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Rawlins: So you're the secretary of the Wagonwheel Information Committee?

Platts: Correct.

Rawlins: So how did you first get involved in it? Were you one of the organizers or were you --

Platts: No, I was just interested in it. Concerned.

Rawlins: Who talked to you about it first?

Platts: I don't remember who talked to me about it first. I remember seeing the Draft Environmental Statement and becoming very alarmed at one statement in it that said that this would be an ideal place for this kind of experiment because it was so sparsely populated and it was not near any populated areas.

Rawlins: So the aspect that bothered you was the disregard.

Platts: We really didn't matter very much.

Rawlins: That you were being sacrificed. Did you see, in a lot of situations people are called on to, you know, make various kinds of sacrifices. How did you feel about that, did you feel like there was some kind of justification for it?

Platts: Well, obviously, I didn't think there was any justification for it. No. Huh-uh. I mean at that point, and I don't know why, but I was very suspicious of the AEC, which was a power at that time. And not very trusting of the government. And I don't know, maybe it had something to do with the Viet Nam war.

Rawlins: Hmm. And how, just generally how did you feel about the, was the fact that it was atomic stuff,

nuclear stuff, was that the most significant issue in your mind?

Platts: Oh, sure. To me it was, yes. Mm-hmm.

Rawlins: What actual activities, in the course of organizing the information committee, what actual activities do you recall taking part in? I mean, were you, you said Phyllis Berg, Phillip Swift and [?] Swift were contact people.

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Platts: Uh-huh. Phyllis Berg was very active in this. Yeah. She was real active and you really should talk to her.

Rawlins: What was your predominant role, what you remember doing?

Platts; I remember helping with the straw vote that we had. I was with Judy Springman. We were over in Big Piney. She wasn't Judy Springman then. And we were there all day.

Rawlins: Did you, now, one thing that I've noted is that there seemed to be a fair amount of division between this side of the valley, Pinedale, and Big Piney, on whether or not this should happen. Some strong support was over in Big Piney. Did you, were there any confrontations when you were taking this straw poll? Did people say anything to you or do anything?

Platts; No, not really. I mean, some people, when we asked them if they would like to take part, they were, what's the word, pretty brusque in turning us down. But nobody was mean or --

Rawlins: So they didn't, those people didn't want to vote -

Platts: No one threw eggs at us. No. (Laughs.)

Rawlins: Those people wouldn't vote yes or no.

Platts; Right. They just didn't want to participate at all. But as I recall we had quite a few people that went through. And I think a lot of those people that went through, it would be interesting to look back at the results of that from the Big Piney thing, where people that perhaps ended up voting yes because it was more or less a secret ballot and we didn't make them sign anything, you

know. And they could maybe express themselves more freely.

Rawlins: Yeah. As I recall the people that voted, it pretty much, what, four to one against or something like that. As far as this community, Pinedale, I've heard about, for instance, you know, the big fundraiser involved the bars and a lot of other things that happened during that time. Would you say that in the mind of the

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community here, that was a fairly a sort of a galvanizing effort for this community?

Platts: What, the whole, the committee itself?

Rawlins: Yeah. And the Wagonwheel Project.

Platts: Yeah, I think so. It was an amazing group. [?] people from all kinds of businesses, educators, teachers, businessmen, ranchers, professional people, ministers. I mean, it was a real diverse, cohesive group.

Rawlins: And how, can you think of, since that time can you think of any issue or situation that has mobilized this community to that degree?

Platts: No.

Rawlins: So that's probably the peak of activism you've seen around here.

Platts: Exactly. And it's amazing how many people don't know a thing about it.

Rawlins: What was, now, at that time, were you, you were involved with the library here? You were the librarian?

Platts: Mm-hmm. What year was that? '72, '73? I didn't start working here until '74. So no, I wasn't. I was probably doing volunteer work, maybe at the grade school library.

Rawlins: And as far as, how long have you been in Pinedale?

Platts: Since '67. August '67.

Rawlins: What brought you here?

Platts: Um, my husband. His practice, he went into dental practice here.

Rawlins: And at that particular time, when the Wagonwheel Committee started up, how much identification did you have with this community? Did you feel like you were pretty much at home here?

Platts: I felt comfortable here.

Rawlins: What about, did the Wagonwheel, did being on the Wagonwheel Committee and being active with it, how did that affect your sense of this community? Did you get more involved in the community, did your sense of the community change during that process of being involved?

Platts: Hmm, that's hard to say, Chip. I don't know. Yean. (Laughs.) Probably became more a part of it because I was such a newcomer at that point. You know, and through this I met a lot of people that I would not, might not have never, might not have ever met before, you know. So it was a very positive experience for me.

Rawlins: Do you think that the Wagonwheel Committee and the activity that went on, do you think that had some kind of an important role in shaping Pinedale as it is today or as it's been for the last twenty years? Is it, were there connections made that have been kept up as far as politics or community improvement or anything? Or did all this sort of peak and then drop out after that?

Platts: I kind of feel it all just sort of peaked, and then people started becoming more involved with their own interests. I think there was, I think what started this in the first place was something called, "Take a Look." Which was taking, maybe that's the first time I've thought about it.

Rawlins: Which was sort of a community evaluation, community improvement --

Platts: Right, yeah. And I know that that was the night that Ken Perry came and spoke, and spoke an awful lot about this, I think.

Rawlins: And your observation that it was a pretty kind of diverse coalition that involved ranchers and teachers and ministers and a whole bunch of other people who all live in the same community but don't necessarily have the same political interests. So you felt like this was an issue that was strong enough, that it enough of a threat to bring about coalition. That after the threat was gone, it couldn't really hold.

Platts: Mm-hmm. And I think people were in it maybe for different reasons. I mean, maybe the Boulder



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community, it seems to me the irrigation ditch there was a main thing. Would it survive? You know. And for me, it was the nuclear threat that bothered me, and the fact that we were considered expendable. You know, I don't know what other people's, but those are two that kind of stand out in my mind. And I remember someone saying something about it would just bring up an awful lot of Texans and they would destroy the ecosystem of the desert out there, 'cause they'd be running back and forth in all their pickup trucks. (Laughs.) So he wasn't concerned about the nuclear thing at all. He was concerned about all these Texans and their pickup trucks.

Rawlins: I've heard of the Yellow Peril. Is that the Snakeskin Cowboy Boot Peril?

Platts: I guess.

Rawlins: Now, it's interesting. You know, I wasn't here during the Wagonwheel situation but I recall the Union Pass issue. You know, with the timber cutting on Union Pass, which was a fairly galvanizing issue that united, you know, the environmental interests, the ranchers. And John Perry Barlow, of course, was right in the center of that. Do you feel like, in some way the Wagonwheel Committee was a model for that later activism of that Union Pass, do you think?

Platts: I have no idea.

Rawlins: Do you think Pinedale had learned something?

Platts: I don't know.

Rawlins: I guess, you know, part of what I'm trying to pursue is the, not just documenting the events themselves, which, good heavens, Sally has done

far beyond anything I could ever hope to do, but also through the legacy of something like this. And what remains in memory about it. For instance, you still attend, do you attend the meetings of the Wagonwheel?

Platts: No. I don't.

Rawlins: Do you feel like if the tests in Colorado and New Mexico had been successful, do you feel that the

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Wagonwheel Project would have gone on here despite the citizens' trip to Washington and everything that was done?

Platts: Hmm, I don't know. I don't know about that.

Rawlins: As far as the accomplishment of the information committee, what do you feel that group accomplished, what do you think the primary effectiveness of it?

Platts: The primary effectiveness was that they did not come in and they did not do the test.

Rawlins: So, but, do you think that was achieved more at a local level? Do you think that was, do you think the trip to Washington, for instance, was the most effective part of it? Do you think the mobilizing the community here was the most effective part of it?

Platts: I think it all tied together. There was no way we could have gone to Washington and made the same case without the community being behind us. Not at all.

Rawlins: It's a, that's one thing I've sort of gotten different calls from on people, whether or not they thought the Wagonwheel Project would have been done if, you know, if the tests had been successful. And it's, to me it's kind of an interesting question because it, I guess, when you're talking about the federal government and the way people see the government, you know, whether they see it as this hostile and distant force or whether they see it as something in which they're involved. The question, I guess, goes into that. And it's, you feel like the government at that point was more driven by its representative functions or do you feel it was,

had an agenda that was tied to El Paso Natural Gas and the AEC? And who is, who do you feel like the government was working for at that point?

Platts: At that point I think we felt, or I felt that they were working for the AEC and El Paso Natural Gas Company. I mean just the fact that we went back there and we had had an appointment set up with the AEC. And then there was a change in command

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and Dixie Lee Ray, there was no way on God's green earth that she was going to visit with us.

Rawlins: She wanted no part of it.

Platts: No.

Rawlins: And how about the congressional delegation? What sort of help did you get from the congressional delegation back there?

Platts: I feel we had a great deal of help. I think Teno Roncalio was especially effective, yeah.

Rawlins: What about Cliff Hansen? You know, in that he had a lot of personal business interest in oil and gas.

Platts: Well, the opinion that, I mean, he was certainly a gentleman and he certainly spent time with us and he certainly listened. And where it went from there, I don't know. I really don't.

Rawlins: What about Gale McGee? Can you think of any particular incidents or any statements or anything like that would indicate any —

Platts: No. No.

Rawlins: So, but Teno stands out in your mind as being really helpful?

Platts: Definitely. Yes. Right. And now that I think about it, the people on Gale McGee's staff were very helpful while we were there. His staff was great. So, but it's funny I can't remember very much about him. He had a great staff.

Rawlins: Do you recall any particular sorts of incidents from that trip to Washington that stuck with you?

Platts: Probably the same that Sally, not using the ladies' elevator. (Laughs.)

Rawlins: In the Army-Navy Club.

Platts: Right. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Platts: And then I guess your response to that was pretty feisty, wasn't it?

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Platts: Well, I don't know if it was feisty or not. We just didn't ride it. We rode the other elevator because it was closer to where our rooms were and closer to the front door, which we were not supposed to use. But all the guys were using it, so we just went with them.

Rawlins: So you did use the elevator that you weren't supposed to?

Platts: Oh, yes.

Rawlins: Well, let's see. Other than, did you, you didn't go to Colorado on the tour?

Platts: Huh-uh.

Rawlins: And, well, that sort of exhausts, certainly not my interest but the specific things I think I have to ask.

Platts: That's fine.

Rawlins: Can you think of anything that particularly sticks in your mind about the whole period?

Platts: Nope. Not right now. Probably as soon as you're gone. Probably tonight. I'll wake up at three o'clock in the morning, "Oh, why didn't I say it?"

Rawlins: Well, in the, I guess from your situation now, do you feel like being on that Wagonwheel Information Committee had anything to do with your present situation, what you're doing today, the person you are?

Platts: No. Maybe the person I am, but not my job.

Rawlins: And as far as your being the person you are, do you think it made you less or more confident in

terms of your ability to affect political decisions and things like that?

Platts: Somewhat more confident, yeah.

Rawlins: You feel more able to go after issues and be listened to.

Platts: Yeah. Don't know if I'm listened to, but I certainly go after them. Still. (Laughs.)