



Rocky Flats Cold War Museum

Weapons to Wildlife

Sept./Oct. 2007, Vol. 1 # 5

Monthly newsletter for Friends of the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum

Six member panel

ROCKY FLATS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT PRESENTED

Six members of the Rocky Flats Oral History Committee made a presentation Oct. 25 at the national Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Oakland, CA, on the Rocky Flats Oral History Project, led by psychologist Dorothy Ciarlo of Boulder, who started interviewing Rocky Flats workers in 1997.

The presentation title was “*From Secrecy to Accessibility: Bringing the Realities of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant in from the Cold (War)*.”

The panel also included Hannah Nordhaus, Boulder freelance writer and oral historian; Susan Becker, manager of the Maria Rogers Oral History Program of the Carnegie Library for Local History in Boulder. Ann Lockhart, chair of the Oral History Committee and president of the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum; Kim Grant, Arvada grants administrator and vice-president of the museum board; and LeRoy Moore of the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center.



From left: **Dorothy Ciarlo, Hannah Nordhaus and Susan Becker.**

The team showed an eight-minute video of quotes by Rocky Flats workers or outsiders expressing disparate views on such things as safety, the FBI raid and long-term impacts. Nordhaus gave an overview of the themes emerging from the 90 oral histories. Lockhart and Grant described the committee process and how the museum will use the oral histories. Moore described his role as an activist in assisting with the project. Becker described how she collaborated with the museum in processing the interviews, checking the transcripts and preparing them for the web site, inserting time indexing and key word searches.

Becker also served on the panel “Successful Oral History Programs: Secrets to Success from Those Who Know.”

INSIDE:

- * **Former Governor Richard Lamm talks about Rocky Flats**
- * **Cold War museum in LA has different focus**
- * **Grant has raised \$\$ for Arvada & the museum**

NEVADA TEST SITE ORAL HISTORIES ONGOING

A related panel presented at the Oral History Association was on “The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project: A Large Scale Study of Cold War Technoscience,” chaired by Mary Palevsky, Ph.D., of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. A graduate student described interviewing ranchers affected by 1950s atomic testing, and a librarian discussed creating a digital archive of the oral history research. Palevsky will share an interview with the Rocky Flats project that she did of a man who worked at both the Nevada Test Site and at Rocky Flats.



Museum Meetings/Events

Tues., Nov. 13, 11:30 a.m. Executive Committee, Egg & I, Leetsdale & Holly, Denver
Tues., Nov. 13, 3:30 p.m., Education Committee meeting in CD2 Conference Room of Broomfield City Municipal Center, 1 Des Combes Place, Broomfield
Wed., Nov. 14, 5 p.m. Rocky Flats Cold War Museum board meeting at 11025 Dover St., Ste.1000, Westminster (northeast of 108th Ave. and Wadsworth Blvd.)
Mon., Nov. 19, 7:30 a.m. Financial & Fund-Raising Committee, Eggshell, Old Wadsworth Blvd. & Ralston Rd., Arvada
Please contact 303-388-6978 for more information.

ARTIFACTS & ARCHIVES FROM FORMER USSR & EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES COLLECTED IN WENDE MUSEUM IN LOS ANGELES

The Los Angeles-based Wendé Museum is a non-profit organization established in 2002 and dedicated to acquiring, preserving and enabling access to cultural and political objects, personal histories and documentary materials from Cold War-era Eastern Europe. It includes artifacts and archives from all former Warsaw Pact states, focusing on the Soviet Union and East Germany. The German word Wendé means “turning point” referring to the period of the collapse of communist East Germany in 1989 and the creation of the reunified German state a year later. The term represents the end of Soviet communism and the beginning of a new era in Eastern Europe.

Wendé Museum has more than 100,000 objects and archival materials including a 2.6 ton segment of the Berlin Wall, the iconic Cold War landmark. The museum has begun a Historical Witness Project to capture oral and written testimony of those who produced, consumed, manipulated and sometimes suppressed the physical record of the Eastern Bloc. The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. See www.wendemuseum.org. The Wendé Museum is at 5741 Buckingham Parkway, Suite E in Culver City, CA 90230.

BOARD MEMBER BIO: Kim Grant, City of Arvada Grants Administrator

Kim Grant, who has served two terms as president of the museum’s board of directors, is grants administrator for the City of Arvada, where he is responsible for developing, obtaining and coordinating supplementary funding to support city initiatives as part of a comprehensive grants program for the municipality of 104,000 residents. This involves project development, prospect research, proposal writing and grant implementation and reporting responsibilities in coordination with several city departments and divisions. Since 1999, Grant has helped secure more than \$10 million in new funding for the city, with particular emphasis on parks, trails and open space; planning and historic preservation; environmental remediation and protection; and arts, culture and humanities programming. Grant has been instrumental in securing much of the Rocky Flats’ museum’s funding in the past. He previously served as director of development for Historic Denver, Inc. and as executive director of the Lower Downtown District, Inc. (LoDo). He also wrote and helped secure most of the private grants for Denver’s new Central Library. Prior to relocating to Colorado in 1991, Grant served as the assistant state coordinator for the Kansas Main Street Program at the Kansas Department of Housing and Commerce. He is married to Mira Zevin and lives in Denver with his wife and sons, Ari and Evan.



NEWS BRIEFS:

THANKS: Duane Hunter, retired Rocky Flats worker, has resigned from the museum board. We thank him for his service on the museum board and help with the Collections and Education Committees.

STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL: The Rocky Flats Stewardship Council, primarily comprised of representatives from cities near the former plant site, voted to continue to have a museum representative on the council at its meeting Nov. 5. Kim Grant is the museum’s delegate, and Ann Lockhart is the alternate.

ROCKY FLATS WORKERS: The Nov. 2007 issue of *5280 Magazine* has an article by Mike Kessler about Rocky Flats workers called “Out in the Cold.” It describes “American’s Cold War veterans, who forged weapons from a fearsome energy source and bravely endured years of radiation for a country that pledged to take care of them. Instead, government loopholes and evasions are making sure those promises are never kept.”

NEW YORK TIMES MENTION: A New York Times article Sept. 9, 2007 about new history museums popping up around the country mentions us: “The Rocky Flats Cold War Museum is in development just outside Denver.” Writer Kathryn Shattuck says, “Gone are shelves of crusty artifacts, yellowed text panels stuffed with dates and names... In their place are Hollywood-produced movies, evocative oral histories and special-effect extravaganzas so spectacular that visitors could be forgiven for thinking they had actually lived through that historical moment.”

Roy Rosenzweig, professor of history at George Mason University who directs the Center for History and New Media, is quoted as saying history museums still rate very highly with the American public. “What people say they’re excited about in terms of history museums is contact with real stuff of the past,” he says. Most of the new history museums make major investments in multimedia or interactive exhibits, although Shattuck says historians, curators and directors repeat the constant refrain, “The museum is finally about the story and about finding a better way to present it to the generations...”

PRESENTATION: Ann Lockhart and Kim Grant presented the Rocky Flats Oral History PowerPoint and short video at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment on Sept. 28, with moderator Marion Galant, former community relations manager in the department’s Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division.

THANKS TO 2007 DONORS TO THE MUSEUM

The Rocky Flats Cold War Museum gratefully thanks the following donors:

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NEED VOLUNTEERS TO PLAN EXHIBITS, ETC.

Want to help develop a Collections Plan? Assist with outreach or planning future exhibits on the Education Committee? Want to help with marketing or fund-raising? Contact Ann Lockhart at ajlddenver@aol.com.

QUOTE

“The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.”

**--Albert Einstein
May 24, 1946**



Weapons to Wildlife

The Weapons to Wildlife newsletter is usually issued every two months by the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum board. In July 2001, the board incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization to develop the museum to “document the historical, social, environmental and scientific aspects of Rocky Flats.”

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Oral history excerpt

FORMER GOVERNOR TALKS ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT

SUMMARY: Hannah Nordhaus interviewed former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm on December 13, 2005 at his University of Denver office on his involvement with Rocky Flats, for the Maria Rogers Oral History Program and the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum.

Lamm was born in 1935 in Madison, WI, and grew up in northern Illinois and Pittsburgh, PA. He came to Colorado in the Army in 1957. He went to Berkeley to law school and came back to Colorado after law school “not knowing a soul, but we’ve been here continuously since 1961.” He was elected to the legislature in 1966, and took office in 1967. He spent eight years in the legislature and then ran for Governor in 1974. He was elected and served in office for 12 years. Read the entire interview at www.bplcarnegie.org/oralhistory/; click on OH 1395V, RICHARD LAMM.



(Nordhaus: How did you end up being Governor?)

...I was of that generation where John F. Kennedy was a shock of electricity through our society. I was a second-year law student when he was elected President...it was just simply a jolt of electricity to America to make the world a better place...there was a wave of idealism, sort of exemplified by the Peace Corps...

(Nordhaus: What kind of law did you practice?)

I was a CPA before I was a lawyer...but soon got out of that to a more general practice of law...I, pro bono, meaning—free—started my interest in this whole Rocky Flats-type issue when I was the chief counsel in an attempt to stop Project Rulison, which was part of the Atomic Energy's Plowshares program—plowshare being that we were gonna turn our swords into plowshares, our nuclear weapons into some better purpose...What they wanted to do in Colorado in Project Rulison is...explode a nuclear device up in Rulison, Colorado [in 1969], underground to try to loosen up the tight rock formations and produce natural gas. Well, I was part of the lead in a group of

attorneys who sued them and tried to stop Project Rulison. We had a big trial in front of Judge [Alfred A.] Arraj at the Denver District Courthouse. It went on for a long time. We lost...Hey, folks, this was a very bad idea.

(Nordhaus: When did you first learn about...Rocky Flats?)

...it gradually grew in my consciousness...I always questioned why we were building atomic triggers upwind from Denver...Project Rulison sensitized me to the fact that both business and government had some grandiose plans for nuclear energy that I felt were not fully thought through.

(Nordhaus: I understand that when you were a legislator, people were already talking to you about Rocky Flats and doing something about it. Was that the case?)

...I think giving credit where credit is due—Tim Wirth (see *interview with Tim Wirth, OH 1398V*), when he was elected in 1974, I think really galvanized the support of a number of us. I really do take my hat off to him....he deserves far more credit than any of the rest of us.

(Nordhaus: And when you were running for Governor, you already had a plan for shutting Rocky Flats?)

I think so...I understood the need to build nuclear triggers...I did not argue with the idea that we needed, for deterrence purposes or self-protection or whatever else, some nuclear weapons...It was not so much the concept as the place where these were being manufactured.

(Nordhaus: Here in the metropolitan area?)

In any metropolitan area...I think with Rocky Mountain Arsenal and Rocky Flats...in Rocky Mountain Arsenal they were storing nerve gas, also upwind from Denver, right at the end of a runway...if you would have a crash into that, smoke and fire would disperse the nerve gas...I don't think that this was...done deliberately, but I think that it was just public policy malpractice that these things were located where they were.

(Nordhaus: Do you remember...where the public consciousness evolved to the point where people questioned the fact that they should be here?)

...Back in the '70s, there was an increased awareness that large-scale things could happen...I think that there was an awareness that if anything went wrong out at Rocky Flats—and things did go wrong—but anything that really got away, like a fire almost got away—that the stakes of something like this were such that even small odds were unacceptable.

What I think was the growing awareness of this is that the government was not to be trusted—blindly, anyway—and I think that was all part of Vietnam. This was a period of nihilism, antagonism toward the establishment, and I think that people said that the same misjudgment that got us into a land war in Asia, we are gonna start questioning more and more...

(Nordhaus: A few people... always...link your involvement with Rocky Flats to the Olympics, your involvement in not bringing the Olympics to Denver. Was that part of a growing environmental awareness?)

Yes...one of the problems that I suffered from after the Olympics, from which I got sort of a reputation as a giant-killer, was that if you could do this, why can't you do this and this and this?...My whole political career is more luck than talent...Robert Redford, who did a couple of fundraisers for me, wanted me immediately to come out against all nuclear power. And when I didn't, he was quoted in the *Rocky Mountain News* as saying voting for Lamm was like saving your Confederate money. We subsequently reconciled, and he is to this day a friend, but it does show that...there were all these built-up expectations. Then I'd been the chief sponsor of the nation's first liberalized abortion law, followed by the Olympics. So I was a giant-killer...

(Nordhaus: Was it harder once you became Governor—)

Oh!...I was thirty-nine years old. I was just a kid when I was elected Governor...the expectations built up around a Democratic Governor were just insatiable.

(Nordhaus: ...what your role was with regard to Rocky Flats? Besides the Lamm-Wirth Task Force...How did your office interface with DOE and the federal government?)

...Early on, I went out to look at the place. I was impressed by the safety considerations there...the Kelly brothers, who were nice, good Democrats, they were definitely a part of all of our considerations, because they wanted those jobs, understand? They weren't worried about building nuclear triggers upwind from Denver...I went out there and then met with the Kelly brothers...Did I ever dream they were burying radioisotopes with half-lives of 26,000 years out there...it seemed to me that the Cold War was going to go on forever and that we really ought to move that place someplace else.

(Nordhaus: Can you describe your physical impressions of the plant, the buildings? Had you ever been on an industrial high-security location?)

...courageous journalists here recently, since 9/11...have really exposed how vulnerable some of these things are ...For the Governor, of course, they had all of the bells and whistles out, all of the rapid-response teams and everything else...a Governor relies on other people. Our health department and the people that are in our health department... I found a wonderful guy that I really did have confidence in that could help me navigate these kinds of decisions.

(Nordhaus: Did you go inside the buildings?)

I watched them manipulating—putting their hands in the gloves and in the box...

...it was a regular industrial building...What I really remember is the handling of those radioisotopes...because if there's even a pinhole in the glove, the guy's exposed. I could see why those people were paid more money and why those were good jobs. And as we found subsequently, we don't know what kind of damage to their health...

(Nordhaus: I'm wondering what you think has happened to that awareness now? Does it go in cycles?)

...one of the issues in public policy is, how clean is clean? How adequate is adequate cleanup? I spent \$16 million cleaning up mill tailings in Grand Junction that might have caused one death every ten years. Now, you give me \$16 million to buy health for Colorado, I would immediately cover all of the uninsured people in Colorado. So I do think that I separate from some of the environmentalists these days in that I think cost-benefit ratios are questions that public policy has to ask...there's a Praeto principle involved in cleanup, where you get 90 percent of your benefit for 10 percent of your costs, and the remaining 10 percent will cost 90 percent of your money...Rocky Flats...there were two different issues...should it be accessible to people, and what parts should be accessible to people...I was actually willing to close down part of that place and just simply declare it a national sacrifice area.

(Nordhaus: But the environmentalists weren't happy with that approach?)

...The idea that you should force industry and/or government to clean up to a 100 percent is mistaken...I think that to govern is to choose...it doesn't make sense to spend...the billions of dollars to get a marginal increase in safety...we live in a society with infinite needs and finite resources.

(Nordhaus: Let's talk about the Lamm-Wirth Task Force now...)

...I think that the idea of a task force was negotiated by Tim and I personally and then left to other people to fill in the blanks.

(Nordhaus: Did you feel that it was a balanced array of interests regarding Rocky Flats?)

I'm sure that the industry would say no. I know that the Kelly brothers felt no. But we felt that that's the people we wanted on it...the power to appoint a task force is a power to get an end result...We did have very strong Rocky Flats supporters on that task force...they were very suspicious of some of the people that we put on it that they thought were "hysterical"—quote-unquote—about the health of the public of Colorado...we wanted a balanced bunch of people, but I didn't want them to be the handmaidens of the union out there, and/or the industry and/or the government...I think that they did an immensely conscientious job.

(Nordhaus: Do you think anybody ever seriously considered closing the plant or that it would be possible to close the plant?)

I think it came as a surprise to a lot of us. Certainly we went into this thinking...how do we keep it as safe as possible? ...there was another thing here, too...transportation of these nuclear triggers up and down I-25...there was a whole untold story about how many of those things were going up and down our highways at who knows what risk.

(Nordhaus: Did you think the ultimate decision to close the plant had anything to do with the public pressure against it, or was it just about the Cold War?)

...I think it had something to do with it, but I think the major driving force was the Cold War...

(Nordhaus: Did you have any frustrations with the legal limitations of your office?)

Sure...I wanted to know how many nuclear devices were in Colorado. The Governor is personally responsible...We run the emergency response systems here...so here the biggest threat to the health of Colorado...one of the biggest ones...would be some nuclear event of some sort, not an explosion, but a weapon that would be subject to a fire and spread...I couldn't even know how many missiles we had stationed in Colorado...the Governor of Colorado has the responsibility but not the authority to really be able to fully protect the people of Colorado. That was very frustrating to me. And they'd pat you on the head and say—Don't worry. We've got it handled...the feeling on the part of the Department of Defense was that governors did not have a need to know.

...I know of no governor in the US that had access...to any of that information.

(Nordhaus: ...Did you—you had mentioned the public health department employee who was so helpful....was he able to get onsite—)

He said that he had found a large degree of cooperation...he felt that there was a new degree of openness out there when we took over...they realized that the game had changed, that governors, local officials...were starting to ask — What's our risk?

(Nordhaus: You discussed your relations with the union. I wonder if you could describe the various pressures that came to bear from the union, from the protesters, from the federal officials.)

...I really was respectful of the Kelly brothers...They recognized that there was a problem, and they were very constructive trying to help us solve it without losing those jobs....those were very attractive jobs out there. They were very high-paid jobs...when we started being a threat to their continuing livelihood, there were some real problems in the union....

(Nordhaus:...These are two very important constituents for you, unions and environmentalists, and in this instance they are completely at loggerheads. How did you try—?)

...the union movement...I was never their first choice. I think that they always had questions about me because I was an environmentalist....I would come down on the side of the environmentalists virtually all the time, and the union members recognized that I was in the way of Colorado becoming a right-to-work state...So I was never very high on the union's list of favorite politicians.

(Nordhaus: I'm wondering if your official role with regard to Rocky Flats ever conflicted with your personal view? And also how you think those roles changed over the years...?)

...my generation...was disillusioned with what government was telling us. I think the Vietnam war had a very powerful effect on increasing all of our awareness that government was also a flawed vessel...Gary Hart and Tim Wirth, Pat Schroeder, all of us, I think, were impacted by this, because we were much more reluctant to take government, what they said, at a total face value. Their assessment of the risk to Denver was something I wasn't about to take blindly.

(Nordhaus...if we could talk about the cleanup and what you think of it. Last week, DOE certified that Rocky Flats is cleaned up. Are you happy with the level...?)

I really can't answer that question....I guess I'm naturally suspicious when I hear an announcement like that....color me skeptical.

(Nordhaus: How do you feel about the nuclear industry and national security issues that involve Rocky Flats in the aftermath of the Cold War, and I guess in the aftermath of 9/11 as well?)

I believe the world has changed dramatically, and I think that it is absolutely time to stand down more of these weapons...I don't think we have any idea of what might be in process because of the loose nukes issue. I'm very frightened of it...it used to be that you didn't have to worry about the maximum damage that could be done by a few kooky people...But now, the ability of a few dedicated, but yet pathological, people to do massive harm, it's just incredible...

(Nordhaus: I've interviewed people who were out there on the train tracks demonstrating who after 9/11 started for the first time in their lives supporting nuclear weapons as a means of defense against terrorists. 9/11 didn't change your position?)

I think that this is a whole different war...I think that nuclear weapons are almost irrelevant to the war on terrorism. We're not going to be able to use a nuclear weapon to respond to an act of terrorism...I'm not trying to say that we would completely disarm. But what do we have, six thousand still-active nuclear devices...Come on...We don't need six thousand nuclear devices.

(Nordhaus: ...Some of the biggest demonstrations, protests against Rocky Flats, happened under your watch. How did your administration respond? How did you personally feel...)

I guess I understood why people did that...it's not my style...I would much rather file a lawsuit, but that's easy for me to say, I was a lawyer...it's pretty hard to argue with any kind of non-violent demonstration...I saw that as an acceptable form of protest.

Read/hear more Rocky Flats oral histories at www.bplcarnegie.org/oralhistory. Click on Special Collections, and then click on Rocky Flats.
