

**--Cottonwood Uranium Mining Project--**

Sponsored by Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest  
Service

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

INTERVIEWEE: Jed Tate

INTERVIEWER: Laverne Tate

DATE: February 5, 2001

PLACE: Home of Jed Tate, Blanding, Utah

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Cottonwood Mining

TRANSCRIBER: Kimberly Hiatt

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LT: Jed, I understand you did some mining out in Cottonwood?

JT: Yes, I did.

LT: How old were you when you started?

JT: I was 19.

LT: Whom were you working for?

JT: I was working with my dad, Jack Tate, and Calvin Black.

LT: What was your job at the mine?

JT: Oh, I drilled and blasted with everybody else and mucked out. Everybody did everything. Everybody kind of worked together and just got everything done.

LT: What kind of equipment did you have? Did you have a shuttle buggy?

JT: We had shuttle buggies and Wagner loader.

LT: What year was this?

JT: It was in 1980.

LT: So what month did you start out there?

JT: I started in October of 1980.

LT: Had your dad already been mining out there?

JT: Yes, he'd been mining out there for probably a year or so already.

LT: Who else was working in the mine with you?

JT: Calvin Black.

LT: Which Calvin?

JT: All I know him by is Calvin but it's the younger Calvin, I guess.

LT: Okay that would be Glen Calvin Black?

JT: Glen Calvin Black.

LT: What was his job in the mine?

JT: Well, he drilled and blasted. Everybody just kind of did a little bit of everything.

LT: What was the name of the mine you were working in?

JT: Spring Water mine.

LT: Was this particular mine on the East Side or the West Side of Cottonwood?

JT: On the East Side of Cottonwood.

LT: Was this considered a wet mine or a dry mine?

JT: It was considered a very wet mine.

LT: Can you tell me about what the conditions were like in a wet mine?

JT: Well, there was water everyday. When we'd go down in the drift it was always raining. It was just wet enough that it is almost like being in a light drizzle all the time. There was water everyday when you came back to the mine. You'd have to pump water for an hour or sometimes two hours before you could go in and actually do any physical mining.

LT: Where did the water go that you pumped out of it?

JT: We pumped it two different places. We pumped up the main drift and out the portal and back into Cottonwood. And then we'd pump out the top of the mine and into a storage pond that was constructed upon top past the vent holes.

LT: Did you have dynamite at this time or did you use prell?

JT: We used both.

LT: Which one had the best advantage in a wet mine?

JT: The prell.

LT: How did you use the prell?

JT: We'd blow it in with an air gun.

LT: An air gun?

JT: Yes.

LT: Into the holes that you drilled?

JT: Yes. Sometimes the holes would be so wet; the prell would run out so we'd have to pack those holes with powder.

LT: Sometimes you'd combine the two, then?

JT: Yes.

LT: I see. Where did you get your mining supplies?

JT: I don't remember.

LT: So your dad was in charge of buying the supplies?

JT: My dad and Calvin probably got most of the supplies.

LT: Okay. Did you live out at the mine?

JT: No, we did not. We lived in town and drove out everyday.

LT: So what time did you usually go to work?

JT: Oh, it would vary on different days. But on an average we probably left town at about 6:00 in the morning, between 5:30 and 6:00 in the morning.

LT: Did you usually try to light a round before you came home for the night?

JT: We'd usually go in the mornings and drill one round out and load it and blast it

and then we'd come out and eat our lunch while it was clearing out the smoke. And we'd go back in and muck it out. Usually with three of us, all three of us would drill what we called a face. We'd drill three different faces so we'd have three different areas to muck out.

LT: What was the ventilation like in this mine?

JT: The ventilation was pretty good. We blew air down an 18-inch ventilation shaft that ran down about mid way into the mine. This is the shaft on the map.

LT: So, did you have any experiences in this mine that you'd like to tell me about?

JT: Well, I didn't work at that particular mine very long. I had been mining prior to that out in the Tickaboo area and also out in Fry Canyon area in some different mines. But this particular mine, I had worked there from October and around December 2nd, we had premature fuses that ignited some rounds early and all three of us were in the face of the mine. We were in one particular face of the mine when a premature round went off and blasted all of us. We were just around the corner where we were able to crawl back around the corner just four or five feet before other rounds started to ignite. While we were injured, yet we were able to get out and still be alive. It was quite an ordeal. As you think back and remember a situation like that, I just remember a bright flash and falling down. And then we crawled as hard and fast as we could. I remember my dad hollering at Calvin, "Where's Jed? Where's Jed?" But I think I was crawling around the corner faster than they were. We were fortunate that it didn't knock anybody out. I believe that if it had knocked anybody out in a wet mine like that before anybody would have got in to rescue you, you would have been drowned. Usually by the time we got back to any face, there were always a couple of feet of water standing by the time we got back to them. We were fortunate to get around the corner and to try and work our way out of the mine. As we began to work our way out of the mine after being blasted, my dad was on one side of me and Calvin were on the other side of me. We were walking down through the mine and probably the adrenaline had us all walking pretty good at that point. But we had one place where we had to sump out in the middle of the drift because there was no place else to sump the water to. Every time we'd go in, we'd pump it out and as we were in there working, we'd have to come back and pump a little bit more out to work through it. But there always seemed to be a foot or two that stood there. As we went through that water to get back out of the mine, after we'd been blasted, as soon as we got out to other side of the water, fresh air hit some of the injuries that got wet as they got in the water, I believe that I probably almost blacked out at that point because I had a foot that was severely injured. Up to that point, I had been walking on it, and trying to get out of the mine after that point, I couldn't walk on it anymore. So my dad and Calvin on each side of me helped me on out of the mine. We got out of the mine looking for some emergency help and realized that we had a flat tire on the pick up and so we weren't going to be able to go to town as quick as we thought. So we hurried and grabbed the air compressor and aired up the tire on the pick up and headed to town for emergency help. As we got to the clinic in Blanding, they took

care of us. They started fixing us up and they realized that my injuries were extensive enough that they needed to fly me out and I was flown to Durango, Colorado to a hospital where I had lost two toes and had every bone in my foot broke. I had my right shoulder shattered and broke in several places. I had my right collar bone broke. I had a rock that had gone through and stuck in one of my main veins in my neck that if the rock had ever come of there I possible could have bled to death. But fortunately for me, the rock stayed there until we got to the proper medical attention and they took care of that. I had extensive damage to the right side of my face which later they used some skin grafts off of my rear-end to put there. I had extensive damage mostly to all of my right side of my body. I had holes where rocks had blasted into me in my legs and different places. I just remember being there in the hospital until just a day or two before Christmas.

LT: That's great. Do you know what kind of injuries Jack and Calvin had?

JT: The extent of their injuries I don't remember. Of course, I wasn't around them much after the accident to see them much to know how extensive their injuries were. I remember some talk about their injuries not being as serious but yet they were badly bruised and their ankles swelled and things like that, and they had a few cuts and scrapes and some powder shots.

LT: They had a number of rocks pelted into their backs that the doctors had to remove. I believe they decided that Glen maybe had more than dad did but they both had a lot of rocks the doctor had to take out. I think Calvin ended up having some stitches.

JT: I think one of the things you don't realize when you're in an accident like that is you dig rocks out for years after that. They keep surfacing and you find a little festered sore that comes up and you have to dig a rock out.

LT: Would you say that the ore in that mine was a good mine?

JT: It was a very good mine. There was lots of ore there. In fact, the potential of that mine is probably virtually untapped.

LT: I understand there are a lot of drill holes clear across the creek even into Zeke's hole in that mine still?

JT: Yes. There are drill holes all through that area. They go clear back into Zeke's hole. The ore body through that mine, they figure, is probably five to six miles long and maybe even that many miles wide.

LT: Did we say at the first of the interview who owned that mine?

JT: I believe Genie Shumway was the owner of that mine at the time.

LT: Do you remember anything about a mine inspector incident? You were in the hospital but your dad had to deal with it.

JT: I just remember that when I was still in the intensive care and really kind of in and out still, I remember a guy coming in and asking me a lot of questions but not really remembering what he asked and not really probably even clear enough to answer him very well.

LT: At that particular time at 1:00 in the morning, your dad and I were staying at his mother's house in Bayfield, Colorado. At 1:00 in the morning we got a phone call from the mine inspector stating that he had to come and interview dad at 9:00 the next morning. So before we could back into intensive care to visit with you, dad had to answer all the questions for the mine inspector at this mother's home.

Were you married at this time, Jed?

JT: No, I wasn't.

LT: So you were still living at home?

JT: Yes.

LT: What is your opinion of the Cottonwood mines out there, particular the Spring Water? Do you think that mine should be closed off?

JT: Well currently it is closed. There is no one trying to mine the area. Yet, it's a very wet mine. There was one set of individuals, I believe, that tried to open the portal that we had and there is one set of individuals that mined the mine before we did and I believe that miner, Burdette Shumway, was killed in that very mine. We tried opening a new drift because the old drift because of the type of shell rock and different things it had on it, had filled back up with water. It's almost virtually impossible to reopen the same drift. It's possible to go back and mine it but I believe it would have to be re-drifted in a new drift so you're not fighting the same problems. As far as the body of ore goes, and the possibility of good mining there, I believe that there is probably a lot of ore and a lot of good mining available there. The prospects of the market ever changing could possibly make somebody well to do on that mine because of the body of ore.

LT: What was the name of the miner that was killed before you guys went in there?

JT: His name was Burdett Shumway.

LT: So in spite of the fact that another couple of guys tried to open it after you guys, they weren't able to. Is that correct?

JT: The drift that we ran, by the time they had gone back to reopen it, had filled clear

back up with water, so however deep the mine was, it was clear full of water. So once they tried to pump it out and pump back to where we were at, the shale rock just kept caving off.

LT: So that means that your dad, Jack Tate, and Glen Calvin Black and you were the last ones that mined out there?

JT: That is correct.

LT: But your dad did mine for awhile after your accident?

JT: I believe they went back in and mined for another month or two.

LT: But you never went back to the mines?

JT: I never went back after my accident.

LT: What did the ore look like in Spring Water Mine? What type of ore?

JT: It's a very dark ore with heavy streaks of little pieces of trees and different stuff through it where they turn bright yellow where the uranium comes in heavy. It's got a lot of vanadium in it, vanadium being another byproduct of uranium or another type of ore that is found with uranium often that is often milled together at the same time. It's a heavy vanadium mine with really rich trees and different things that fall out from that.

LT: Do you know who was hauling your ore from the mine?

JT: We hauled our own ore most of the time.

LT: Whose truck was this?

JT: Jack Tate's, my dad.

LT: So your dad usually drove the truck to the mill?

JT: Yes, he did.

LT: What mill did the ore go to?

JT: It went to Energy Fuels at the time at White Mesa.

LT: Do you have any other comments that you'd like to make about this mining experience?

JT: Well, when I mined I enjoyed mining. As life progresses, you do different

things, but I don't have anything against mining. I think mining is a good occupation for those who choose to do it. I enjoyed it at the time I did it. I don't have any regrets.

Although I'm missing two toes, I still don't have any regrets and if it was necessary to feed my family, I would probably mine again.

LT: I know you mentioned to me about a nest of rattlesnakes out there.

JT: Well, occasionally there were lots of rattlesnakes around mines and mines were typically where rattlesnakes liked to be. We found a bed or a den of rattlesnakes underneath an old pickup bed that was out there. When I first went out there, as young as I was, I thought it would be kind of neat, and I stuck a bunch of dynamite under that pickup bed and blew it up and blew snakes everywhere.

LT: I almost forgot that incident. That was a pretty good part of your interview.

JT: Well I'd like to thank you for being interviewed on your experience out there and you will be furnished a transcript and you can correct it in anyway that you want to.

JT: You mentioned earlier that you wanted to know whether I thought they ought to keep mining in that area. I think we talked about that particular mine but not the area. I think my personal feelings are that uranium is a type of power and energy source that should be used throughout our whole world and we avoid it because we feel it's dangerous. But in reality it's probably the safest energy out there. And I think that especially in our times, we're seeing energy crisis, people without electricity and shortages on electricity, and one day we'll run out of coal. And I believe that if we're ever going to power our world the way we think we will, we're going to have to explore nuclear energy further.

LT: I believe that's a good opinion and I appreciate you giving it at this time.