfortunate—and these are good kids, these are good young men, these are good young men. But I would have to say this is also happening in the prisons. We're taking good people who make a mistake once in a while, and we're exposing them to hardened criminals. And we expect that a couple years, they come out of prison and they're not going to be affected. We're taking young men, teaching them to kill and putting them in dangerous circumstances and when they come back we expect that they're not going to be changed. I mean wake up here, you know. Somebody is asleep; and they—whoever's in charge needs to wake up. The American people need to wake up too 'cause they elect these folks. They put these people in positions of power. And they need to be very careful who they put in charge these days. I think they're starting to awaken to that. I think that's why President Obama was elected. But it's like don't stop with the presidency. Let's start electing better people in the legislature, in city and county governments, you know, state governments. Look at corruption in the governorships, in Chicago and other parts of the country. I mean American people need to wake up and stop being followers and sheep and really take Thomas Jefferson's principals and teachings to heart. He said that our democracy hinges upon an educated public. He wasn't kidding. This is not a country for ignorant backward people. It's a country for educated and progressive people, people who are enlightened and want to be connected to the world. So we need to make up our minds. Do we want to continue to be Americans or do we want to see this country fall and fail from within? 'Cause that's what was happening prior to the election of Obama. And we're still not out of the woods yet. Our economy is in the toilet right now and it's

about ready to be flushed. [laugh] And it needs to be flushed. [laugh] Some of those corrupt guys need to be flushed as well. I mean there are some real bad dangerous people out here. They have money and power. And they have done horrible things and gotten away with it. So we need to be real careful about who we punish in this country. Too often we're punishing the good guys, all the people who made a mistake. We need to be looking after these people who are really really evil and heartless people.

We need to really be thinking about what it means to take a life. I mean we have dehumanized ourselves. We take life far too much for granted. It's a sacred thing. You send your son over to Iraq to kill somebody. You're saying "under the right circumstances, I want my son to kill somebody. Take the life, a sacred life of some other person." And, "Oh it's not sacred, their life is not as sacred as our lives are sacred because they're Muslims or their religion is connected to terrorism or they're from a foreign country." So for some reason, their sacredness is not as sacred as ours. That's the same thing they did in Utah history in the dealings with my people, the American Indians. The suffering that went on over there took place here first. And had they learned from the suffering in their own backyard, it might have tempered foreign policy today. But because we don't know our own suffering in our own backyard, we haven't learned from it see. So that's what I mean by history. That's how important history is. People's identity is wrapped up in history on who people view themselves, their life, their culture, what they're about is wrapped up in history. That's a big part of who I am today. And what I am right now at this very moment is connected to my past. And the reason I'm here in this job is because of my history and my understanding of history. I'm here to promote fairness, to do my part and to help people too in the process. That's why I'm

here, to try to improve life and try to promote fairness. That's really what it's all about.

To love people is why I'm here, that's what we're all here for—not to kill each other.

And how often we take that for granted. We're here to love each other not kill each other.

And some people have the idea that we're here to kill some people. It's okay to kill some people. And I always think back about Christian teachings and the Fifth Commandment.

God didn't say, "Thou shall not kill except certain circumstances involving terrorism or someone trying to break in your house." [laugh] You know, he said "Thou shall not kill."

Period. You know what I'm saying? There needs to be a discussion on that because I

think we're taking that far too—we're living by the sword and we're starting to die by it.

So, anyway those are my soapboxes. Those are my editorials for the day.

**DE:** Alright. [laugh] Thank you. One final question.

**FC:** Sure.

**DE:** Can you recommend anyone else for me to talk to with this project?

**FC:** With regard to the storage issues? I think you should try to talk to Governor Levitt. I mean he's going to be out of a job soon. I'd at least think you ought to have a talk with him.

**DE:** I'd like too, yeah. I'll catch him when he gets back.

**FC:** There you go. You've probably talked Margene Bullcreek.

**DE:** I have yeah.

**FC:** And you've talked to Leon of course.

**DE:** I haven't gotten in touch with Leon yet.

**FC:** You haven't gotten—okay those are the two main characters in this drama, the Governor and Leon Bear. Once you talk to those folks, I think you've covered every base there is.

**DE:** Great. Alright well thank you very much for the interview.

**FC:** You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW.