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I guess the first thing is, how did you get involved in the Wagonwheel Committee?

I am a geologist. And some people up here who knew that I was a geologist told me that the Wagonwheel Project was being considered by El Paso Natural Gas and they had in hand an Environmental Impact Statement. So they asked me to read the Environmental Impact Statement, and after I'd read it they asked me to attend the meeting at the library, the Sublette County Library in Pinedale, to discuss, you know, the nature of the document.

Rawlins: And who, do you remember who it was who asked you, was it Sally Mackey?

Perry: I think it was Phyllis Berg who asked me.

Rawlins: Phyllis.

Perry: Yeah. So, no, no it wasn't. No, actually I, actually I met her at that meeting. It was somebody else. So I read the impact statement and it really said some things which were kind of absurd. I don't think you would ever see them today in that sort of document. I came to the library and just discussed my own opinion, really discussed what I had seen. And in the statement, as I recall, they had items like this: that when El Paso Natural Gas did complete their wells, the gas which they produced, because it was released from tight gas formations using nuclear weapons, would be radioactive. And that in the process of flaring the gas, they mentioned as I recall in the report, that some of this radioactivity might diffuse out to the downwind side of the gas wells where it was being flared. And if my recollection is correct, they made statements, for example, to the effect that people living downwind should not

really use the milk from their cows and, you know, a few other items to that, of that nature. When I mentioned this the people were a little bit upset, and so thereafter they asked me if I would attend another meeting which would be held, as I recall, in the high school. And that meeting took place and essentially I just reiterated, you know, some of the, what I considered to be the unfavorable aspects of the Wagonwheel technology. And after that it was decided that the Wagonwheel Information Committee would be set up and the

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whole thing got rolling. So that's just basically what I [?].

Rawlins: And specifically it was the fact that the gas would quite possibly be radioactive and the, you know, the possibility of accidental releases, the radiation?

Perry: Yeah. There were other considerations, which were unfavorable. For example, you know, a shot like that sets off a small earthquake. Well, later on we were told that this had done some damage in one shot down in Colorado. That it had done damage, I believe in Rifle or someplace like that. I may have my places wrong. But I never really considered that to be a major problem. The problem, when it came to the shock effect of setting off nuclear weapons, that bothered me, would be that if you were to shock again and again in the process of setting off nuclear charges that would release the gas, that the fatigue effect over a long period of time could cause damage. Very subtle damage to things like irrigation drops, which were made out of, you know, unreinforced concrete and stuff like that. But I never really considered, you know, at least from my point of view, that these were going to be like earthquakes and that they would cause real damage. I think also, that from the people's point of view, when you took this shock bit, I think it was just a pain in the neck. You know, they looked upon this as a very undesirable technology. At this point, coming back to the radioactivity, once the thing got going, the government, of course, has access to a fairly good scientific staff. And as I recall, they had a team of physicists who worked at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in Berkely, California. And they did calculations, trying to calculate how much radioactive waste would be released in an explosion of this sort,

and they assured people — I'm really getting ahead of things here -- but they assured people that the amount of radioactivity in the gas would be very small, you know, not harmful to human beings. And the idea was that when they piped the gas into gas lines, into pipelines, that they would pipe other gas in and the radioactive elements would be diluted. So hopefully you wouldn't get a dose. The reason why I bring this up now is that later on when they did run the Rio

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Blanco shot, which was a total disaster for the government, in Rio Blanco County in Colorado. In that well they were supposed to set off a series of three nuclear bombs, I think that each one was a thirty megaton -- excuse me, a thirty kiloton — bomb, that's my recollection. So that the total shot would have been roughly ninety kilotons. In that shot, first of all, only one bomb went off. It's my understanding that the other two are still down there. I might be wrong on this, and, you know, you'd have to check the records. In addition the amount of radioac — I just read these reports I think in the newspapers, but my recollection again is that the amount of radioactive waste in that gas, from the one bomb that exploded, was vastly greater than what the government had calculated. And this was something that always bothered me through the entire Wagonwheel affair, the fact that whenever you calculate something, you know, whenever you compute a model that deals with the Earth, with real-life situations of this sort, almost invariably you come up with wrong answers. This is something that's almost a given in the scientific world.

Rawlins: You know mathematics is not the world. Math is descriptive.

Perry: It's beautiful. It's beautiful, mm-hmm. They're just models.

Rawlins: So you had, probably, a much more informed sort of opposition to this than probably many of the people did. Do you see your technical expertise as having sort of been a catalyst in moving the work of the committee?

Perry: Not really.

Rawlins: Were you the "science guy?"

Perry: Not even that, no. I was just a geologist and they felt they could ask me some questions which they couldn't answer themselves because I did a formal training in geology. But at the same time, when it came to the physics, I knew as little as anybody there. So I didn't really understand the physics of this any better than, you know, Sally

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Mackey or Floyd or any of the people who ran the committee.

Rawlins: And did you, like, for instance, you know, nuclear power, nuclear weapons, things like that tend to provoke fairly strong emotional reactions. And were you, did you have any kind of basic antipathy to nuclear stuff?

Perry: Yeah. Yeah, I was, that was my mission in the Navy, as a Navy pilot, we delivered nuclear weapons.

Rawlins: Delivered them?

Perry: So I, well, that was our mission, our primary mission. And I knew a lot about nuclear weapons.

Rawlins: Huh. That's interesting.

Perry: And I never talked about it, because I, at that time I, you know, I wasn't sure how much of what I knew was classified. In fact, it, you know, it really never has been declassified. So I never, you know, I kept that to myself. But I knew very well what these things did. I knew that the technology was a disaster when they tried to use it for peaceful purposes. In the Nevada testing grounds the idea, you may recall, originally was that it was the plowshare kind of thing. You know, that we were going to turn our swords into plowshares, nuclear swords that is. And one of the first projects they had, they wanted to dig canals, for example, using nuclear weapons. And the idea was you simply go out, and you line these things up and set them off, and you don't have to move the earth, you know. The nuclear weapons move the earth for you. 'Course then they found out that the amount of highly radioactive isotopes released was, you know, great. And even today we

find out that, you know, that probably there are quite a few people out there who have suffered ill health because of these tests. I remember, also, at the same time back in those days the talk by Edward Teller, which was given at the University of Wyoming. Teller was very much in favor at that time of using nuclear weapons for things like excavation. One of the things that he wanted, in this lecture, he wanted to take thermonuclear weapons and dig deep harbors. Can you imagine, if

you just think about this, to dig deep harbors in certain ports, you know, to enlarge the harbors, perhaps, in certain ports of the world. And Teller's, Teller's attitude really, really came out in this talk when somebody stood up and they said, "Dr. Teller, you want oilbearing ships with drafts of 100 feet and more to be able to move in and out of these harbors, but what happens when one of these tankers breaks apart and spills its cargo?" And his answer was, "That's for you environmentalists to worry about." I'll never forget it. That was his answer. And this was the attitude, to a certain extent, in the early days after World War II. I think that this was almost the attitude of, well this is being, this is a very personal opinion, but almost the attitude of "[?] the government and the people who are running these programs."

Rawlins: And what do you see as having driven them personally, maybe? I mean, there is obviously, if you have a job and much of your scientific career has been committed to developing, you know, certain technologies or something like that, you have a tremendous vested interest. But what, this, the attitude you're talking about, it's kind of interesting, what do you see having been associated with some of this in the Navy? What do you see as having produced that attitude? I mean, you're talking about in Teller?

Perry: Oh, clearly, it was something for nothing. And this is why nuclear, nuclear has always been something for nothing. In other words, you know, it's, this is, it's best reflected today in the research in fusion, in trying to develop fusion power. The idea is that by building a fusion reactor you get an enormous amount of electricity for nothing. Here we were going to have, you know, we were going to get inexpensive canals,

inexpensive harbors. We were going to have, you know, all sorts of goodies for nothing. It's just like the nuclear powered electrical plants all over the world. To a certain extent you're getting something for nothing. You don't have any stack pollution, you don't have to bring the coal in, in carload after carload. But, but we still have the problem, you know, of waste. This may come back to haunt us in a very real sense, you know, particularly when you consider that all over

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the world governments, again, are dumping their, you know, their very, very hot nuclear waste into the oceans.

Rawlins: Like [?] Fields in Britain.

Perry: Yeah. But the Soviet Union is well known. They've simply been deep-sixing the stuff out in the ocean, and this may well boil up and bite us in the back of the neck in a bit[?].

Rawlins: Hmm. Yeah, that's a, something that I think about periodically. What, in terms of the, you know, the citizens' effort here, you were the, what role did you play in the group? I know you were the pilot that flew the group back to Washington. And that was in your plane?

Perry: Mm-hmm. The plane played it out [?], too.

Rawlins: Really?

Perry: We lost an engine in Cincinnati, I think. (Laughs.) As I recall, I think that was the trip where the engines failed, as I recall everybody had to make it back as best they could. But I was just an ordinary citizen, really. I mean, in fact I had much less input. I came up here periodically and sporadically. And, you know, once that thing got going they were just like, they were like bulldogs. They weren't just, you know, they weren't going to let it go. I think, I think there was a real "us against them" attitude, which I think is very healthy. I think, I think today as then and all times, it really is us against the government.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Hmm. So in this case that sort of, oh, insular, you know, xenophobic, clannish quality that you find in this area was focused on this

particular project and against the government.

Perry: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Rawlins: Do you, how would you compare the Wagonwheel Committee to, oh, sort of conventional environmental groups?

Rawlins: In a sense they were more committed. They were really hopping mad about this thing, and they

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would bring Phil Randolph, El Paso Natural Gas would bring Phil Randolph, who was their public relations man, up here to discuss how benign the technology that this was. And to discuss, you know, how little it would impact the local people. And the more, and he was kind of a slick, scientifically-oriented gentleman. And the more Phil Randolph talked, the more pissed off the people in Pinedale got. It was wonderful. And it, he was, you know, the government really never know, when they — in fact, I don't know if we even met the government scientists, I can't recall, until we went to Washington. They may have sent a physicist up here once or twice, I can't recall. But in any case, the people from the outside really had just the adverse on the local people in the Pinedale area.

Rawlins: So part of this was just pretty much legitimate community self-interest.

Perry: Mm-hmm.

Rawlins: And then there was also a strong personal element that sort of focused a lot of the more Western qualities of the community and, you know, sort of gave a target to those qualities, it sounds like.

Perry: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Also, we have to go back and remember that gas was being produced up in this area. You know, they were hit at Big Piney and around this part of Wyoming. It was before the gas rush, it was early before the, you know, the great gas rush in the Overthrust Belt. And I think the people up here wondered, "Why are they doing this?" In other words, in a sense, "We're being taken." I think that was the attitude. In other words, "El Paso comes in, they're going to test, you know, this nuclear technology on us. If it works it might harm our health. But on the

other hand, what are we going to get out of it?"

I don't think that El Paso ever made it very clear that this technology was going to add very much to the, you know, to the community. Either, oh, financially or otherwise. And I think this is a major point. This, I think, probably one of the major points that just comes up to me now is the fact that people here felt they were being used as guinea pigs. It was very clear that they were

being used as guinea pigs. Whereas Rio Blanco was going to be, as I recall, three separate weapons detonated, up here they were going to have one big one. I think it was going to be 100 megatons -- excuse me, not, no, no, 100 kilotons. I keep on thinking in modern terms. No it, kilo, it just made kilo everywhere. But it was going to be, I think, 100 kilotons, which is a big, whopping explosion. And the people just resented the fact that they were experimental. And even better, El Paso, as I recall, had drilled the hole. I think that the hole was in existence. I think that they had an 11,000 foot hole. This is a vague recollection on my part. And that the hole had cost them something like, oh, four million dollars or if there was seven million dollars.

Rawlins: Hmm. That's something I didn't know, that they'd actually drilled a —

Perry: Well, that's my recollection. You'd have to check that out. And so that, and also the attitude was that this was going to take place. You know, the attitude on the part of El Paso Natural Gas. And I think also certainly on the part of the government. Was that this experiment would take place and it really didn't make too much difference what the local people thought. This is my impression, okay? This is, this is, I always had that feeling. And in fact, I think it would have taken place. I think if Rio Blanco had been a success they certainly would have had the shot up here. By the way, I think that the one thing I forgot to mention, in the Rio Blanco shot, I think the amount of gas they got out of there, in by fracturing the tight formation, was trivial. It far, it was far less than what they predicted.

Rawlins: Well, I guess what occurred to me was, I would wonder how they would manage the heat. You know,

because it seems like --

Perry: It's no problem. It just dissipates, you know.

Rawlins: But don't you get a certain amount of blazing and things like that? Can you actually fracture a certain formation —

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Perry: Oh, there you get into the physics of the cavity. I think the whole thing was a mess. I think, I think the whole technology was almost a joke.

Rawlins: So it was sort of a, it was just a justification for, in a sense a justification for government spending and sort of the continuation of this bureaucracy. You know, there've been, central to this war effort.

Perry: Yeah. Yeah. But not from the point of view of El Paso Natural Gas. Again, for them it was going to be a freebie. You think that back in those days even, we had lots and lots of nuclear bombs around. Lots of them. Okay? Of various sizes shapes, configurations. And from their point of view, if this thing could work, if they could start jamming these things down hole after hole, fracture a formation at a, with government money, okay? This always would have to be controlled by the government. But this was my, the way I looked at it. And again, El Paso might say, "That guy is all wet." Which is fair enough. And I'd, you know, I'll certainly honor their opinion. But my feeling was, that they would get, essentially, these nuclear weapons at virtually no cost, slam them down there, fracture a tight gas formation, and completely bypass, you know, the normal procedure of fracturing tight gas formations, which is very expensive.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Hmm. Yeah, that's interesting, the, I guess, most of the people I've talked to tend to lump the Atomic Energy Commission and El Paso Natural Gas into sort of one big ball. And it's, to hear those interests separated that way is One, no, really nobody that I've talked to has been opposed to normal oil and gas production. Or, you know, has mentioned that as undesirable

in this area. Do you pretty much go along with that?

Perry: Yeah, it's a, I don't have feeling one way or another. I don't like to see oil wells, you know, or gas wells popping up where I live. So as long as it happens down there, it's fine.

Rawlins: Yeah. But you don't have any, sort of, generic opposition to the industry or anything like that?

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Perry: Oh, no. I drive a car. You, know we keep a propane heater, so what can I say?

Rawlins: Yeah. Well, as far as your situation in the community here, how long had you been in the area when you got involved with this?

Perry: What was the date when this thing started, do you recall?

Rawlins: I believe it was the very late '60s. The EIS is dated January, 1972.

Perry: Yeah. Yeah. I think I'd been up here less than a year. I mean, I'd just bought this place then. And I think that I'd been up here less than a year.

Rawlins: And how, in terms of, you know, your basic relationship to the community, I suppose at that point you didn't know all that many people, how did being involved in this, did it have an effect on your relationship to the people around here in the community?

Perry: Not really. I mean, I've never really known that many people. I tend to hang out by myself. You know, I got to know Floyd and the members of the committee. But really, you know, pretty much on a fairly formal basis.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. And did it, just as far as your basic feeling about people around here, did it change that in any way? I mean, did you --

Perry: No, I have a great deal of respect for them. I still do.

Rawlins: Was it something you remarked at the time, that the people involved in the committee in many ways

didn't have that much in common? I mean, they had different backgrounds, they had different livelihoods?

Perry: I think that the common tie, again, is that they live up here. The people here are really kind of unique and they're kind of different. And you've seen it: neighbors will fight up here, and really maybe dislike each other greatly but they'll still do business. Out here in the Boulder Flat I've

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seen that again and again. You know, people say, "I can't stand that person." But they want to go over and buy some hay from them, and if they need the hay, they'll go over and buy it rather than order the thing from Idaho.

Rawlins: Yeah, I guess Susie McNebbitch [?] compares it to a, a sort of a big family with a lot of internal squabbles, is the way she looks at it. As far as the way that this developed, you've already said that the fact that the Rio Blanco shot didn't work was a primary reason that development didn't take place here.

Perry: That's my own opinion, anyway, yeah.

Rawlins: How influential do you think the citizens' information committee was?

Perry: Tsk. That's a loaded question. Basically, I think not terribly. I mean, here, here my opinion, I think, differs with that of a lot of people up here. I think that they feel that the information committee was very instrumental in killing the project. And I have a different opinion. This is based on our experience in Washington. When we went back to Washington, I think that we were looked at, I think we were regarded, particularly by Senator McGee's office, as a royal pain in the ass. And, oh, I remember when we were back there having heard rumors of a memo which, you know, said very derogatory things. This was from Senator McGee's office about the committee. And that may not, you know, that may not be true. I mean, I never saw the memo. It was just a rumor. But I had a feeling that the politicians were very unhappy to see us back there. That they —

Rawlins: All of them? Or was there —

Perry: Teno, well, Teno Roncalio, he was always sort of a happy-go-lucky guy. And, you know, Hansen, I never had that much contact with Hansen. And Roncalio was, he was sort of a hail-fellow, you know type.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Well, Hansen --

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Perry: And Hansen is a real ranching type, you know, person.

Rawlins: Well, he's also, for years, [?], the family, his family has been very heavily invested in oil.

Perry: Yeah. And he never, but he never was really involved that much to any extent, as I recall. Which is interesting, you know, why, it's a good question why he wasn't. You know, as you would think, with people like Floyd and a lot of other people up here in the ranching community were dead-set against this project, you know, I wonder why, you know, the whole thing ended up in McGee's lap instead of Hansen's.

Rawlins: So really, as far as the contact with the legislative people in Washington, it was Congressman Roncalio who was the --

Perry: He was, he was the guy who really, I think, gave more help, you know, to the people up here. And I think that Teno's heart was in the right place. Now, personally. These are personal opinions. I never cared that much for McGee. As a senator, I didn't like his stance on the war. And as a person, I felt that he was, you know, a total politician: you know, smile at you when, you know, when he's, you know, face-to-face, and then, you know, when you turn your back, you know, doing what most of them do. I really didn't like him; I didn't think he was a good senator, and I still don't. But anyway, going back to those meetings we, you know, in the Washington meeting we met with technical people from the AEC. The technical people were there from El Paso, we presented our case. I don't think that they were that impressed. I just don't. I think that the whole thing hinged on Rio Blanco. And Rio Blanco, I think the key was not the radioactivity, the key

was the fact they simply didn't get the gas they needed to justify the technology.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Hmm. As far as the sort of the public relations effect of that trip to Washington, I guess Floyd Bousman is still renowned locally for having demolished who was it, Phillip Randolph, on the "Today" show? Was that Randolph or somebody else?

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Perry: Yeah. I think that probably is Randolph. I don't recall the incident, because I don't have a television. You know, we never, I wouldn't have seen it. But I remember that he did go on the "Today" show and apparently acquitted himself very well. As you'd expect; he's very articulate. And when Floyd gets going on a project he really knows his facts. He has it all down.

Rawlins: Did, do you think that, for instance, if the Rio Blanco shot had, perhaps had sort of marginal results, you know, of a sort of borderline, it wasn't clear whether it was an economically feasible thing or not, and they'd wanted to go ahead with it up here, do you feel like that trip to Washington would have given the committee a fairly strong basis to, you know, to pursue —

Perry: My opinion, Chip, is no. I don't think they would have made any difference. And I, although as I said, I have the greatest respect for the committee and the members who put in so much time in collecting information and studying it and really understanding it -- these are all very bright and very intelligent people, and they're well-read and they absorbed the information and they knew everything that there was to know about the shot -- I don't think it would have made any difference at all. In fact, my own opinion is that I don't think the committee had any clout.

Rawlins: What about, okay, what about the —

Perry: This is my own opinion. And everybody else up here, I think, feels very differently; I'm well aware of that.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. What about people like, for instance, oh, Phelps and Sally Swift, or John Chrisman, who had, I mean Chrisman obviously had some connections in

Washington? How important do you think those people were, sort of behind the, you know, behind the curtain in influencing things like this?

Perry: Well, I wasn't aware that Phelps and Sally Swift ever did anything? You know, I think they were interested bystanders but I don't think that they ever did anything.

Rawlins: What about Chrisman?

Perry

Perry: Well, my understanding was, you know, that John Chrisman, he was in oil and gas, he was a gas man. And I think he was interested in technology. I would have been too if I was in his place. I think that, you know, he attended meetings and, you know, he went back to Washington as I recall. But I think that from John Chrisman's point of view I think he would have like to have seen the shot, and if it was a success I think he would have looked at it as a very, you know, as a very viable and interesting technology. I mean I can't, you know, I can't say this 'cause I never knew the man. I mean, I never, I didn't know him personally, but if I was in his position that certainly would have been my perspective.

Rawlins: So possibly somebody in his situation, he might have been --

Perry: I think he was neutral. I think he was neutral. I think he was interested in what people had to say; I think he had an honest interest in what the people up here felt. But basically, you know, he was a businessman. You know, if I were deeply involved in the gas business, at least for myself, I would have been a hundred percent for the technology.

Rawlins: Hmm. If it worked.

Perry: Sure.

Rawlins: Yeah.

Perry: Basically, from a geologic point of view, I mean, you know, the promise was that you would fracture the rock in such a way that you would unleash vast quantities of gas which were just unrecoverable. I mean, you know, the technological carrot here was really, you know, a wonderful drawing card for

the people in the industry.

Rawlins: How do they fracture those formations now?

Perry: I think it's mostly, you know, hydraulic pressure of one sort or another. I've forgotten the technology, it's been, you know, twenty years since I've even, you know, known anything about it. I never studied it. But I think what they used to do is, they put down fluids under very

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high pressure and sometimes maybe an explosive device at a given layer, and then, you know, as you either explode the thing or else just, you know, open it up by pressure, you just, you know, try and. . . .

Rawlins: And in that case the fluid would just be the hydraulic medium for transmitting pressure.

Perry: My knowledge there is trivial. In fact it's, I have almost a non-knowledge of the fracturing process.

Rawlins: Yeah, I have to read in here a little bit more thoroughly, but I wonder if, was there a fluid-injection plan to go along with the nuclear device or would they just?

Perry: No, I don't think it can. Maybe, what happened later after the shot, I don't -- the one thing I do recall is that once you made the shot you're supposed to create a cavity. It was supposed to create an actual cavity down there. And then, now what happens to the rest of the rock I don't know. But, then, my understanding was that you would have fractured so much country [?] rock that once you create the cavity and the gas rushes in to fill the cavity. And then you've got a, you know, you've got a, you've got pipe up there and you simply draw the gas off and you're in business. I don't think, I don't think once you've made this shot you could have done anything further in the hole. And in fact --

Rawlins: You just drill into it to tap the gas.

Perry: Yeah. Yeah.

Rawlins: Well, do you have, other than the engine going out on the plane, do you have any recollection of any

amusing things that happened on the trip? Did you stay with the plane in where, Cincinnati was it?

Perry: Well, I remember, I remember Floyd Bousman. We were sitting down in a bar having a couple of drinks after the day, and a couple of the guys were there from the AEG. They were physicists. And I remember Floyd and one of the physicists arm wrestling. (Laughs.) And Floyd, this guy was, you know, was pretty stocky, I mean he was, you

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know. And Floyd probably was maybe, oh, at that time, probably, you know, 35 years older. But Floyd, Floyd gave him a good, a pretty good run for his money.

Rawlins: Huh. Yeah. Floyd's wiry.

perry: Yeah. And that's, that's the only thing I can recall. You know, I don't really recall any human interest.

Rawlins: Did you, then, get the engine repaired and fly back to Pinedale?

Perry: Yeah.

Rawlins: It was your plane?

Perry: Yeah.

Rawlins: What kind was it?

Perry: It was a Beechcraft. A twin. And, you know, actually I, at that time I had in mind setting up a charter service in Colorado. Which I did eventually and the thing really didn't work out too well because I could only fly, you know, without a special permit I could only fly in and out of the state. I couldn't fly people in the state to another place in-state without getting a special, a PUC permit.

Rawlins: So it wasn't really something you had for your geology.

Perry: No. No. And that would have been highly political and very costly in attorney's fees and what have you, so, in that I lost another engine, at that point I decided to get out of the business.

Rawlins: Well, I can't really think of anything else.

Although it's interesting that, you know, your evaluation of the way the whole set of events went, it's sort of much more, oh, you know, maybe a broader perspective. It's not [?], it's not, you know, "We fought the devil and we won." It seems to be a little more deterministic or something like that, but there were some fairly large forces in play and that things just happened to come out your way.

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Perry: I think if you're stupid enough to spite the devil you never win. (Laughs.) You know you may get off, you may escape, but nobody beats the devil. And in this case, you know, my opinion is, if the government really is going to go ahead with something like that they will give you a sugar-coated pill and tell you they're going to help you out in every way they can. But basically they simply do it. What it is, is just a form of condemnation.

Rawlins: And do you feel like that Wagonwheel Information Committee, do you feel it has had some kind of legacy for the community? Like, looking back since I've been here, that Union Pass fight over the timber sales and things like that, do you think the Wagonwheel Information Committee was in any way responsible for the opposition to Union Pass? Do you think it's left some kind of mark?

Perry: No. No. That I don't know. This is, I think this is a different question entirely. I remember one time when I made it at a last committee meeting we had, they still had a few bucks in the till and the question was, what are we going to do with it, have a big party or, you know, just, you know, go off and live our lives. And I said, "Well, you know, this thing is over. And as far as I'm concerned that probably the most important issue that I see around here is, what's happening to the land." And I made the comment that Pinedale and vicinity was being developed in a most unattractive manner, and that I would like to see the committee keep going but get into the land use thing. Well, of course, that went over like a lead, you know, like a lead bar. Because people like Floyd and the other ranching types and certainly the people in town who are attorneys and professionals of one sort or another firmly believe that a man should do what he wants with

his land. Well, I believe that a man has a right to do what he wants with his land but I also believe that in the truly enlightened community, the community or the state might decide, for example, to purchase the land and put it into trust and save the land from, you know, say, from tacky development. This is what I was getting at. I, you know, just think what Jackson would look like if they'd taken South Park, you know, twenty years ago and when it came up for sale, said,

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"Hey, look, we'll buy it." They would have picked it up for a song. You know, the land today would be worth, you know, ten times what it was worth then, or more. And they would have preserved the whole thing.

Rawlins: The, so in other words, communities like this should have some medium for working out those kind of land use things other than just the marketplace.

Perry; Yeah. Exactly. Rather than just the marketplace or just state regulations. A good example and exactly what was coming up then was the whole Bargerville [?] thing. Fay Barger, as I recall, here again I might be wrong. I had the impression that he had decided to go and live in Nevada, but I might be entirely wrong on that. In other words, but anyway, his, I believe his son, yeah, was there, and I think that he decided just to sell most of the ranch or the whole thing off. And it was developed, or a plan was proposed for its development. And I went to the zoning meetings, where they, you know where they, Tenenga, there was a guy named Tenenga. He died in a plane crash. But there was a fellow named Tenenga who was a salesman for the project, and for Bargerville they had a big map. It still exists somewhere around here. It was a big map. And as I recall, there was going to be a trailer court over here and there were going to be houses over there. There was going to be a golf course, and it was really going to be a pretty nice development. And you can see what happened.

Rawlins: Yeah. So in other words, when the immediate threat from outside evaporated so did a good deal of the impetus for the coalition, for all these different people to stick together.

Perry: Yeah. I think that's precisely it. And it was the outside, this was exciting, you know going up against the government and El Paso was exciting. And I think, I think, whereas I don't think the committee would have ever beaten the project if the government had wanted to go ahead, the committee had enormous successes. And don't ever get me wrong on that. I think the committee had enormous successes. I mean, the fact that El Paso used to come here regularly and used to argue

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their case, and then the committee would bring in scientists who would argue the committee's case. The fact that the Atomic Energy Commission realized that these people were there and were angry and were fighting the project and their representatives knew that, this was all, you know, a tremendous success. I just say again, that I don't think in spite of the success that they could have prevented it. Or that they did.

Rawlins: Yeah. Okay. Well, that pretty much —

Perry: But I think they were, you know, I think it's, in a sense it's one of the truly remarkable little, you know, stances of citizens against big government in, you know, in modern times.

Rawlins: Yeah, well, it's, that's sort of what attracted me to studying this in the first place, was that, the, kind of that circle-the-wagons defiance, you know. That, occasionally I, you know, there were a few things that I wish it was a little easier to mobilize that on. Just like the land use thing you were talking about.

Perry: And certainly all of the powerful people involved are very much aware of the, you know, the classical burr under the horse's saddle.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm, well, that's, I don't have any more questions to grill you with.

Perry: Good.