



## Rocky Flats Cold War Museum

# Weapons to Wildlife

Jan. 2007

Monthly newsletter for Friends of the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum

### *New officers elected*

## New monthly newsletter is among goals of new museum board president



This new monthly email newsletter for the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum, named to reflect the evolution of the Rocky Flats site, meets one of the five key goals of new board president, Ann Lockhart, retiree of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and writer/editor.

Lockhart outlined her five goals at the Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> board meeting. They include increasing communication, increasing outreach, developing a fund-raising plan, broadening volunteer opportunities and completing the museum's oral history project, which Lockhart chairs.

She was elected board president at the annual meeting Dec. 13, and Kim Grant, grants administrator for the City of Arvada, was named vice president. Grant has served two terms as president and a term as treasurer. Marion Galant, part-time community relations specialist at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, continues as board secretary, and Don Rohlf, a former purchasing analyst at Rocky Flats, continues as board treasurer. Rohlf chairs the Collections Committee.

The goal of this monthly online newsletter to give you updates on our progress in saving artifacts and creating a museum. We'd like to hear from you. Send feedback to [editor@rockyflatscoldwarmuseum.org](mailto:editor@rockyflatscoldwarmuseum.org).

### *MUSEUM BOARD GOALS FOR 2007*

- 1. Increase communication* about activities of the museum (starting an email newsletter, improving the web site, creating fact sheets, issuing news releases, etc.)
- 2. Increase outreach and schedule presentations* in communities and organizations in the northwest Denver metro area.
- 3. Develop a fund-raising plan* for 2007 and an architectural and site plan for the land donated by Charlie McKay.
- 4. Broaden and publicize volunteer opportunities.*
- 5. Finish and publicize the museum's oral history project. See article below.*

### **QUOTE**

*"I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of their own nuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality."*

*Martin Luther King (from his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech)*

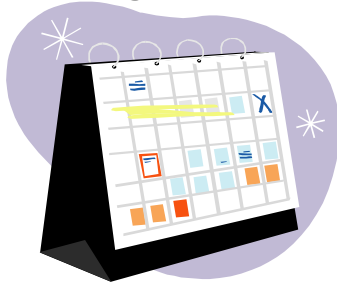
## **NEWS BRIEFS**

**Wendell Cheeks**, president and GIS Project Manager of Infinity Solutions, Inc., has joined the board of the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum. Welcome Wendell!

**Kim Grant** and **Ann Lockhart** attended the Superior Historical Commission meeting Jan. 19 at the Superior Town Hall. Grant presented the museum's powerpoint presentation to the members. Commission members told Grant that when the coal mines closed in Superior, many of the workers went to Rocky Flats to work.

**Donations welcome.** Send your tax-deductible donations to the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum at P.O. Box 871, Arvada, CO 80001-0871.

## Upcoming Meetings/Events



**Mon., Feb. 5:** 8:30-11 a.m., Rocky Flats Stewardship Council, Jefferson County Airport Terminal Building

**Thurs., Feb. 8:** 11:30 a. m., Museum Executive Committee, Parisi's Restaurant, 44th & Tennyson, Denver

**Wed., Feb. 14:** 5:30-7 p.m. Rocky Flats Cold War Museum Board of Directors meeting at 1025 Dover St., Suite 1000, Westminster (east of Wadsworth Blvd. at 108<sup>th</sup> Ave.)

**Tues., Feb. 20,** 8 a.m. Oral History Committee, The Egg & I, 2574 Baseline, Boulder (Broadway & Baseline)

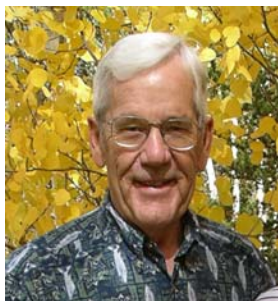
**Tues., March 20,** 1 p.m. or 7 p.m. Colorado Historical Society, 1300 Broadway, presentation by Mark Fiege, "Atomic Sublime: Scientists and Nature at Los Alamos" RSVP to 303-866-4686. There is a small fee.

## Grant lists museum board's 2006 accomplishments at December meeting

Former president Kim Grant cited the museum's accomplishments in 2006 at the Dec. 13 meeting.

- ❖ Completed 90 videotaped oral histories of Rocky Flats workers and others under a Colorado Historical Society grant; processing of transcripts is still underway.
- ❖ Developed a preliminary site plan and met with the Jefferson County Planning Department to discuss rezoning the 1.4 acre museum site donated by Charlie McKay.
- ❖ Held a special event Oct. 28, 2006 near the west gate of Rocky Flats for the donation of a teepee, banners and other materials from activist groups who used them in protests at the site.
- ❖ Did presentations to five groups as part of the speaker's bureau.
- ❖ Continued to publicize the museum and its activities; a German public television crew did an interview.
- ❖ Began participating as a member of the Rocky Flats Stewardship Council.
- ❖ Helped form the DOE Science and Visitors Center Network.
- ❖ Visited the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, NV, and Weldon Spring Visitors' Center, MO.

## BOARD MEMBER BIO: Meet Don Rohlf, Arvada



Don Rohlf worked at Rocky Flats for 38 years as a cost analyst, so he knew the plant and its systems very well. He joined the museum board in June 2000, because of his interest in preserving the history of Rocky Flats' contribution to the nation's defense. He is serving his second term as treasurer for the museum board and chaired the board's Fundraising Committee in 2006. As chair of the museum's Collections Committee, he is seeking artifacts and materials that tell the story of the plant. Several years ago, he videotaped 16 Rocky Flats retirees to help preserve their histories and stories. Rohlf is historian for the Homesteaders, the organization of retired Rocky Flats employees. Rohlf likes photography and serves as president of the Broomfield Photo Club. Rohlf has a bachelor's degree in business.

## Committee to complete the Rocky Flats Oral History Project by March 31

The Rocky Flats Cold War Museum received a \$38,600 grant in May 2004 from the Colorado Historical Society to do videotaped interviews of 75 Rocky Flats employees and others to preserve the history of the "built environment," since the historical site was to be demolished as part of a Superfund cleanup. Rocky Flats was decontaminated, decommissioned and then closed in late 2005. The Oral History Committee was formed in late 2003 at the suggestion of retired Boulder psychologist Dorothy Ciarlo, Ph.D., who had already interviewed a number of Rocky Flats workers as part of the Boulder Public Library's Maria Rogers Oral History Program.

The committee is working on a powerpoint presentation, articles and other products to complete this project by March 31. Each month, we will feature excerpts from one of the oral histories. Read Bob DeGrazio's story below.

## Bob DeGrazio

### *From chemist to building manager at Rocky Flats—a 38 year career*

*Interview recorded Sept. 30, 2004 by Dorothy Ciarlo, Ph.D., and transcribed by Sandy Adler for the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum and the Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Boulder Public Library.*

Bob DeGrazio worked at Rocky Flats for 38 years, beginning in 1952. He talks about the tritium contamination incident, the 1969 fire, the FBI Raid in 1989, working with radioactive materials and a mock “terrorist” raid that he didn’t know was mock. Read excerpts of his interview below.

Bob DeGrazio graduated from the University of Denver in 1952, majoring in chemistry and minoring in physics and math. One of the officials from Rocky Flats came and interviewed chemistry students at DU. (“My first and only job...I was hired six months before I graduated. Because at that time they were just building up Rocky Flats.”)

“We always had a fight – not a fight, but arguments with the physicists. They thought they were the king of the hill, and we thought the chemists were the king of the hill, and there was always a conflict there. And nice conflict, but a conflict. Even at Rocky Flats, the physicists there, the engineers – “Oh, you chemists, what do you know about anything?” (laughs)

**(Ciarlo: How would you characterize the difference between chemists and physicists?)**

“Well, a chemist deals with mostly solutions and liquids and chemicals and, uh – whereas a physicist will deal mostly on the physical phase like of lights and electromagnetic waves and magnetism and stuff like that. But lots of times we had to exchange information, the chemists had to give the physicists information and vice versa. So we worked together. And that’s another thing you don’t see today, is teamwork. At least my kids tell me that.”

“The security was pretty strict. Anyway, I passed the security and graduated and then Mr. Epp said, “Well, we don’t have a building for you ready yet.” So they sent us to Oak Ridge for about six months.”

“And then we went back to Rocky Flats and still our building – at that time the building was 81 building, and that wasn’t ready...So they put us in a garage...It was the west part of the plant site there, and you know at Rocky Flats the wind blows from the west pretty hard. That so-called garage was made of tin. And the thing would rattle and shake. We thought, “Man, we’re not going to last long here.”

**(Ciarlo: And what was it – were most of the other people like yourself young and just out of college?)**

“We were the same age and just straight out of college and eager to save the world. Which I think we did. I think Rocky Flats really did. The escalation was really serious, and we found out real quick how serious the Cold War was...”



Bob DeGrazio

**(Ciarlo: Were you given more information, do you think, about what the Russians were doing, than the average citizen?)**

“The average citizen didn’t know...She (points to wife) didn’t know, and I couldn’t tell her. And it was, it was scary, so we really put our heart into it. At the same time, we were really criticized. We were called murderers, you know.” (laughs)

**(Ciarlo: That was later, after the protesters.)**

“Yeah, all the protesting, I can still remember the blue nuns coming out there and protesting, and the hippies from Boulder protesting, and the people from Tibet with their drums walking up from Boulder to Rocky Flats protesting. We really weren’t liked at all.”

**(Ciarlo: But wasn’t that later? Weren’t there a number of years when it wasn’t like that?)**

“Oh, yeah, most of the time it wasn’t like that. Because it was a secret plant. And I had to laugh because a lot of people thought we made insecticides out there. I’d say, “Oh, yeah, we make insecticides, yeah.” No, you’re right. Most of the time, it wasn’t like that. It was after people began to realize that we were making nuclear triggers and stuff like that.”

**(Ciarlo: Now, earlier on, was it hard for you not to be able to talk to your wife about what you were doing?)**

“Oh, not really. Because most of it was chemistry. And unless you’re a chemist or have a scientific background, it didn’t mean too much. I told her a lot of stuff that was non-classified. I told her one time I got contaminated with tritium. (laughs) Which is a radioactive gas.”

**(Ciarlo: How did that happen?)**

“...somebody brought a sample into the lab one time and said, ‘Don’t know what this is. I’d like to have you guys analyze it.’ Sure. I said, Don’t you really know where it came from? ‘No, they think it’s a – they think it’s water, but we’ve gotta make sure what it is.’ And, uh, I was the guy that did the analysis, and I got one tiny drop, one speck of drop of that stuff on my finger, accidentally, and after we analyzed the stuff, we found out it was, it was heavy water, you know, with tritium, which is radioactive. And man, I got contaminated bad. But luckily, tritium has a half-life of 26 days. So they said, “If you drink a lot of beer and excrete it, you’ll be OK in 26 days.”

**Read/hear the full interview at [www.bplcarnegie.org/oralhistory](http://www.bplcarnegie.org/oralhistory); select OH 1286 V A-B Bob DeGrazio.**



### **ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER...**

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