

WAGON WHEEL INFORMATION COMMITTEE

PINEDALE, WYOMING 82941

GENERAL CHAIRMAN, Floyd Bousman
CHAIRWOMAN, Sally H. Mackey

TREASURER, Jo Crandall
SECRETARY, Daphne Platts

March 30, 1973

APR 3 1973

Senator Gale McGee
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator McGee:

Thank you for your letter of March 2 and the copy of the letter you sent to Dr. Dixy Lee Ray, Chairman of the AEC.

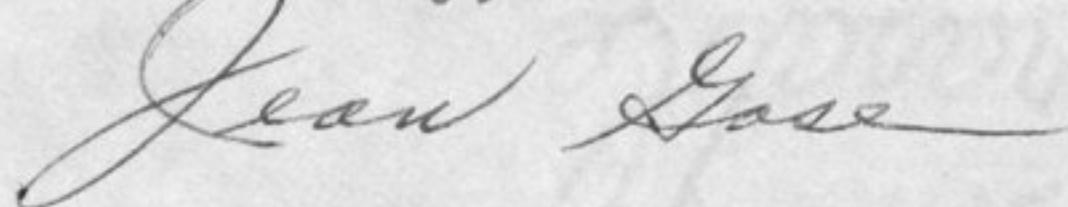
The letter, I felt, was excellent and deserving of careful consideration. I will be most interested in receiving a copy of her reply.

Enclosed are two news articles that I thought you would be interested in. You may have already seen them, but I think they deserve careful consideration. The article on Rio Blanco is of particular interest to myself (and many others) because of Dave Jackson's ^{of AEC} admitting that eventually the water will be contaminated. It has been my view for a long time, that if faced with survival, we could find a substitute for gas but thus far we haven't anything that will replace our water. We simply can't afford a risk of this possibility.

The other article on OTA is interesting to me because this may be a new avenue open to us to fight Wagon Wheel. Inasmuch as you are a United States Senator and can gain information much more readily than we can, would you look into this new "arm of Congress" and see what help it may be to us and our state as a whole.

Wishing you the best, I am

Sincerely,



Mrs. Jean Gose

Coloradans Get Close Look

★THE DENVER POST Mon., Mar. 19, 1973

19

at Nevada A-Test Sites

By STEVE WYNKOOP
Denver Post Staff Writer

MERCURY, Nev. — A rumbling, shaking of earth has pockmarked Frenchman and Yucca Flats—barren pieces of earth once seared of life by blinding atomic thunderclaps.

More moonscape than desert, its life stunted and twisted here and there, the Nevada Test Site is mother to Project Rio Blanco.

It is here the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) has proved the instruments of war and sought to turn them into tools of peace.

The test site is 1,350 square miles of austere regimentation. Concrete bunkers give way to hillsides of look-alike trailer huts, and everywhere there are silent, blue-suited Wackenhut guards in Prussian mufti.

COLORADO VISITORS

It's morning at the Nevada Operations Office in Las Vegas. The AEC has two busloads of tourists, many of whom are residents of the Western Colorado towns and cities around the Rio Blanco site.

Everyone is given a badge and identified.

Tour guides are Dave Jackson, AEC press relations officer, and Hal Aronson, vice president of CER Geonuclear, industrial sponsors of the proposed Western Colorado Rio Blanco shot.

BADGES EXPLAINED

Jackson explains about the badges. You aren't expected to get any more radiation than at home, he says, but the film badge goes into a lead-lined canister after your tour of the site.

Mercury is seventy miles north of the glitter of the strip.

Mercury is a small agglomeration of buildings just inside the fence that rims the test site. The buses whiz past to Frenchman Flat—an expanse of alluvial gravels ringed with mountains.

WEAPONS TEST

Aronson, a former AEC weapons consultant, spun a tale about the time the AEC put pigs in weapons carriers near an atmospheric blast.

With high humor, Aronson told how wounded, radiation burned pigs are difficult to round up after they've been blasted out of a weapons carrier by an atom bomb.

That's the type of experiment they carried out at Frenchman Flat.

The bus rumbles up over a saddle in the mountains and down into Yucca Flat. The destination is the site of an underground nuclear explosion.

It was called Piledriver—61 kilotons of nuclear explosive

force detonated in a mined drift deep in the granite guts of a mountain.

The drift, at the bottom of an 1,800-foot shaft, was sandbagged in for the shot. Afterwards, it was mined out again. Today, it is a chief tourist attraction.

Seven years after the 1966 Piledriver event, hundreds of tourists have walked within 130 feet of ground zero to see the compacted, flaking granite and green plaster covering radioactive, black melted rock, chipped here and there by souvenir hunters.

To show the relative safety of the blasts, Aronson said there have been a half dozen blasts since within 20 miles that have left the mine unaffected.

That was a theme of the tour—the safety of underground nuclear detonations. Another was that the AEC and its contractors in the less than 30 years since the super-secret Trinity project at Los Alamos, N.M., have acquired Solomon-like wisdom about the atom.

RADIATION RISK

There was a visit to a dairy herd and the comment a person would have to eat a thousand pounds of liver from contaminated cows in two weeks to approach dangerous radioactive cesium concentrations in the human body.

At Project Sedan—a huge hole dug in the desert by a 100-kiloton device similar to those that might have been used to dig the ill-fated trans-isthmian canal with A-bombs in Central America—tourists are reassuringly told 90 per cent of the radioactivity was contained in the blast area.

A high point of the tour was showing off an area atop an underground blast where an adjacent water well is pumping pure water from aquifers near ground zero deep underground.

Jackson makes much of the pure water to the tourists, telling them that no groundwater contamination has oc-

curred. This has been a big concern of persons living near the proposed Rio Blanco site in Western Colorado.

CONTAMINATION COMING

When questioned further, Jackson concedes the water will become contaminated in "25 to 100 years." He's uncertain to what degree contamination will

occur and says that "might be classified."

He says that contamination couldn't occur at the Rio Blanco shot because the formations in which the detonation will take place are well below any known aquifers.

Rio Blanco, to be detonated near Meeker, Colo., is an ex-

periment to free natural gas trapped in sandstone deep underground by cracking rock formations and "stimulating" gas flow with three 30-kiloton nuclear devices. The AEC says the blast won't take place before May.

The tourists are then bused to Control Point One—a secure

compound within a secure compound—where guards board the bus to check ID tags against driver's licenses as they did at the Mercury gate that morning.

It is afternoon. Three government and civilian scientists are waiting to make presentations and answer questions about Project Rio Blanco.