KIM TOWNSEND

South Fork Indian Reservation, Nevada

An Interview by

Danielle Endres

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Nuclear Technology in the American West Oral History Project

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THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH KIM TOWNSEND ON JULY 17, 2008 CONDUCTED BY DANIELLE ENDRES. THE INTERVIEW WAS DONE DURING THE INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK CONFERENCE IN LEE, NEVADA ON THE SOUTH FORK INDIAN RESERVATION (WESTERN SHOSHONE). THE INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE AS TOWSEND'S CAMPING SPOT. THIS IS THE FIRST AND ONLY INTERVIEW WITH TOWNSEND.

DE: Ok, this is Danielle Endres, and I'm doing an interview with Kim Townsend and we're at the Indigenous Environmental Network Conference at the South Fork Indian Reservation, and it's July 17, 2008. All right, so Kim can you give me your full name with spelling?

KT: Kim Townsend, K-I-M T-O-W-N-S-E-N-D.

DE: And your current residence?

KT: In Duckwater, Nevada.

DE: And how long have you lived at that residence?

KT: Nineteen and a half years.

DE: OK. And your occupation?

KT: Currently, I'm a summer youth program supervisor. I've been substituting since 1994. I'm still trying to finish school. [Laugh] someday I will.

DE: You will, definitely. So I'll ask you some background information on you. In addition to that information, your birthplace and birthday?

KT: Owyhee, Nevada. You don't need my birth date.

DE: Yeah, we don't need it. [Laugh]

KT: [Laugh]

DE: And then any siblings?

KT: Two brothers and a sister.

DE: And what brought you to live in Duckwater?

KT: It's a Shoshone Reservation. It had housing availability. I have a little mansion by the waterfall.

DE: Ah nice.

KT: It's the most perfect place in the world. That's why.

DE: It sounds great.

KT: [Laugh]

DE: And then is there anything that you want to share that you think is relevant to how you got involved in nuclear issues?

KT: Because I've seen a lot of my people have skin cancer, leukemia, ovarian cancer, thyroid problems, rheumatoid arthritis [noise] that it's just increased faster than it should be. . . stomach cancers, colon cancers, prostate cancers. And my thought is if I could figure out how and what they were doing during the time of nuclear testing that I could pinpoint some things that helped them—but not really helped them get cancer—but invaded their body for those kind of cancers—bone cancer was another one.

And knowing that when I was young we hunted rabbits and, you know, the old people used to cook the whole rabbit, except for maybe the ears. And eating the thyroid along with the rabbits…when they're cleaning, you know, they gutted it out but the neck part is still there and they used that in the soups. And the way that Iodine 131 works. And it's there for 6 days. But within those 6 days it's eaten the first day that its caught so the people got 131, I mean Iodine 131 in their system. And, you know, if we ate rabbits on a daily basis, it's there all the time. That was one. Cesium was another one that got into the

bones through—now I can't remember what it was…something. But it had to, it decreased, I mean not decreased, increased the bone cancers. I think it had a lot to do with the rheumatism increasing faster than it should, the other types of arthritis, the ovarian cancers. What's the other one? Plutonium sits in the earth for thousands of years beyond a whole bunch of people's, whole bunch of generations lifetime. What was the other one we used to do. Tritium is water soluble and we have a lot of aquifers. [background talking] So, when it gets into the ground, it moves [background laughter] with the flow of the aquifer and it comes as far, gosh, as far north as up here I believe. I can't remember how the water tables work. But now Las Vegas [Nevada] has it [laughter] since they keep taking the water.[1]

DE: [Laugh] Yeah, I've heard about that.

KT: Those are about my basic interests in, I guess, I'm trying to find what I had to look forward to when I got older. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah.

KT: I've—I'm just one of the lucky ones. For when I starting hurting more than I needed to, I went to the doctor and they took everything out, all my female organs. Just because they took out a piece of cancer, that piece is gonna grow. It's just like a worm, you know. [Laugh]

DE: They grow. Yeah, yeah.

KT: It just continues on once it's there. But I'm just one of the lucky ones. I've had friends find out they had it and within, oh gosh, maybe three months, they're gone.

DE: Oh my gosh, wow.

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[1] This comment refers to the Southern Nevada Water Authority's proposal to use water from the Snake Valley Aquifer to support the water and development needs in Las Vegas.

KT: And it's really sad because a few of them have worked for Greenpeace, and it's really sad to lose them because they're really strong women.

DE: Yeah, I've heard some other stories of just how quickly it moves though the communities.

KT: Yeah, and it seems like it's all like an epidemic within, gosh, forty years of the testing, you know, a lot of people were getting different kinds of cancers really fast. During the time of the active radiation, it's like our cowboys would be out in the boonies gathering cows and get hit with radiation and have burns all over them and then they would be dead, you know, in a couple weeks. It's pretty sad.

DE: Yeah.

KT: So that was my big interest. All of those things.

DE: So, do you have any role models or ethical influences in your life or just kind of world views that have influenced you in this work or in your life in general?

KT: Oh, there's been a lot of people. I guess one of the most prominent people would be Virginia Sanchez and her brother Joe. Debbie Harey [spelling???], Tom Goldtooth, Melar [spelling???]… I can't even remember what her last name is. She was one of the ones that helped with IEN [Indigenous Environmental Network].[2] Corbin [Harney][3], of course, as he was around for a long time. And our grandmother's that have, well they don't anymore, but they used to run some sweats and tell us stories, and they told legends

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[2] Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) is "A network of Indigenous Peoples empowering Indigenous Nations and communities towards sustainable livelihoods, demanding environmental justice and maintaining the Sacred Fire of our traditions." This interview took place at the 2008 IEN Conference in Lee, Nevada. For more information, see the IEN website: http://www.ienearth.org/.

[3] The late Corbin Harney (1920-2007) was the spiritual leader for the Western Shoshone and an anti-nuclear advocate.

that came to be because when radiation passed over, that's where the rain burned the skins along with the acid rain from Belamy [spelling???]. So it's a combination of those during that time. There's a lot of it that has to do with my grandmas and the old stories.

DE: Can you share any of the stories?

KT: All I can remember right off hand, because it talks about the burning, is through Pine Valley area. All I know is when we were going pine nut picking, I was just hearing that there was a rain coming through, and the rain was gonna be hot, and it was gonna burn the earth. And we used to have glaciers in the mountains all over. And all those– once the glaciers have gone, and then the, you know, the burning sensations from the water that falls from the sky. I can't really tell a story right now. [Laugh.]

DE: It's okay.

KT: You know it's just bits and pieces of it now. I would have to sit down and write some of it. I do have some things written. When my computer crashed, there's the more recent stuff I kinda lost. I don't back it up like I should you know. I feel safe with it, and then here it just crashed. [Laugh]

DE: I've done the same thing and it's awful.

KT: It was because of that Trojan, that Trojan virus, and it has five different pieces to it. And it's worse than a worm and it took everything in my computer. It took my operating system out. And oh…

DE: That's awful.

KT: I was so sad. Yeah, I was writing stories for my girls and stuff. And I would have to sit down and think about it, but that's the most one I believe are—the first sign of me pulling a story from the grandmas and connecting it with a now activity and feeling the

pain from, you know, the painful sensations on the skin from that stuff. Then after that, you know, they always told me to go to school, learn everything you can. And that's all I've ever done. I keep telling my kids the same thing, but so far they're not going. One of my daughter's got a $100,000 scholarship, I think she's gonna lose it, because she's not going to use it.

DE: Oh no. [Laugh]

KT: I was just so frustrated, but what can I do? [Laugh] I kicked her butt all the way through high school because she got pregnant, and I made her finish high school. And she graduated with a 3.8 GPA, with a job and a baby.

DE: Oh, congratulations—yeah—that's great, that's an amazing feat.

KT: Still kickin' her. [Laugh] Yeah, for these young girls. . . Anyway, that was just—the last couple years have been a struggle. I have seven kids. My oldest will be thirty this year. And then, that's my oldest daughter, the one with the big belly.

DE: [Laugh] Ok, and your youngest, how old is that one?

KT: She's six, she'll be seven next month.

DE: Great.

KT: Then she pulls her auntie authority over her nephew that's same age as her.

DE: [Laugh]

KT: They're six for about three months together.

DE: And then she gets older. [Laugh]

DE: I see. [Laugh]

KT: Then she gets older and then she's auntie again. [Laugh]And now they're equal partners.

DE: So in addition, you talked about being involved in nuclear testing. Were you involved in nuclear waste. . . the Yucca Mountain at all or mostly the testing?

KT: No. My part during the caravans, that Citizen Alert[4] used to come through Duckwater, and, well throughout the state of Nevada from Reno to Vegas, would be just cooking, cleaning up, preparing the grounds, you know, the labor part of the work. And just listening to people. I think my more active time was when I was working with Virginia [Sanchez] right after Joe [Virginia's brother] died. And I was working with Citizen Alert Native American Program[5], and we did—they did the transportation stuff. I just kind of like did the ground work. I didn't really get out there and be active. I just kinda like to kick back and I'll do, you know, the grunt work and that's no big deal. I just don't like to speak in front of people. [Laugh] But, when we worked on the nuclear, it used to be the nuclear, let's see…Native Communities…nuclear…it was NUKERISK [spelling???]. I can't remember what it's called, what the acronyms stand for, but it was NUKERISK [spelling???]. And we went—we were, let's see, we got funding from the Child Cancer Institute, from the National Environment for Health Science. I think we got some from the Center…CCD, no, Center for Disease Control [CDC], Okay.

DE: Center for Disease Control, CDC. Yeah.

KT: I knew my acronyms were coming wrong. Gosh I think we had six sources when we started out and what it was, was going around to native communities that were affected

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[4] Citizen Alert is Nevada grassroots organization that provides education, advocacy, and empowerment to citizens in matters of environmental justice and environmental harms. Citizen Alert, P. O. Box 17173, Las Vegas, NV, 89114-7173, www.citizenaltert.org.

[5] For more information, contact: Western Shoshone Health Project/Citizen Alert Native American Program (CANAP), Attn. Virginia Sanchez, P.O. Box 5339, Reno, NV 89513, Phone: 702-827-5511, Fax: 702-827-4299.

by the nuclear testing, and interviewed people between, oh gosh, back then, I think it was from like fifty-five to however old we can get 'em. And kind of building on the Dose Reconstruction[6], I might be saying this wrong, because the Dose Reconstruction itself left native people out, and that was the basis of our interviews with our people. And the ones that they compared us to were the sheepherders. Well, the sheepherders are a different type of people, and they're not indigenous to their lands. And so we gathered stories from our people. And what I did was…I don't…I used to have these fancy terms when I was using this. But it was like building a scenario of, let's see, I think I started with the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act [RECA][7] and all the counties and whatever they had listed and the dates of all the tests that they have inside of that and built this scenario of what people were eating, their lifestyles, where they gathered pine nuts, the currents whatever, especially during the heavy testing and the heavy radiation flows and the wind patterns. And there was not a whole lot of documentation. And when I'd get into DOE [Department of Energy] stuff or DOD [Department of Defense] stuff I'd get blocked. I could enter information. I would get some, I would get what I needed for that day, but then the next day, I wanted to get into it; I couldn't do it unless with another computer but that's a secret, don't tell anybody. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

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[6] Radiation-Dose Reconstructions are a type of research that attempts to reconstruct the doses of radiation received by certain populations from nuclear testing, working at a nuclear production facility, and other potential sources of radiation.

[7] The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act [RECA] was passed by Congress on October 5, 1999 to provide compensation for downwinders, Nevada Test Site employees, and uranium mining and milling employees who contracted cancer or other radiation-related disease.

KT: But I got some really interesting information and just built, I don't know, it was…it was really interesting. If I had it I could show you because I had the big old drawings of what I had done for the different communities. 'Cause that was another part of it, is doing radiation modules on health effects in the different communities. I don't know, it was fascinating to me. There would be times where I would forget I had kids and had to cook and feed them and, you know, and wash clothes and all that good stuff. But it was really interesting in that aspect. But then the outcome of it is when I have to see my family die from, you know, leukemia, from bone cancers, you know. They're strong people and then all of a sudden they just kind of wither to nothing. So, that's about it.

DE: Yeah. So what…do you remember what different communities you were going and talking to?

KT: We did South Fork [Indian Reservation] all the way to Beatty [Nevada], Ely [Nevada], Owahee [Nevada], Battle Mountain [Band of the Te-Moak Tribes of Western Shoshone]. I think there was Wells [Nevada] done, but somebody else had done that. There was a few people that had worked off and on on the project, but it was all the Shoshone Tribes within our territory. Um, Las Vegas [Tribe of Paiutes].

DE: Okay. So it was just Shoshone.

KT: Well, there was Paiutes here and there too. I'm not full Shoshone so, a little bit. Like my grandma says, if I really cut my finger the Paiute would bleed out.

DE: Ah, really? [Laugh]

KT: Must not be much.

Yeah it was all the native communities. A high concentration there for a while was in Ely [Nevada], Duckwater [Reservation], Eureka [Nevada]. Because one of the

testings, one of the, I don't remember the names of the tests, but it was a real heavy dose of radiation that had come through. And of course, a lot of those people aren't alive because they didn't live in regular houses during that time. You have most reservations that began around the forties but they didn't get regular housing until, maybe, the fifties or sixties or there. You know a lot of them would move into the chicken houses when the ranchers moved out. That kind of stuff. And, so, you know, it wasn't safe. There was no insulation in houses at the time. Of course, we didn't get… here the year a graduated from high school my grandma was just getting indoor plumbing. And I think it took another couple years after that to really get electricity.

DE: Mmm, wow

KT: So she had a toilet, and she had a sink and a bathtub. But you have to have electricity to have running water. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah [Laugh] exactly.

KT: So, it took a little while. It won't come at once. What else? And I remember when I was riding the bus back from Arizona 'cause my mom lived in Phoenix [Arizona], and I would come back in the summer-times. And I remember the military somewhere between [Las] Vegas [Nevada] and it must have been Ely [Nevada], where they had blocked traffic out. And it didn't mean anything to me back in those days. I was just tired because I just spent the night in Las Vegas walking around, you know, waiting for the bus to leave. I was probably about seven or eight years old. But I do remember that part. When people were telling me stories of the drone planes that flew over and the military blocking it because they were following these, this radiation. It's like okay maybe that's

what was going on. You know but it's not anything I can say for sure because I was real young. But now I have a good idea that's what it was. [Laugh]

DE: Wow, yeah

KT: What else about…um, I don't know…because I used to always be in those mountains right there. Get on a horse early in the morning, and that's where I'd be.

DE: So, did you ever see, or did your relatives ever see the mushroom clouds from the above-ground testing?

KT: Not here. Oh, St. George was the other place. The Shivwits, I think that's what they are. It's a reservation right outside of St. George. And they and the Moapa [Band of Paiute Indians], the people there used to go up to the top of the hill to watch the tests. They watched all those pretty colors come up in those big pretty clouds. You know that was sad. To see that, because you know because they might not be Shoshone but they're still, you know, part of our people. And that's the way I look at it and for them to be blind all their life because they went to see something the government said was safe. You know little kids never really fully developed because of that intense radiation as close as they were. But from around here, you know, you just get the after-affects. You might feel maybe feel something under the ground, but you know, because the water table is so high, I don't think up here you would have really felt it, but the people down closer to the test site, the closer you get to it, the more that they, the more stories they had of feeling the ground shake and tremble. You know, some dirty air coming over them, or planes, some kind of planes coming by. And the tough thing about it is today, almost all the people I interviewed, they're not here anymore. I mean that was…

DE: It's good you interviewed them.

KT: That's what I said because a lot of them started leaving this world probably five years after I started the project. And, it's like I just got frustrated because you can't do anything. You know the whole thing was for us to find some ways to protect our people. I don't know how we can do that but, it's, you know, the thyroid screening was pressed, different kind of cancer screenings were pressed. But it's just one of the things you leave up to the creator. And if he wants 'em to be in this world any longer then. . .you know they just suffered through it. But, I don't like to see that part.

DE: Yeah that's got to be difficult to see.

KT: That's sad.

DE: Yeah, really sad. So you said something about the Radiation Exposure Act [RECA] or something. Were you able to use, you know, your research to get any compensation from the government or…

KT: I still have the application. But I did give it to a lot of people when I'd interview them and know where they were. 'Cause at the same time the Diné[8] were pushing legislation for adding countings, or not countings, counties in Arizona, New Mexico and that area. They were adding counties to the legislation and the types of cancers were being added to it. Because when it first came out it was just very—there was probably just five types of cancers, the uranium mines and the test site. If you were at the test site, then there was compensation. And then going through all the doctor screenings and all this, of course, their doctors are not always going to always tell you the truth and help you, I guess, in any way. But for…and right now when I was reading the new legislation, all those counties were added and I think the uranium mining—miners have been

[8] Diné is the Navajo language name for the Navajo people.

increased. But I see that the test site people was decreased by $25,000. . .onsite testing. It was $100,000, now it's down to $75,000, I believe.

DE: So, that's the money they get if they can prove they had some sort of effects from the tests…

KT: Yeah, if they were in the tests. But the only thing that I really noticed—that it doesn't really help anything…it's only limited to maybe seven or eight tests. And that's not good.

DE: There were hundreds of tests. [Laugh]

KT: There's a thousand ninety-one or a thousand and one. It was over a thousand.[9]

DE: Wow.

KT: I was just amazed at that. And when…Okay there was one test, and I don't know if it was the 'not' something 'not shot' or whatever it was. But they did…They set one off and five minutes later in the Tonopah Site, they set another one off before you get to Fallon [Nevada] and Frenchmen's [Flat on the Nevada Test Site], they set another one off—these are all five minutes apart—and someplace before Fallon [Nevada]. So you have this series of shot given off in the early morning. And when I had interviewed a few, five or six, older people that were in the mountains by Austin [Nevada], they had felt something and seen, I can't remember, I can't… If I had my transcripts, I would be able to tell you. But it was something in the sky. The ground was shaking, the animals were crazy. And when I did my research on that test because of all that underground testing that went on, that's what shook up all that animals at that particular morning. And that's

[9] There were 1028 nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site. 100 were above ground atmospheric tests and 828 were underground tests. 24 of the underground tests were conducted for the United Kingdom (UK).

when people were gathering pine nuts, deer hunting, you know, gathering wood for the winter and… It just all matched up. And…

[Deleted Material]

KT: But those kind of things is always what I try to match up. I've always been that with religions around the world. That was my great dream when I started college years ago. And so I just have this knack for pulling things together and trying to decipher all of reality there. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah.

KT: And I was good at it.

DE: Figuring out puzzles kind of too. Yeah.

KT: Yeah. Nowadays I just want to make sure my family's just fine and the grandkids are just find and—and I kind of just let it be at that. 'Cause my turn is over.

DE: So when you say your turn is over, do you think someone else has to take up the cause? Or…

KT: It's still there. I've seen some young kids where I know their parents, and a whole bunch of our little kids were all running around together. And I see some of them being activists—hard activists, not just talking, but really doing something. And so it's still, now there's the turn, certain people will do things at certain times and other people have greater skills than we used to because of technology. It's different, it's really different. And I always, you know, I listen to my one of my great grandmas and she was a hundred and four when she died, but she's seen it from eighteen I think it was 1895 to 19. . . she died the year my daughter was born, 1993.

DE: Wow.

[noise]

KT: I bet you do. [Laugh] Yeah and just the things that happened during her lifetime you know having horses to cars to railroads to airplanes, you know. It was just really impressive to listen to her. And you know, she got into reading the bible and just the way she grew up compared to Christianity, you know, she kind of intertwined them and took the better parts of both. And she spoke, she spoke Italian, Shoshone, Paiute, English, and Portuguese.

DE: That's amazing.

KT: You know just because that's the kind of people that were around there. You know when she was here.

DE: Yeah

KT: She was over here on the other side of Ruby Valley, the people were attacked. And her, her mother was raped by an Italian railroad worker. And so she was thrown into a bush because the native people didn't like half-breeds. It was not a very good thing to have in the tribe during that time so my mom threw away, and I'm assuming it was her mom's sister, cause she always said her aunt picked her up and raised her. But they went on the other part and I'm not exactly sure what happened to her mom. But, you know, that's a lot of history right there. That's…

DE: Yeah

KT: And it, sometimes it gets really hard to take. And with the radiation stuff it was just really hard. It just got to be too difficult. We would do, um, talks. I could do the funders. Those kind of presentations. I could do the modules and the community-trainings, but I

would have a difficult time when it came to…I can't remember what it's called. When you you're pushing for legislation and you have to give some talk. There's a word for it.

DE: Yeah, I can't think of it right now. [Laugh] But I know what you're talking about.

KT: Yeah, and that was hard. Because, you know, I'm talking about a lot of my family and that. It's very emotional for me. I just couldn't do that any more.

DE: Was it hard because of the reactions you got from the politicians? Or just that it was revealing?

KT: Oh, I ignored the pol…They're just people. They ain't no better than I was. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: Or I am today. And some of them just…I don't mean to be racist sounding, but they're just a bunch of old white men that just sit there and do nothing. [Laugh] I went into the senator's cafeteria one time and I would swear half those people are dead sitting there.

DE: [Laugh]

KT: Cause they are so white, they don't move. They have food in front of them, but it's just like some sci-fi movie where they're just sitting there, you know.

DE: [Laugh]

KT: I wanted to go touch some people and to see if they were alive. You know, are you really there?

DE: [Laugh]

KT: But eventually they did get up when the buzzer rang to go beep, you know just like those white mice that will do that.

DE: [Laugh] Oh yeah…

KT: That what it reminded me of. It's just really frustrating. Some people will listen. Then you just have the…I don't know the deaf ears I guess.

DE: Hmm. Yeah.

KT: And I don't play political games of any kind. I'd just as soon turn around and just walk away, because I don't want to waste my time.

DE: Yeah

KT: But there's other people who have the knack for it, and so they can do that job. That's why I said I am—I do the footwork. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh] There's skills for everybody [laugh] to do different things. Yeah.

KT: I just do the other paperwork. I enjoyed doing the curriculum for the modules. That was my favorite part. Cause I did all the research and I put things together. That's one of the better things I have…

DE: So curriculum, who were you teaching about the…?

KT: We'd just go to communities and have community meetings at the different reservations and explain what we have found and how the radiation has affected them. It was really to stimulate them, to bring in interviews so we can get more documentation. As well as educate them and let them know why, you know, why maybe their grandmother was blind, you know. Or why people were having thyroid problems. Or why their bone degeneration is speeding up. You know, because after that it was like a fifteen-year span from the last test to forty to fifty years. Each one of those decades brought on a different type of cancer within a gen…you know, like a different generation or, not even a generation, but just in a year's span. As if they were, you know, three years old and radiation is creeping on the ground, of course this little person's going to get hit better,

you know, more than this person. It's just pulling all the information together for them. I don't really know what became of the project. You have to ask Ian [Zabarte][10] on that. He's stayed over there...he stayed a little longer than I did.

DE: Ok I'll ask him.

KT: Yeah, because my…I had my, my littlest girl right at the end of my time that I was working there. But that was one of my favorite jobs. 'Cause I can do curriculum almost anything. I can pull out science and go to the tree and take a bunch of kids and tell them all about it. Quiz them. [Laugh] I now know it all.

DE: [Laugh] Well it makes sense that you're still teaching. You said you were…

KT: And I don't want to be a real teacher because they have more work to do these days with No Child Left Behind [Act].[11]

DE: Oh yeah.

KT: And the dealing with the parents and all that stuff. So, I like to be the substitute that can do the groundwork, and I'll go in draw up the tests and…[laugh]

DE: I remember loving when substitutes came in 'cause they were always more interesting than my teachers. [Laugh]

KT: [Laugh] Oh yeah, I can find games to play out of thin air and whatever else. My kids at work, tell…when they first started I said I will be quizzing you on stuff, so you better pay attention to what I say. Then I told them when I brought them here, they would have to write an essay. So three of them didn't want to come because they didn't want to write the essay. I says well it wasn't the whole point of coming here to write the essay. You

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[10] See interview with Ian Zabarte. Nuclear Technology in the American West Oral History Project, Everett L. Cooley Collection, Tape No. u-1927, J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections.

[11] No Child Left Behind Act is a Bush Administration education reform.

still need to write the essay. They told me, 'You do that in school? We don't take tests here.'

[Unidentified voice]: Here you go Mom.

KT: Thank you.

'That's in school.' And I said, no no no. You always…right now in this day and age you need to learn how to write, you need verbal communication and these are just skills that I want you to work on. So I took them to join. It's at the employment office in Ely. And that lady was just so articulate. And she just was right on about the writing skills, communication. And it didn't matter what field that they were going into. She…'cause at the beginning she asked them what their interests were. And even if you're a mechanic, you have to write. Because if somebody comes in saying 'You don't do this to my car, or you did that to my truck and that's not what I wanted.' If you didn't write it down, who's right? The customer's right. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah.

KT: But she went to every one of them, and oh man it was just wonderful. It's just like reinforced everything I said. And I was just so happy. [Laugh]

DE: That's good. [Laugh]

KT: She gets so mad at me too [referring to her daughter who was nearby]. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: She's my almost twelve-year old. Just one of my workers. He's fifteen.

DE: Oh, okay.

KT: And the oldest one is my other daughter that's seventeen. She enlisted in the Marines last…a couple months ago.

Ah, get Kleenex grandson, there's paper towels over here.

And then graduates this school year so. So, she'll be on her way.

DE: Basic training and…

KT: Right after, the day after graduation.

DE: Oh yeah.

[DE and KT laugh about something they saw]

KT: So between now and then, I got to not let her get pregnant. Stick rocks in. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: Chastity belt. [Laugh] Big iron something or other. [Laugh] I can't just say things and expect them to…to follow through with it because, well, the first two have just…I don't know, they just go crazy. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: But that's life.

DE: Yeah.

KT: And I love my grandchildren, so that's all good. As long as they're not around me all the time. [Laugh]

DE: Need some alone time.

KT: Yes, keep some space between me and them.

DE: So, you said something about, um, the Shoshones being categorized with the sheepherders but they really had differences from the sheepherders. Can you explain that a little bit more?

KT: Ok. It's just not the Shoshones but it's like the Shivwits and the Paiutes down closer to the testing. Sheepherders, they go…I think it's in the spring, they used to graze from

it's like from Wendover all the way down south, but they just graze in a little certain area. And their meals, it's like whatever they bought from town. It was, I don't know, I guess they lived in a…um…their lifestyle was lived in a house the majority of the year except for the time that they moved the sheep. And they'd be out for maybe three months a year. You know, moving sheep and then they would bring 'em back or went in a circle. Or maybe they didn't even go that far. There was a certain allotted area for sheep at the time. And our people lived in specific areas all the time. And, you know, our main food-source was rabbits. Native foods that you see over here. And during the fifties and sixties a lot of people planted gardens. So the way that the radiation was traced, it might have missed the sheep herders during that time and I know they did get sick and stuff, you know. But we're stationary because we were forced on the lands spaces we're on. Where they just kind of went, and then they went home.

DE: Oh yeah

KT: Maybe they didn't even live in Nevada, maybe they were sheepherders from Idaho and just had a grazing area for sheep.

DE: That makes sense.

KT: So their lifestyle was different than ours. Especially when you get closer to the test sites everything's contaminated. The soil's contaminated, the water's contaminated. I know we had DOE [Department of Energy] people tell us that they built a cyclone fence around the test site. And, and they went on and on about this little scenario. And it's like okay. So, that cyclone fence sits what, this much above the ground, you have metal poles, and the water stops where the fence post stops. And the air stops at the fence line. I mean is this, is this, what you're trying to tell me, you know?

DE: Yeah.

KT: Well I just love to do that stuff. Because they would…I mean they're trying to make sense and they always send young people who just got hired or interning for the summer to try to make us feel like we're really dumb and we're really stupid, but the way that they have those people present, I mean that's their job they have to do that. But they're there to answer questions, but if they can't answer questions and give us a truthful round about that radiation did go from here to New York on a couple tests, you're, you're inefficient. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah. [Laugh]

KT: They're inefficient, you know, but that's how the government works is they send young people. People that don't have answers so they can truthfully say, we don't know how to answer that. I can't answer that, I don't know. I'll get back to you. Well, guess what? You know, good thing I never held my breath. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah. [Laugh]

KT: You know. Or other people even, you know. We all sat there holding our breath waiting for them to return, you know, an answer or something, that would have been the end of us a long time ago.

DE: Yeah.

KT: With the other part with them being, ok, the other part of the lifestyle. Um…When we have ceremonies, we're out and we…that the winds blow and the rains snow, yeah rain snow, the snow comes over certain mountaintops. Well some of those are the areas where there would be ceremonies during different times of the year. Well radiation is going to follow that same type of pattern, as far as I'm concerned, and if you look at the

weather station and see the wind, and how it blows and the rains, how it comes. Well, guess what, that's where the majority of it sats or sits or went, or covered us while we were there, you know. It's just all common sense. They want to make it with big gigantic scientific words. But in reality, it's just common sense how things go.

DE: Yeah.

KT: And if your dirt's being picked up, the heavier particles are going to fall here and the lighter particles are going to fall there. Same as radiation. How the isotopes that fall, the heavier ones fall down along the way, the smaller ones will go a little further. That's just common sense. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: I think it is. A lot of other people don't but… [laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: It's a dangerous thing and there is an area that is still considered to be hotspot. If you go up Highway Fifty and you notice when you're going along that the shrubs, or even the sage, the shrubs, the weeds even, you know, it'll be—you know they'll be about this high, then all of a sudden they jump to this low. And that's how they stay year round. They don't grow even if they have lots of rain. They're dwarfed forever.

DE: They stay low…wow.

KT: And it's the whole valley. I don't know how long it is. You can get that that information from Ian [Zabarte]. But we took our funders through that area and, of course, I explained to them the same way I did, you know, that it's common sense. If that's the way the wind blow the hardest and that's where the snow comes and falls the deepest and

the rains come heavier and, you know, you have more washes over here. [Laugh] Of course that's where it's going to fall.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

KT: But I think the other part of what I thought was pretty neat...is taking all the pieces out of a bomb during the different types of testing. Gosh, I couldn't even name them now but it's every little, every little piece that makes a bomb has a different impact on the earth, has a different health effect on how it affects life in general. I mean, it's just totally amazing. I mean you have TNT in there and TNT is carcinogenic. They have some really horrible stuff in it you know to make TNT.

DE: Yeah.

KT: That just one. If you have cesium and uranium and iodine, each one of those has its own health effects on life as a whole in general. I mean you know it affects everything. And of course what affects the earth we walk on, the air we breath, the water we drink. It affects everything. All of us.

DE: So, would you say that you are opposed to nuclear weapons in general or is that something other Shoshones have kind of come to believe because of the effects of radiation?

KT: Hmmm. My personal belief would be you know to stop production. But because of all the socioeconomic stuff that makes this world go round and round. You know, it's a hard one to really make a judgment or to feel safe. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah. [laugh]

KT: You know it's just. I was just watching things and protecting yourself is all we can do right now. And a lot of the people in there [the conference tent] can do some really

cool stuff. And I'm hoping some of my kids will do something some day. But at least they have the knowledge of it.

DE: Yeah.

KT: That's protection within itself, is knowledge.

DE: Um hum.

KT: The one thing that I've, and I almost did it. You know the mines around here, I've always avoided working for a mine.

[Unidentified speaker]: Mom, here put bug spray on.

KT: You?

[Unidentified speaker]: No, you.

KT: Ah, I did a long time ago. You want me to give you some?

[Unidentified speaker]: Sure.

KT: On your feet. [spraying sound]

KT: Ok turn around. [spraying sound]

Oh you know what's really interesting, I got this bug spray…is that certain types of radiation can have poison in it and just like mosquitoes carry malaria, I think that some of that can get into the bugs and when it stings it gives…um…what do you call it…a better a harder reaction. Because if I get, if I get stung by, well bees are a lot of people, but get stung by them, it can make me really sick. Mosquitoes used to just be horrible.

DE: Oh yeah.

KT: I used to just hate that. And in Owyhee they're huge. They're about this big.

DE: Oh gosh.

KT: I used to just watch them, you know, with their big old long stingers and it's like they'd land on me. I'd watch it and it would touch my skin I could feel it [slap] ah and it sting. [Laugh]

DE: Just stick it in…[Laugh]

KT: Don't you dare bite me. I don't know, there is just, there is just so much to it. And I forgot the question that you asked me. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh] I forgot it too.

KT: It had to do with Shoshones and nuclear testing.

DE: Oh yeah…nuclear yeah…

KT: Nuclear tests…Well, I can't speak for anybody else. I just speak for myself and my family. I have uncles that were drafted to war. Some of them couldn't have babies when they came back, 'cause of the Agent Orange over there.

DE: Yeah.

KT: And when they tried to collect compensation, I think they were denied because they got it in war in Vietnam. It was radiation from this country.

DE: Oh.

KT: If they were in the Pacific Islands, they didn't keep records very well in the military. So they couldn't prove they were there. [Laugh]

DE: Oh no.

KT: It just gets really ridiculous. I don't know. Our government uses people like pawns. You know, it's just whoever's there that has an itch to see blood I guess. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: Here comes the war. And sometimes it's an economy, some for economy growth. You know they make weapons, they make money. They sell products. You know they have an import, they have an export. You know. It's just like the gasoline now. And the cars and [laugh].

DE: Yeah.

[Unidentified speaker]: [unintelligible]

KT: Oh just great! Like your hairdo. [Laugh]

It's just a hard, hard call. But if it would be possible. You know we live in a utopia where there would be no weapons, there would be no toxic poisons. There would be serenity and peace and cleanliness. And…[Laugh]

DE: Sounds nice [Laugh]

KT: Harmony amongst people.

KT: And maybe I might live to see the day and maybe I won't. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah. [Laugh]

KT: But, it's, you know, it's just life. Sometimes you just got to accept the good with the bad and do the best you can. You know, but I have, I have a lot of pride in a lot of the people I've heard speaking today. They've done some magnificent stuff. That's what I wanted the kids to hear when I brought them here.

DE: Hear all of the stories and the different struggles.

KT: Oh there's a big mosquito.

DE: Oh, thank you.

KT: They're still coming around you. Yeah, I believe a lot of the bugs can do a lot of damage too. I don't really get in to that much. I used to tease our nuclear physicist

about…I'd ask him all kinds of questions. And between him and the doctor they'd ask me, where do you get these questions. I don't know, I think I just pull them out of thin air or some. It's just something I'd like to know so I can try to put stuff together. I says, well isn't it possible that we could be like cockroaches to radiation. You know, some native people. If you live a certain distance from it, you just kind of build an immunity to it. You know like the cockroaches in the wall when they spray a certain, a certain type of pesticide and the cockroaches in the wall get immune to it, and the eggs are totally immune to it so they have to find something else to kill 'em. Oh no, nuclear physicist is telling me 'you can't, you can't do that.' And he gave me this huge long scientific reason why we're not like cockroaches. And it had to be with some little gland in the cockroach. And I said why can't that be the thyroid? You know, because if it's taken out at an early age, or the tonsils or appendix. You know something that people in general have outgrown from being rock ages man. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: Can't even remember those, those scientific terms. 'Cavemen. Yeah, that's what it is. And he told me that, he told me that it wasn't possible. But I still think if they really thought about it, because scientists have to sit and ponder for ten to twenty years you know and ahh loosen their tie so they can speak freely.

DE: [Laugh]

KT: There still, there's still something to it somewhere. Because there's a lot of body parts that we don't use that the cavemen used. And if that little piece of our body was radioactive and it was taken out, and all the radiation was in it, just like your thyroid, it's produced radioactive hormones. And why can't we be immune to it at some point in

time? People up close aren't. After each generation if you see, different types of cancer reacting differently to a certain type of people, it's like a new strain of virus. Each strain is different, and it hits the human population the same, but radiation has hit different races of people differently. But it still destroys the environment. And, that's how we have to learn to adapt again. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: Bummer. [Laugh]

DE: Yet again.

KT: Yeah, what else do you want to know?

DE: I'd like to hear if you think there are any ethical considerations with nuclear testing.

KT: Oh ethic. Oh the ethics of everything. It's very unethical. [Laugh] There is a part of me that says…no, there isn't a part of me that will say it's ok. I don't know. I just have this thing for the human race, you know, it's... Some races are different than other races. And some people are meaner than other people. And you have bad apples in every race, but the politicians are a race of their own. And they're just ignorant old fools that need to align themselves at the test site and be nuked. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: I don't know if want to write that. They might be hunting me down. [Laugh] Oh goodness.

DE: [Laugh]

KT: But radiation, weapons, wars, there's, there's no ethics to it. No good ethics anyway. I've just been trying to give my kids good work ethics, so they can grow into a society and know how to take care of themselves when they're older.

DE: That's important.

KT: That's kind of the small-based ethical journey of mine now. [Laugh] I kind of like you know just we'll just see things. I don't have a satellite TV anymore so I don't get to watch TV. But when my son went to war, when they first started bombing Baghdad, I was watching CNN every morning.

DE: Oh yeah.

KT: Watching those young people get off the planes and everything. And it's like ah man. Ah, you know, just say good prayers for them that they can go home to their families, and you know a lot of 'em won't. You know. Every time our men have been drafted to war and all of the World War I, II, Vietnam, Korea. Gosh I want to say Saudi Arabia, Desert Storm. [Laugh]

DE: Oh yeah.

KT: You know, and some come home and some don't. And the people that died on the land fighting against Spaniards when they came through 'cause they were just so ruthless. The white people when they came through.

Oh, I got a good one. I was listening in my speech class. We had to listen to Arnold Schwarzenegger when he just became governor and doing his beginning speech. He talked about the immigrants and how his family were immigrants from Austria, or his mom and dad. And how they put him through school. And then he talked so highly about immigrants and then all of a sudden he turned on the Mexican immigrants because, you know, that law and whatever was coming into play. And we're not immigrants, and we're treated worse than any immigrant in this whole country. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah.

KT: I thought that was so interesting.

DE: Yeah. Well it is interesting because my students will say, 'We're all immigrants.' And I have to remind them that we're not all immigrants. That there were people here before Europeans came.

KT: Yeah. And I had a class, gosh, I want to think it was a Native American, no, it was history, Arizona history. The first day I just sat down in that class and that professor started talking about Arizona and when it became a state, or the territory, then the state. And he just kept talking on and on like nobody ever lived there because there was nothing there. There was nobody there. And you know during that time…that college is based on—it's leased from the Salt River Pimas, I believe. And he…and they just found that underground canal where they had a city, as the Pimas, Zapapcos [spelling???], Maricopas, the whole bunch of them. Anyway the archeologists were unearthing it, and it was this big old something new, you know in archeology in the state of Arizona. Here this professor is saying that there was, you know it was just like nobody. They just all came in and just started living there and setting up camp here. And I asked him, I said: 'So, what tribes were living here before Arizona was a territory?'

'Oh nobody was here.'

And I kind of looked around. And there was a couple other Natives in the class, and I just says 'Well you know this college is leased round from the Salt River Pimas and they've been here quite a long time. I mean you know, we're not talking generations and generations. That canal that was just found said to be like ten thousand years old. So I know you're not ten thousand years old, and I know your grandpa wasn't ten thousand years old.' And people are starting to look at me. And, of course I get embarrassed. And

then he just got really angry with me and didn't answer a whole bunch of other stuff. And if I could have been articulate and kept up the little whatever I was doing. But I didn't, I just got frustrated and walked out of class.

And then I went to, you know, Manny Peno [spelling???] I think is still at Scottsdale College. I think he's their Native Director, whatever. But, when I was there it was a different guy and I think he helped me write a letter. He's my federal law teacher. And he helped me write a letter. And I think they got rid of him. The Arizona whatever he was. So it's kind of like if you do a little bit of grunt work without arguing in front of a lot of people, then maybe something good comes out of it at the end. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah.

KT: And you know, that's the best I can wish with all the nuclear activity that goes on. You know…

DE: Put in your grunt work and…

KT: Yeah I've had one son in the war. And he was, gosh in three wars before he was even twenty-five.

DE: Um. Wow.

KT: Now he'll be thirty and he's… it's just a war's a war and it kills some part of the spirit in a person. So they just off by themselves. [Laugh]

DE: Yeah.

KT: But he could be like his mom and just be a hermit. [Laugh.]

DE: You never know. [Laugh]

KT: I just love to be. [Laugh]

DE: [Laugh]

KT: I tell my kids when they were small. I'm going to hermitize myself now. So they always thought it was a word. [Laugh] Make up words you know. But, anyways, yeah, what else do you want to know? [Laugh]

DE: Well, I think I feel pretty good with the information that you gave me. Is there anything else you want to share about your experiences? Or any closing comments kind of about…especially about the nuclear stuff, but about anything we talked about.

KT: No, but in my prayers, you know, we always give thanks to the creator for all that we've been blessed with. You know, and ask for protection for all the animals, and the trees, and the air, the water, and the land. You know, and just tell people to love themselves and their children.

DE: That a good thing.

KT: And that's all I've ever done.

DE: Great. And is there anyone else that you would recommend that I talk to for this oral history project?

KT: You can try Virginia Sanchez. I don't know if she will have time. She's a very busy lady.

DE: And she's…

KT: She's doing a presentation here on the spring fish in Duckwater.

DE: Oh ok, good and she's Duckwater.

KT: Yeah, she's the grant writer there.

DE: Ok.

KT: She'll be here Friday I think. I haven't even looked at the agenda. I made my kids all read it. I skimmed through it. I told them and, you know, I'm going to make like you all

are adults this weekend and you behave yourselves. You know where I'll be. 'Cause we were, we were loading wood for the elders. We have to get sixteen cords and we probably got maybe almost three.

DE: Wow.

KT: And so my feet really hurt and so I'm just hiding from the sun, from the pains. [Laugh]

DE: It's hot out in the sun.

KT: Now it's nice and the bugs come out.

DE: Yeah, exactly.

KT: Do you want bug spray?

DE: I've got some actually back at the…back at my camp, so I'm going to head over there and…

KT: Cause they're going to get hungry pretty soon. When people start to go and eat they get hungry too.

DE: They like me too, so. [Laugh]

KT: [Laugh] Yeah, yeah, like I said most of the people I interviewed, a lot of 'em are gone. I'd have to think about that and see who else. You know, are you just looking for anybody?

DE: Yeah, anyone who's had experiences with nuclear technology, nuclear waste, nuclear testing, uranium mining. The project is kind of the American West, this area, Great Basin area and how nuclear issues have affected all the people living here. So…

END OF INTERVIEW