

--Cottonwood Uranium Mining Project--

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In cooperation with *Blue Mountain Shadows* and Utah Division of
Oil, Gas, and Mining

INTERVIEWEE: Don Black

INTERVIEWER: LaVerne Tate

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PLACE: Home of Don Black, Blanding, Utah

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Mining in San Juan County

TRANSCRIBER: Kimberly Hiatt

The Stinky Hole Mine was just across Cottonwood Wash from the Big Hole. It was a dry mine. The Big Hole was on the East side of the creek and it was a wet mine. The Big Hole was closer to where that old vanadium mill was built, before my time. I understand they took a lot of ore out of the Big Hole. When you went into the Stinky Hole Mine, you came into a big open area. There were maybe six or eight tunnels in different directions and different guys would be working and mining in each of these tunnels. Mining in the Stinky Hole, at first, about the only thing we had was a jackhammer and wheelbarrow. We didn't have a jackleg for the jackhammer or any water for it. You just had to hold the jackhammer and belly it in until you finished drilling. You didn't want to shoot out any more than you had to because you were hand mucking and loading it into a wheelbarrow. If you had a vein that was three foot thick, you only shot out the three foot area. Then you had to lie down on your side and kind of scoop it out, in that position, and into the wheelbarrow. While wheeling the wheelbarrow, we were always in a bent over position. You didn't want to make the tunnels any bigger than you had to because of the added expense. In some of the places we worked, we wheeled the wheelbarrow of one up some planks into the back of the truck. I remember this could be pretty steep if we didn't have a bank to back the truck up to. DeLoy Shumway could push these full loads up any steep plank and into the back of the truck. He was so strong. There was an older, local man that was very strong named Heber Carroll, so DeLoy's nickname became "Heb". He was the strongest man I remember.

All the compressors were Ingersol Rand. We had Cleveland jackhammers and nearly everyone bought Ford pickups. We were getting ready to come in on a weekend from Deer Flat: Burdette, Kenny, Merwin and maybe some others. Burdett and Erva hadn't been married very long. He was really wishing he had some money to take her to the movie when he got into town. He said, "What would you guys give me if I ran down into this canyon and on the count of ten you guys start throwing rocks at me?" We were standing right on the edge of Deer Flat where it drops down into White Canyon. "We

could see how many of you could hit me before I get out of range.” We all thought that would be great fun. Each one told him how much we would give him. So he took off, and after counting to ten we could start chucking rocks at him. He was so damned fast and fleet on his feet, by the time we had counted to ten he was long gone and we couldn't hit him. He earned his money to go to the show. Another time, we were coming into town. We were riding in the back of the pickup. Glen Nazer, Kenny Shumway and I were riding in the back standing behind the cab. Kenny was holding onto a stake. Glen was in the middle. I was on the other side. Burdett drove around the corner and that stake broke. Kenny grabbed Nazer, he grabbed me and we all went flying out of the pickup. Nobody was hurt though, so we climbed back in and made it to town.

Some of the men working at Cottonwood there at the time were, my brothers, Ken and Calvin Black (commissioner), Leon Black, Carl Mangum, Glen Nazer, George Marian, Kenny Shumway, Burdett Shumway, DeLoy Shumway, Glen Shumway, Keith Jones, Joe Nielson, DeVar Shumway, Leonard Louchana, Keith Shumway, Kent Black and Genie Shumway. The ore in this mine was both uranium and vanadium.

After a while, I partnered up with Carl Mangum, just before I went into the service. My brother, Calvin Black, had bought a F8 Ford truck. It was a big truck for those times and would haul maybe 10 to 12 tons. Burdette and Merwin Shumway were partners in the mine at this time. They thought it would be a good investment to be a partner in the truck. They traded Calvin an interest in their mine for an interest in his truck. That is how my brother, Calvin Black, started into the mining business.

I don't know why it was, but I didn't get powder headaches. Often when we had shot a round, I could go back in the mine there by myself and muck. The others would have to wait until the air had cleared out or they would get powder headaches. I didn't get any kind of headaches until I was probably thirty years old.

On one occasion, we were on our way to the Markey mine. There was Hansen Bayles, Homer Taylor, Jack Tate and me. We were going down Grand Flat before the road was paved, and it was not daylight, yet. A big four point buck ran into the side of the pickup, hard. We thought it was dead. It just lay there. We let the tailgate down. Hansen had the deer horns and Jack had the hoofs. On the count of three, they were going to load it into the truck. We figured we had our camp meat for the week. They swung the deer, one, two, three, and the deer kicked its feet and stood up. Hansen still had the deer by the horns and there they were facing each other. Hansen didn't know what the hell to do. Jack yelled, “Bulldog it.” So Hansen twisted its head until it flipped over on its side and lay there, kicking its feet. Jack grabbed one foot, put his foot on the deer's other foot, and I cut its throat. We stood there until it had bled and then we did the one, two, three thing again and loaded it into the truck. We got down to where you turn towards the Markey mine, about by Redhouse. One of us happened to turn and look towards the back of the pickup. It was fairly light by then. That deer was laying on its side looking around with a puzzled look as if to say, “How in the hell did I get in the back of this pickup.” By the time we got to the mine it had finally died. We hung it up, skinned it and had our camp meat for two weeks.

Lee Guymon had some kind of a disease after he was an adult that left him baldheaded. I guess he was really self-conscious about it. On the way out to the mines, he wore this felt hat. When he got to the mines, he would hold his hard hat in one hand and look around to make sure no one was watching. Then he'd switch his hats really fast so no one could see his baldhead. A few years after that, he got active in the church and I would see him at church and other places with no hat. I guess after awhile, he got to where it didn't bother him any more.

One summer there was an infestation of big worms about two inches long with a horn on the back end. Joe Nielson got one on a stick and asked us how much we would give him to eat it. We each gave him an amount we would pay. I think it added up to \$20 or \$30, which was a fairly large amount at that time. After looking at the worm a little longer, Joe asked if he could cut the horn off first. I think we agreed that he could. He looked at it some more and then asked if he could kill it and roast it first. We said, "No" and told him he would have to chew it at least twice before swallowing it. He looked at it for another minute or two trying to make up his mind. He finally decided not to do it.