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Jesse Ekker
Interview
By Gary L. Shumway
July 24, 1991

S: This is an interview of Jesse Ekker on July 24, 1991 in the Ekker home in Hanksville, Utah.

Well, Jesse, as I've told you, the reason for me being over here is to talk about Temple Mountain, so let's talk about your family's involvement about Temple Mountain from the earliest that you know about it.

E: It was my Grandpa Gibbons and a guy by the name of Abe Glassman were the first ones that located it. I don't know the exact date, but it was a long time ago. And they mined it and shipped vanadium out of there. Uranium of course they shipped, too, and some of it went to Madame Curie for her, whatever she did. I guess she was experimenting with radium. And then it laid dormant during the long years when there wasn't any price or anything for uranium and vanadium. Then in the boom, some lawyers took some of it and leased it to different people and they shipped all of the ore out of there to Salt Lake City to the Vitro Chemical Company up there. They processed it and had a lot. One thing about that Temple Mountain ore is that the rich high-grade part of it had asphalt in it. So Vitro had to go to the expense of putting in roasters to roast the asphalt out of it. So that was the only place in the country that you could ship it was up there. There was a lot of different people who leased it. It made a lot of people a lot of money. My mother had, from Grandpa Gibbons, it started out at about 16% and the lawyers kept taking a little here and there until she wound up with about 7%, I think. But it still made a lot of people a lot of money. That was during the boom in there during the 50's then later, Energy Fuels Company came in and the boom came back on. They wanted to mine it and do something with it but the lawyers just wouldn't give it to them. Wouldn't let them have a lease on it or anything. Of course they didn't have any roasters or anything but they claimed that when they ran through their mill they could mix it with those sandy ores and make it work, but they wouldn't let them. They didn't get it anyhow. Now it's still sitting there.

S: Didn't the Atlas mill there in Moab find a way to get around?

E: Well they bought some of it. There was certain parts of it in certain places that didn't have the asphalt in it and so you could go in there and mine it and if you knew what you were doing you could mine around that. But it cut your grade down. It seems like the high-

grade came with the asphalt. But you could mine .25 or .30 hundredths and it didn't have any. Carbide bought a bunch of it. During the boom in the 50's Climax Uranium in Grand Junction bought a bunch of it, too, but it was mined so that it didn't have any asphalt in it. But if you would go in there and produce a lot of ore like most miners wanted to do, say 100 tons a day, it had a lot of asphalt and it would have to go up there and be roasted. It had a lot of vanadium in it, too. It had uranium and vanadium in it.

S: Can you remember the first time that you ever went to Temple Mountain?

E: Oh, yeah. The first time I ever mined up there or did anything was after I came out of the Navy, in about 1948 when uranium came back that time. I went out there and worked for L. E. Robinson. He had a lease out there from Frawley, so I went out there and worked for him for a while.

S: Now that was there on pretty much the south side just a little in there where the incline was?

E: Yes, that's it. We mined mostly high-grade. We shipped it down to the government mill that was in Monticello, I think. They had a government mill and we shipped it down there. He had all of his own setup and truck. He made pretty good money on that.

S: Why don't you reminisce about that? What was the name of the incline. There was a name for it. Can you remember it?

E: Well, Joe Baker had an incline out there that was a long incline.

S: But this, where Frawley was working, was fairly close to calex 8 and 7 there wasn't it? Just over to the left.

E: Yes. That's where he had a lease on the whole thing. There were guys like, what were those people in Green River?

S: Clines?

E: Clines! Yeah. Bill Cline. He was one of the big producers on calex number 8. He ran a lot of ore out of there.

S: But you were running an incline, it wasn't in a calex hole. Right?

E: It was around on this side just going right straight in. We weren't in there 200 feet to start out with.

S: So you were clear on the west side there going right in. There on the south-west side there where those old...

E: On the North Temple, out there on a place called North Temple...

S: Where the Migliaccio's...

E: Migliaccio had that see. I don't know how he came to get that property but it all belonged to Glassman and Gibbons and all of them. I don't know how come Migliaccio went in there, unless he went in there and found some loophole where they didn't do the assessment work and he jumped on it. Later on he went up on the Flat Tops and he located some claims up there.

S: Migliaccio?

E: Migliaccio did, yes. Come to find out it was school section and it's still school section.

S: The whole Flat Top?

E: Yes. Any part of it that is any good up there. When I was out there during when I was mining here and down in Red Canyon and everything, I went out there to look it over because some guys had told me that there was some good ore up there and it had all been drilled out. There was some guy there working and he was shipping his ore in here, to the mill out here, and it wasn't too bad. He was doing pretty good. He had leased it from some people up in Castle Dale that had a lease from the school. They were leasing it to him so they were making a little money. You have to pay the school 12.5% no matter what. So he was giving 12.5% to pay the school flat rate plus some for him, maybe 10%.

Mrs. E?: Was that Bill Hannock?

E: No, Bill Hannock was down on the Hondoo, and Red Canyon, and that country. Bud Handy and Butch Bullard and them were all out around, oh, what is the name of that other

nob on the San Rafael?

S: Tomsich?

E: Yes. Tomsich.

S: Did you ever go out there?

E: Nope. Never did.

S: Is he still around?

E: Butch?

S: Yes.

E: I don't know where he's at.

Mrs. E: St. George.

S: What's his last name?

E: Bullard.

S: Bullard? And he lives in St. George now?

Mrs. E: Yes. He still has a home here, though.

E: He did a lot of work out there at Tomsich Butte, and everything was all shipped in here to Energy Fuels. And then there was the old Happy Jack down on the Muddy that Pick had, and Odlum bought.

S: You mean the Hidden Splendor?

E: Yes. I call it the Happy Jack mine.

S: Did they ever call it the Happy Jack there?

E: Yes. They called it the Happy Jack down here. There were two claims; the Happy Jack was down around the corner up here (gestures) and old Pick named it the Hidden Splendor, I think.

S: The Delta was the Hidden Splendor, wasn't it?

E: Yes. Odlum bought it. They paid 9 million bucks plus gave Pick a big old airplane.

S: And it went out pretty soon after that didn't it?

E: Well, yeah. But Odlum went in there and there was a lot of ore left in there.

S: Oh?

E: Lots and lots of good ore left in there. Because the AEC went in there and mapped it, you know, and figured out where the ore was and everything. But when old Odlum and those guys got through with it, I think he bought it more or less for a tax right off, they just poked head holes in the ceiling and backed out and pulled the trigger and let it all fall in. Well then, there was lots of ore back in there, hell of a good ore. So Lloyd Meacham, he decided he was going to go in there and get that. He got a lease on that from someplace, I think the county bought it for taxes, or something. But anyhow, he got a property or lease and went in there and he and his boy, Randy. They spent a lot of money and a lot of time. But they had blowed her in too good; he couldn't get at it. He went clear around and came in the back way and he couldn't afford to do that.

Mrs. E: Randy still lives here in town.

E: They did ship quite a lot of ore out here but none of it was very good. Just barely made the freight and maybe a few biscuits or something. According to the maps that AEC made and everything, there's still lots and lots of ore in there.

S: There's still lots of it on Temple Mountain according to the maps they have.

E: Oh, yeah.

S: Do you know anything about some Japanese that were supposed to have worked up there early, real early, in the 1910's or something.

Mrs. E: A lot of the haulers for Vern Davis were Japanese.

E: Yes, but they didn't mine anything there.

S: People have told me that some of the earliest work that was done up there was by some Japanese. Or the Japanese were the workers at least that worked up there clear back in Madame Curie's time.

Mrs. E: Jesse's family shipped ore to her. Your mom was saying the ore that they shipped they had given to her. They had a certificate there for years.

S: Now, where were they working in that very early time, in the radium area?

E: Right where you go in, at the start of the canyon when you first see Temple Mountain. A lot of tunnels over there.

S: Yeah.

E: Right there is the richest part. And then up around on the west end up there close to the big Temple there were some places up there that were awful rich and that's where they dug it.

S: Now, is that where they dug it very early?

Mrs. E: Well, wasn't that more vanadium than uranium?

E: Well, down on the other side Migliaccio had some good vanadium over there on that side. But that's where they dug the high-grade and today it's still, you can still go, or could, I don't know I haven't been out there in a while, but in those tunnels when you first go in and right on that side. You can go over there and you can see about that much. A vein going around in the top of those old tunnels.

S: Just three inches or so.

E: Yes. I imagine it's just 2 or 3 percent. Just yellow cake. And they went in there after that stuff.

S: Even if it was a little bit they would put it into hundred pound sacks.

E: You would chisel that stuff. Pieces like this would fall down. Grits like that you know.

S: It may have been higher percent.

E: Oh, yeah. Back in those days. But now they don't give you a fair deal on it and everything; they never have. I know we went down there years ago to Shoot-a-ring Canyon, my dad and all of us went down there and we were selling it to Shattuck Chemical Company, the ore. Some of it was down in Loma, Colorado. We dumped it there and sold it. Johnny Hill was the big boy there. We went down there and we went on top of those old trees and dug that yellow chalk out of it and put it in sacks, put on horses and hauled it clear out of there. Dumped it in a truck out at Trachyte Ranch was as close as we could get a truck, then hauled it to Denver, to Shattuck Chemical Company, and then later on some of it went over here to Loma. And that load that we hauled into Shattuck Chemical Company after we put it in sacks, went 26 percent in price.

S: Yes. I was going to say I'd go 20 percent easy.

E: The chalk. You can sell ore today and if you get 2 to 3 percent you're doing good. They don't give you much.

S: Not many of those high prices left, though.

E: Well, there's some. But now, you can still get the same ore but they don't give you that.

S: That's interesting.

E: I was shipping ore and I knew damn well it was going a lot higher than what they said it was, and I knew them old boys. So what they would do, when they cut you a sample, they would take a little of what they would sample of their part and

then they would give you the same, out of the same sample, they would give you a little sack-full. What they called an umpire sample. If you didn't like what their sampler had given you why then you could take your own and go to an individual and have it assayed and if it was higher they would pay you for it. But if it was lower you had to pay for the sampling and everything like that. And it would always come back lower.

S: Do you think they mixed the sample before they gave it to you?

E: Yeah, they did something. There was a lot of things that were told. You could go out there in North Wash where we were years ago and even at Climax, which is the fairest outfit that we ever did business with. You would go in to Climax and if you didn't like what your ore assayed, you would go in there and chew on old Tony [Mastrovich] a little bit and he would come up with something a little better. Always would.

S: Always worth chewing on.

E: Yes, because he knew that if they didn't treat you fair there was always Union Carbide and a bunch of others that would buy it in a minute. Of course Union Carbide would trick you three or four ounces, too.

S: So you had quite a few dealings with Tony Mastrovich?

E: Oh, yeah. Years and years. Tony Mastrovich, he was good. He sure would help you.

S: Oh, he would?

E: Your damn rights. If you didn't have any money and you wanted some money to get some equipment with or anything, boy he would dish it out to you. Of course you had to sign a contract that you would ship your ore to him. He was really good.

S: Were you ever up on Temple Mountain before you went up there mining? Did you ever go up just as a family or anything?

E: I worked up there. I worked up there before.... I built all the roads up there on top with a bulldozer while they drilled it and then rig sites for those guys.

S: After you got out of the Navy?

E: Yes. And then Harry Phillips, who married my mother, he had an old cable tool rig. I would make sites for him and he would go up and drill with this cable tool rig, a big hole about like that (gestures) so they could put a blower on so they would blow air down the hole. I did all that work out there. Then, I got involved with Frawley and all of them. They put in as superintendent of the mines out there a guy by the name of J. P. Decker. They hired him out of Salt Lake outfit. He was running the whole show, and I went to work for him.

S: Mining?

E: No, I would run the Caterpillar, and sometimes I would go down to some of their other operations. They had some claims down on the Dirty Devil, down to Hannards there and I would go down and build some roads. They had something they wanted down in Poison Springs, I remember I went down there for a couple of weeks and built some roads through there because they were going to take over Hunts' claims and mine them. They found out they weren't any good. I stayed around there for awhile for Decker. And then I went to work for old Dade & Shumway, and Dean was working for them, too at the same time. And then Lopez, what the hell was his name? He had quite a crew.

S: Where is he now? Is he still alive?

E: I don't know whether he is or not.

Mrs. E: Decker died, I know that.

E: Yeah. J.P. Decker died. What he did, he took over the superintendent part about it and he went ahead and bought him eight or nine of those big old Mack trucks, and he put them to work.

S: Yes, that's right, I remember those.

E: Old Neal Batchin was honcho for him for a long time while running that truck. And that's the way it was.

Wife: Vern Davis was hauling out there, too.

E: Yes, but old J. P. ran him out after he got to be superintendent. He got all he wanted

so he bought those big old Macks.

S: So he was superintendent of the mines but he also could decide who was going to ship the ore and he decided that he was going to ship the ore.

E: That's right. So he bought himself a bunch of trucks and went to work.

S: Could you take a Mack truck right up onto Temple Mountain?

E: You bet. You could pull it right up that dugway and right up on top and, see them calex holes, you know how they fill them up there and dump it into a bin. Drive them right up there and boy they would load them up for you.

S: And that was in calex 8? Or 7?

E: 7 and 8, and all of them up on top. Have you been up there?

S: Yes.

E: Is there still those old cores up there?

S: Yes, those are quite the old cores. I wouldn't mind rolling a couple of those into the back of a pickup or something.

E: Oh, yeah. I would like to have a couple.

S: I would, too. Even split them into pieces about that thick and make table tops out of them. There's even some of them there that have some pretty good ore in them, right to where you could see it in the bottom.

Mrs. E: Didn't Hez Hatch do a lot of work down there first? I think that's in Charlie Hunt's report.

E: I don't know.

S: Had you ever been up there before World War II?

E: Not that I can remember.

S: Even though your family owned it all those years.

E: There was no reason to go up there.

Mrs. E: Did the older boys?

E: No, I don't think so.

S: It's kind of a wild country.

Mrs. E: I thought Glen was the one that took Pick in there.

S: That's not Temple Mountain.

Mrs. E: I mean Glen knew a lot about that country out there.

E: Up on the Dirty Devil he did. He had the horses and stuff is the reason why he done that.

S: But you don't know that any of your family went up there? It wasn't something that you would go look at every once-in-a-while because your mother owned it?

E: No. We were mining lots of uranium and vanadium in those days, too. But we would go up on the Henry Mountains. We owned 2400 acres of gold placer up there and we would go up there and mine gold in the summer when we had the water, you know. In the winter time we would go down below and mine uranium and vanadium.

S: At Shoot-a-ring?

E: No. Just down on the mountain, in the north fork of Trachyte.

S: That was before you went into the Navy then?

E: Oh, yeah.

S: This was during Metals Reserve time? Or even before that? Before the war started?

E: Oh, yeah. We were working there when the war started.

S: Wow. You were mining vanadium out there?

E: Yes.

S: Who was buying it?

E: What we called the UVC.

S: USV?

E: Yes, the USV, and the VCA. Vanadium Corporation of America.

S: And they were both buying ore from you?

E: Yes. Vanadium.

S: Before the war started?

E: Yes. We had to keep it up above 2%.

S: Now, when this was so rich in vanadium up there how come you never thought of going up there? You owned the property and all that.

E: Up here?

S: Yes, at Temple Mountain.

E: Well, like I said, it had that stuff in it. Dad never did like to dig that stuff. A lot of people wouldn't buy it.

S: And that's what you think kept them away from it?

E: Yes, on account of that.

S: So what they were doing back in the radium era, they were just taking this little thin

seam of high-grade there or however thick it was and they were just high-grading it, really, just for the uranium content, not even worrying about vanadium, probably.

E: That's right.

S: Did your mother or your father ever talk about being up there and mining that area?

E: No.

S: Who mined it for them?

E: Well, nobody ever mined it except for Glassman and Gibbons and then there were some other people...

Mrs. E: It's on that history I got from your mom.

E: There were some people in Green River, what's their names?

Mrs. E: Pete Riley.

E: Yes, Pete Riley and those people.

Mrs. E: But the lawyers kept coming in, Frandsen and Jensen and Hansen.

S: That was later, though.

E: I remember them saying how they hauled it out of there in wagons, with teams of horses because they went right down the canyon and over towards that old...you could find ore all along up in there.

S: That had fallen off the wagons?

E: Yes.

S: That would be high-grade stuff if it fell off in those days.

E: Oh, yeah. They put it in sacks, too. That's where Dad got the idea of putting it in

sacks.

S: Those seamless sacks?

E: You would buy that tarp, it's just like a tarp. We used to go over to Canvas and Leather in Grand Junction and buy it. It was about 46 inches wide and you'd get a roll of it and all you had to do was cut it and sew it. Then when you put the ore in it you had a big old needle with that heavy yarn and you would sew the tops of it so it couldn't leak.

S: They would sew the side and bottom before they took them up there?

E: Oh, yeah.

S: And then they would sew the tops on them after they would fill them up with ore.

E: Yes, and then you'd put them on a horse. One on each side and one across the top, and tie it down with your leather string.

Mrs. E: You weren't very old.

S: But he wasn't up there. You never did go up there?

Mrs. E: He brought the horses out. You're always telling me...

E: No, I was down here. When I was a kid we walked out there and led those horses. We had seventeen head there, I remember that, of horses and mules. On the big mules you would put three sacks and they would weigh a good hundred pounds. You wouldn't ride coming back out of there because you had to have three more sacks of ore, so we walked out of that. Hotter than hell.

S: Absolutely.

E: And then you walked out to Trachyte, which is about 17 miles. And then you took all those sacks off of the horses and dumped them.

S: Oh, you would dump them? You wouldn't leave it in the sacks?

E: There would be a good box in the truck, lined with tin so it couldn't leak, and then puts the sacks back and you would take the sacks back down there.

S: Oh, so you wouldn't lose your sacks. I was going to say that some of it would blow out with that flour like stuff, you would lose a little of it.

E: When we had to go to take her for a load you would water her down good, you know.

S: All right.

E: I remember one time we had an old Model-A truck, it wasn't a Model-T is was a Model-A, one of these better new ones, you know. We put about 3000 pounds on there.

S: A ton and a half.

E: Yes. And they went to Denver.

S: Oh? They took it all the way there?

E: All the way to Denver.

S: Not on the railroad, they took it all the way on that truck?

E: All the way to Denver. And they went over and sold that damned ore and when they came back they had a new car, a new guitar for Darrys and clothes, and you wouldn't believe the things they had and they still had a lot of money left.

S: You bet. And that was before World War II then?

E: Oh, yeah.

S: Did you ever sell any to Howard Balsley?

E: No. Never did sell any right directly to him.

Mrs. E: But Howard was a partner of Jesse's brother-in-law, Ray Bennett.

E: We knew him awfully well, Howard, and Ray Bennett.

Mrs. E: He's my godfather.

S: Ray Bennett?

Mrs. E: No, Howard Balsley.

S: Oh, really? He was quite a man.

E: He got a lot of good ore.

S: He did, there in that Yellow Circle and some of those places.

E: I saw him one time and he wanted us to go to Yellow Cat, wherever that is.

S: Yeah, out there by Cisco.

E: He wanted us to go up there and mine on some mesa.

S: Monogram Mesa? Or Club Mesa?

E: Cedar Mesa?

S: Polar Mesa?

E: Yes. My dad didn't want to go. He had plenty of stuff out here. We owned all the claims from the Butler Wash to Shoot-a-ring Canyon. He staked them all and then he sold them to.... They built a mill out there, in North Wash. The UVC they called themselves, the Vanadium Corporation of America, or something like that. They built a mill and some houses and a whole bunch of stuff. They were going to mine it and mill it.

S: That was the VCA, wasn't it?

E: No UVC.

S: USV?

E: And they were going to concentrate and make vanadium. And they never did get the job done.

S: When was it that they built it?

E: Oh, a long time ago.

S: Before your time?

E: Well, no, it was during my time but I was awful young. I remember going out there and we used to live there on and off for years, every summer, or every winter we would live there until I went to school. We would go and mine the ore. We lived right there and there were some good houses there and that old mill. I remember it was colder than hell, and we would put our horses in that great big old mill. They thought it was great.

S: Now, the predecessor of some of these companies was Standard Chemical Company and they had been in that area.

E: That was out at Trachyte.

S: Yes, that was in Trachyte?

E: Yes. That's how Ray Bennett got in the country, was with them guys. They became Shattuck.

S: Yes, out of Denver?

E: Yes.

S: And that's who you were selling to prior to World War II then, was to Shattuck?

E: Yes.

S: And didn't Balsley have some connection with them?

E: Yes, he sold some ore to them, and he's the one that got us to sell it to them. But he also said, well, it's got to be high-grade stuff. I know you couldn't sell anything less. It was

about 2 percent uranium and at least 2-3 percent vanadium. Out here in this Morrison formation, if you mine 2 percent uranium, your vanadium content will always be twice. So if you mine 1 percent you've got 2 percent, but it's always about twice. So we didn't have to worry about it as long as you kept your uranium content up why the vanadium would handle itself.

S: [Tape turned over] O.k., why don't you go ahead. You were saying something about Shoot-a-ring.

E: Well, Shoot-a-ring, when Harold went down there and started mining, he had a big plaque up on the wall that the AEC or somebody gave him. He shipped the highest grade, I mean the most of it, of everybody on the Utah-Colorado Plateau. He wouldn't ship anything less than 2 percent.

S: 2 percent uranium?

E: You bet. He would sit there with a cobbing hammer and if one of the guys he had working for him put in a piece ore that had a little sandstone on it, but he would knock that off. He was throwing away 50 hundredths. They said he threw away a fortune, right over the dump.

S: Should have at least tossed that in another pile that somebody could get later or something. Is that because he was used to the old days where it had to run 2 percent?

E: Yes. And then he liked to do that and they liked to see him do it. They would take a

couple of truckloads in there to the Grand Junction mill and the people there would just gather around and pick up pieces of that ore. He would give old Tony a lot of that chalk and stuff, pieces of highgrade trees that were 20-25 percent.

S: Then you went to work for a while for Shumway and Dade out there. Why don't you talk about your experience there. Dean was working for them.

E: I never worked out there for very long. Seemed like they went down in a drift and mined some good ore out of there. Then the leases were in blocks you know and I don't see how they ever did it. Joe Lopez was running in here and Dade and Shumway were running in here and in between the two of them there was a hell of a lot of good ore. The one he didn't want to come over here and the other he didn't want to go over there. I don't know. But they were doing pretty good because you can tell by what they're shipping, and they were doing pretty good.

I went from there to work on an oil rig somewhere and Dean stayed with them for a little while. He was living in Green River. They were driving out of Green River everyday to work. So we had to drive out of Hanksville and meet them out there to Temple Mountain turnoff and we would park our outfit there and get in with them and go on up to the mine.

S: Boy, you would commute from here out there everyday. And then there wasn't a paved road.

E: No. From Green River to Temple Mountain was worse because you had those big old trucks beating up the road. Some of those holes out there between Green River and Temple Mountain you could lose a car. Those big old trucks. They just about broke old Decker before they finally got oiled roads out there because he was just busted down all the time, and them drivers didn't give a damn.

S: They were just trying to make one more load, since they were being paid mileage.

E: Yes. But Decker did all right after the roads got better. Then he went down around Moab and he died there.

Mrs. E: You and Decker went hunting that time his kid got shot and you packed him out.

E: I always had a job of one kind or another. What's the name of that trucking outfit up at Grand Junction?

S: Schooley?

E: That's right, Schooley.

Wife: Mack and Hack.

E: Mack and Hack a lot of it. Schooley would haul a lot of it out of Shoot-a-ring. They were real good. Jameson, too.

S: Where did you learn how to drive a Cat?

Mrs. E: Trial and error.

S: You weren't in the CCC? You weren't old enough to be in the CCC.

E: No, I wasn't old enough.

Mrs. E: We were kids when they had their camp here.

E: I worked for the state for a long while. And then Harold had about 3 cats, and I worked for him for a couple of years and he just put me on one this one day and said, "Go get her done."

S: And so you were up there building mining roads and things.

E: Stripping ledges and bucking them off and getting down to the ore. He had three brand new Cats down there.

S: Harold did?

E: Yes. I remember one time he had, what was it? Twenty one guys. It was a big operation.

Mrs. E: Then he sold off to Plateau. No, Hydro-jet, wasn't it? Harold sold out to Hydro-jet and worked for them. Then he worked for Plateau Research, the same deal. That's when they built Tickaboo. We were down there when they were building Tickaboo.

S: Have you been back up to Temple Mountain in the last few years?

E: Yes, me and the kids was out there. I don't know if it was last winter or the winter before that we went out to get some firewood and we drove up on there. I wanted the kids to see them big old cores up there.

S: Yeah, that really is something. Over west of calix 7, over at the Temple itself, you can see an a-frame way up high on the hill. And you can see two cables that come clear down there. What was the deal on that?

E: They were going to ship that ore off. Right up there on the Temple?

S: You can see it leached out there.

E: Right around on what would be the north side, up high. Boy there is some hot stuff.

S: Of uranium?

E: Yes, and vanadium, too.

S: We sat there looking through binoculars at that and it looked awfully good. You can actually see it leaching the whole side there.

E: I think somebody, and I don't know who it was, whether it was Lloyd Meacham or whether it was some of old Migliaccio's outfit, who did that. During the time that Energy Fuels was out there, there was someone out on the north end mining it, but I never could tell you who it was. I went in to Price because I knew how good that was. Gary Ekker used to mine that. He had an outfit and he mined that out there and he made a lot of money. And he told me, "You get a lease on that and I'll make you rich because I know where we left that ore and I know where it's at."

E: So I tried everything I knew how to do. I even went to her, she was in Price.

S: Migliaccio?

E: The lady. She was working in a woman's clothing store up there, where you go in and

buy dresses and all that stuff, and I couldn't pop her, no way. But, boy, he said, "You get the lease on that and we'll make a million bucks in no time."

S: And nobody has mined it since, it's still there.

E: Yeah, it's still there.

S: Now up there on that north end at least right where it's on the west side of the north end there's a road here and you can see a lot of tunnels there, one after another, and then there's another road just above it that comes from right in the middle of this big temple, that big thing, it looks like a whole area that's been faulted in there, or something, and there's a truck sitting there. I didn't know whether that was recent or whether it's been there a long time. It looks like it's probably been there for a few years.

E: Was it a pretty little truck?

S: Well, I was looking at it through binoculars over on the Flattop there, but you can see it up there. It's a yellow truck with black, it looks like it is a water truck.

E: Water truck. Yeah. We had to haul drilling water up there. Yeah, I know where that's at.

S: Has that been there clear since the 60's?

E: Oh, yeah. Well, I think this outfit was mining out there when they were selling ore out here, I don't think they ever did sell any ore out of right there, though.

S: Energy Fuels?

E: Yes. I don't think the northwest side of the temple produced much.

S: Do you know who would have put that truck there?

E: It's been there for a long while. It's got a tank on it.

S: It looks like they did quite a bit of drilling in there.

E: Oh, yeah, they did.

S: And was that right there, the spot that you were trying to get it on? Or was it on around?

E: No, out there on the north side.

E: But I went down in there one time when they were mining and Lloyd Meacham had told me about it he said, "I've spent a thousand dollars and I've run out of phone calls and I can't get a lease. I can't even find out who to get a lease from. If I could find out I would kill the guy that owned it. I can't do it." And so then when I went out to talk to that old boy who was working on the Flattops, he had tried, too. He said, "Maybe I went out of my jurisdiction and everything but I was looking for a place to mine. I've been all over this country, been clear down to Happy Jack and all over." He said, "I went down in this North Temple." He said, "Boy I don't know. I wish they would turn me loose in there for 30 days." I said, "Well, I was there one time and they were shooting 9 feet."

S: You did?

E: No, they were when I went in there and looked at it.

S: But you went in and looked at it?

E: Yes. Nine feet of ore that was running around 50 hundredths. They were pulling better than 100 ton at a whack. Using 8 foot drills and shooting 100 ton at a whack. It was running 50 hundredths and boy, you figure that out, it was money. 100 ton a day, they could do that, shoot it and muck it out, 100 ton a day. Energy Fuel was just sitting out there crying for it. I had them guys in here every night wanting to know why we couldn't get a lease. They said, "When we built a mill here and come in this country we figured on

Temple Mountain."

S: When you built the mill at Tickaboo?

E: No, when they built the buying station down here. They said, "When we come in this country and built this buying station and had our plans to build this mill in Blanding and all of this stuff, we figured on Temple Mountain." They said, "Unless we get Temple Mountain we can't make it, because there isn't enough ore anyplace else to do us. So they said, "We figured on Temple Mountain. We tried every way in the world to get that and couldn't do it."

S: Now, your mother had 7 percent of it at least on the south side there. Why were they having a problem with that?

E: Seven percent. They just push you aside. You got Frandsen and Jensen and Hansen and all them bastards.

S: And they wanted to hold on to it.

E: Sure.

S: They just sat on it.

E: What they wanted was money down. We'll lease it to you but we want it up front. \$100,000 or so.

S: Well, Energy Fuel probably would have been willing to give it to them.

E: Oh, yeah, I know they would. They couldn't get along with them. They couldn't do business. Of course they didn't have the right people to go in there after them. They had a couple of old guys who thought they knew everything there was to know about it and I think if they would have hired say Gary Ekker or somebody that went up there and got the lease for them, they could have got it.

S: Well, now there's so many places where they've got so much high-grade and easy places to mine and all, what do you think, do you think they'll ever mine Temple Mountain again?

E: Well, if it ever comes back and they need a lot of ore they will have to.

S: They sure have found lots of it though since then.

E: Yeah. You can go back against that ledge. That ore runs clear back underneath that

ledge back there going to the east.

S: It probably runs all the way through there.

E: You can go back there. I know this for a fact they went back there and I know they never went and got it because right at that time they closed off everything and Clines had lots of ore. I built some roads back there, right back against the high ledge on the east, and they had drilled some holes back there with rigs to mine the ore. Of course it would be pretty deep for calex but you could go down out here and go in there. And they found 8, 9, 10 feet of .30-.50 hundredths back there against there. But nobody went back there after it. Uranium prices were going down and nobody dared to put some money in it, but old Bill Cline made lots of money. He would come down and talk with Mother, he and Mother were good buddies. Mother lived out in the trailer house. Old Bill would stop by and say, "Well, Mrs. Ekker you should have a good check this week. I shipped \$60,000 myself." Pete and Bill Cline were working that one part.

Mrs. E: It says here "Between 1920 and 48 only a small amount of ore was produced, perhaps 135 tons or as much as 15 carloads from F. M. Murphy's writings in 1944. Extensive mining and production began in 48 accelerated owing to the development of processes enabling comfortable extraction of the uranium-vanadium ore from this asphalt type at Temple Mountain. From 1948-56 the district produced 240,000 tons of uranium ore that contained about 585,000 pounds of U3O8. Most of the ore came from the area near

Temple Mountain. A small amount came from Flat Tops in the western part of the district during the period that Calex 8 mine was the largest producer, contributing 38,000 tons of ore containing 103,781 pounds of U₃O₈." But it says, "The history of mining operations ever since '48 is complex. Before '48 most of the mining was done by Standard Uranium Company between '47 and '51 several operators were acting in the district and in 1951 all claims except those in the Vanadium King group were leased by the Consolidated Uranium Company and from '51 to '56 Consolidated was the chief producer in the district. In November of '56 the interest of Consolidated was sold to Union Carbide Nuclear Corporation and most of the recent production has been done by Union Carbide."

S: Now, do you know why Union Carbide left there?

E: They didn't have a process. They would come right out there and I remember some guys leasing from Union Carbide, some of those Union Carbide guys would come out there and take a bucketful out of their stockpiles and take it and heat it and do something, whatever they did with it, then they would tell them they would have to get away from that asphalt. I guess they didn't have a processor, or didn't want to spend the money to put in one. If you signed a lease with them that was one of the things you agreed to. If the asphalt was a certain percentage, you didn't get paid for it or something like that.

S: It is really saturated with it. You can smell it.

E: Some of those old drill holes back in there, you can see it running out of there down on the floor. You drop some of that down on the road, and it works great. I know they used to have those big old sand holes in the road, and they would just dig up a lot of that stuff and old Decker would pick it up and dump it on the road and run back and forth a couple of times and it would just take care of those sand holes.

S: They had a genuine oiled road. (laughter) So they would actually do that with some of the ore then? Take it out and use it to pave the road with.

E: Well you know some of those bad holes when the trucks went through why they would just take them out and dump a couple truck loads in there and run it back and forth with a grader.

Mrs. E: Here's your truck, that you were talking about (showing a magazine article).

S: Yeah, I think it is. Now, those two old cabins there, or the cabin and the other building. Why were those there?

E: They were built there when they first started Temple Mountain. They are old. They've been there ever since I can remember.

S: Are they cowboy cabins?

E: No, they're miners. Built up there by Grandpa or Glassman or whoever when they first went in there.

S: They're pretty good old cabins really. Pretty well built.

E: There's a lot of good rocks to build a cabin with.

S: Yes, there are. So you're saying where you can see that stain up high there on Temple Mountain itself, there's some high-grade ore up there. What is it doing clear up there?

E: It's come up.

S: There's a pipe?

E: What they call a fumarole. It's come up from down in the bowels of the earth and when it did, it brought that up with it. Now the stuff around on this side I don't think is as good as it is around on the north. The northeast side up there, there's a hole up in Temple Mountain, it's kind of a valley in that temple. Right up in there is where they were mining it.

S: On the east side of it there. You can see it from the south there, but it's over to that side.

E: I can't figure out who put that tram up there.

S: I would say it's been there quite a while. But I don't know, you can't tell.

E: That probably was the only way they could get up there, see.

S: Oh, yeah, because you couldn't build a road up there.

E: Jess Abernathy, he was the big shot out there, the geologist, was saying that was a good way to do it. You can send a loaded one down and when the loaded one goes down it brings an empty one back. He says that's the only way to do it and we have got plenty of stuff to do it with. He was all for going up there and running a hole through there. But he was a good miner. He was a geologist you know. In fact, Consolidated had him out there practically running the outfit.

S: That was there at the Frawley incline?

E: Well, yeah, Consolidated.

Mrs. E: Jess Abernathy was good.

E: That Frawley was the guy Consolidated had running that thing. He had old Jess Abernathy out there as the head geologist. He told you where to drill a hole and he told you everything. And then when you drilled a hole why he was there with his probe and stuff and figured out how much ore there was and the depth and everything. It just seemed like whenever they hit a good place, a real good hole, why it went to Clines or some of the old boys that had been with them for a long time, that's where it went. That's why Cline made the money, they all liked him. Whenever they hit a hot spot they would give it to him, Bill Cline.

Mrs. E: I think he moved back to Colorado after his wife died. I don't think he lives in Green River anymore. Foreman is the step-brother. I think Cline went back to Colorado.

E: He was a good miner.

Mrs. E: He was a darn good miner. Funny.

S: Now, there were two Clines weren't there? Bill and what was the other one? Didn't they build a motel there in Green River with some of their money or something?

E: I think they did. Or they ran one.

Mrs. E: I don't think so. Well, Lill worked in the drugstore and she was in the PTA, but they never did.

S: Well, for that part of it, I think this about does it. We could talk all night just on gold mines, couldn't we? Up there, what you do in the summertime or something. But for this part of it, for Temple Mountain, that about does it.

Mrs. E: This book here is really good for info. I'll get a copy, they sell them all over town. I helped him do research and he gave me this one. This has got the Robber's Roost history in the back, too, all out of Lou's book.

E: He walked a lot of miles that old kid.

Mrs. E: He does a real good spiel here on Temple Mountain and he's got great pictures. And then another one was that other guy that came down here from the *Deseret News*, Joe Bowman. He wrote a real good book and interviewed Bud Haney and all of these old miners before they died because I took him around to visit with them, don't you remember?

E: Yes. Old Bud was good.

Mrs. E: Bud Haney died of cancer two years ago November but he was an old miner out there.

E: He had lots of claims out there at Temple Mountain. Not Temple Mountain itself but down on the Red Canyon part and down in there and this side of Temple Mountain down in Chute Canyon and down in that country.

Mrs. E: His wife was as good a miner as he was.

S: Oh, really?

Mrs. E: She still lives down here.

S: She lives where?

Mrs. E: Right down here in that yellow house. You know where Ryder's house is? There's an old house off the corner by Ryder? She lives in that house right there.

S: And she was up on Temple Mountain?

Mrs. E: She was there.

S: Well, good, I'll talk to her.

Mrs. E: She mined right in the holes with the guys. Darn good miner.

S: And she was on Temple Mountain itself or just off of it?

E: No, I think she must have been down in Chute Canyon. Then they were down here, Circle Cliffs and down in there mining. But he had his own claims and made a lot of money. He was the only smart one in the outfit. Sold his claims to Energy Fuels when they first came in here. And he made a couple hundred thousand dollars quick because he got out of it.

Mrs. E: I hear they are tearing down the mill at Moab, huh?

S: I think so.

E: They're tearing them all down.

S: What's your assessment of what happened at Tickaboo?

Mrs. E: Well Jesse's brother-in-law and sister were the developers down there at the town itself.

E: They've got a \$40,000,000 mill down there. I guess the uranium has gone bye-bye so they're stuck with that \$40,000,000.

S: Was there any uranium there?

E: Oh, yeah. They had all the time in Shoot-a-ring. And then they figured on buying, too. They figured on buying these little miners. They have got a weigh station and the office and all of that there, you know. So they were just going to be like Climax or any other company. You'd drive in there and dump the ore and get paid for it. It would have been a good thing for this country.

Mrs. E: Vance Morrell, who's here, is on the ambulance with me and he is one of the security people that is in there, making sure that nothing happens. They are in the process of getting the mine so they can tear it down.

S: And that hardly even did it?

Mrs. E: They just ran it and it worked and that was it.

S: Was there really uranium in Shoot-a-ring and all?

E: They had a hell of a store that they had been mining all of these years. Plus they had a lot of ore drilled out had to mine.

Mrs. E: But I can't see how Mr. Power, who originally owned the stuff, could keep

paying that crew down there all that time.

E: Well, they got to. They can't just walk off.

Mrs. E: But I mean they never processed anything to go back to their plant in Michigan.

E: Well, they were going to and they didn't figure it would go down the tube either, I guess.

Mrs. E: Then the lodge and all that stuff, nobody is going to buy that when they know they've got to generate their own power and produce their own water. They can't sell that to anybody. It would be a great site for a senior citizen deal or something like that.

S: If it was in California we would put a jail in there. We always need more jails.

E: Yeah. If you had some water and electricity and stuff, that's a great place to live in the winter time down there.

S: Is it?

E: Yes. It hardly ever freezes.

Mrs. E: I know when my dad worked for Utah Power and Light, that was when Lake Powell

and that was a dream, nobody had even thought of it. I remember when my dad was in the hospital he was trying to promote them to run a line to Hanksville, and they would be, "No, no, there's never going to be anything in Hanksville." And Utah Power and Light could kick themselves in the butt for not running lights and stuff down there.

E: And they went right on down to Lake Powell.

S: Sure.

E: Bullfrog uses an awful lot of juice, you know. As far as that goes they can go right on down to Page and hook up down there.

S: Or bring it up this way.

Mrs. E: CR & K, our supplier here, buys it from the dam.

Until it rains and lightning knocks out the electricity, then I have to go over and start the generator up.

S: Oh, goodness. Just for your house?

Mrs. E: No, for the whole town.

S: So you have a diesel generator for the town as a backup?

Mrs. E: Yes. Before, the power would go out, and you would have to phone somebody up at the county offices to come down and start the plant. I thought, "Well this is stupid. Somebody could be up there and have the power back on by the time they came." Guess who got the job. Usually, we are doing all of this stuff in the lightning and rain, and I say, "I don't know why I opened my mouth." We were talking a while back, and I said, "We could hold the town up for ransom." Someone needs electricity to pump gas, because someone needs to get to the hospital to have a baby, or whatever. We babysit it for five or six hours sometimes.

S: Well, these things are all so interesting, but it looks like we are out of tape. Thank you very much again for both of your reminiscences.

End of Interview

