MR. DUNHAM: Probably more accurately than about anybody is, is the connection between the supplies, because I sold everything they needed to mine with and so, and I was in those mines or around those mines and, you know, through many years. And so, if there's anything that, that rings a bell that you'd like to, you know on that aspect of it I, I might be able to, to shed some light that, that wouldn't come up otherwise. The, the actual mining, I mined in numerous cases, and in fact this, the White Bull ah group we had out in a, in a Henry Mountains at a Cottonwood Wash, and I leased those claims to Jack Erwin for a short period of time and he mined for me. But ah, anyway this same guy that I mentioned before, Bud Hany went out and jumped those claims and he was my buddy and he stopped me out here on the highway one day and said "How come you didn't file your assessment work on the, on the White Bulls" and ah I said "I did" you know sure I did. You had to go all the way to Escalante Utah to the courthouse to file your assessment work and so you'd get nonchalant and not do it sometimes you know and then do it the next year. But in the meantime, Bud went over and checked and he found I hadn't done it so he filed, he restaked the claims and ended up selling them for 10,000 bucks to one of these johnny-come-lately big companies that came in and was before the last, the last boom and that was the end of it. But, you know, nothing wrong with it. All I could do was kick my own hind end you know because it my mistake. But anyway that happened a lot, that happened a lot.

MR. VERDOIA: Let's, let's pick a point and start and

let's um let's pick a point where you come out of the service. And I, I guess right around that time right after the Korean War the boom is just starting to pick up steam.

MR. DUNHAM: Yea the boom was...

MR. VERDOIA: Tell me what it was like on the Colorado Plateau as you, you come home and you, you catch the, the sense that this uranium boom is really taking off.

MR. DUNHAM: Well every newspaper was full of you know Moab, Green River. We were shipping I think more ore from right here in Green River Utah in 1954 than any place on the Colorado Plateau. And so when I decided that I was going to the uranium boom someplace Durango, Colorado, Nada Reeda, Colorado, Uravan, Grand Junction, someplace. And then as I told you I got, ah reacquainted with some old friends of mine an S & M supply company in Grand Junction, John R. Monroe and D.G. Son and ah, we struck upon with partnership and I came to Green River and saw all the, just a hubub of activity. You couldn't imagine what it was like then compared to now because like there were only a few outdoor ah, public telephones and they would be busy at midnight. At 12 o'clock there would be a line out there because there were so few phones in, in town. And the cafes were the same way 'round the clock. And it was just a hubub of activity. There were, there was a uranium miner or a prospector behind every rock and bush in this part of Utah, so, it was an attraction, it was like a magnet to, to get you know involved in this, in this excitement. And of course with me I was fortunate to have some partners and a little bit of

capital, enough to build us a store and, and stock it with what it takes to, to mine, so. And before when we started pouring the concrete down there we put up a sign "The Future home of the Uranium Supply Company" and we had people in there the very first day, can you get me this, can you get me that, and ah within 30 days we were just busy, busy, busy and we stayed busy all through the whole, the whole boom.

MR. VERDOIA: Let's, let's break this in, in to two sections, we got prospecting, we got mining. Let, let's talk about prospecting for a little while first.

MR. DUNHAM: O.K.

MR. VERDOIA: This, ah, this can be pretty tough land. It, it's land that's not easy on a person that doesn't know their way around and you got to know geology to do some prospecting. Ah so tell me a little bit about the people that, that were good prospectors. How would you know someone knew what they were doing?

MR. DUNHAM: Well, the, to, to even the terminology the you know ah jurassic, triassic, the ages that, that a this, these various kinds of ore can be found in, the morrison formation, the shinrup formation, the shinlee formation. If they could at least talk knowledgeable about geology there was a chance they might know what it looked like when they got out in the country looking and, and at least get in the proper zone to go prospect for it. But there were many, there were many more that didn't know than there were those that did know. And so, ah, it, it was a fiasco. I mean people bought a Geiger counter and a 29 dollar lucky strike and

away they went. And they might look out here for something that was radioactive where the Geiger counter would click, click, click and they, they wouldn't find it. But usually they'd sit in a beer joint someplace and somebody'd say, "Hey you've got to get up in around Hanksville up at such and such or someplace else" and, and then they'd, they'd eventually find the right spot at least, but very few of them ever found any ore. But...

MR. VERDOIA: Sounds like what your describing is that one of the, the real exciting parts of, of the uranium boom was, it was a lot of people chasing a dream.

MR. DUNHAM: A dream. Sure. And the fabulous part was that like the, the ah, Happyjack Mine down there in, near Monticello. They, they made a fortune, found a fortune. And ah, overnight they're wealthy. And so those stories get published and everybody reads those and they think they're going to do the same thing. But, I could, you know numerous instances where a, a person came into my store and a, with a Geiger counter and had found a little radioactive spot someplace, came in there and didn't have money enough to buy anything other than a shovel and bought a shovel and went out, and a pick, and went out and picked and shoveled and so forth and came up with a little bit of ore, enough to think that they and chances are they did have a spot where they could open up a mine. And in many cases they didn't know how to open up a mine. They didn't have the slightest idea how to, how to go in there and, and go underground and dig that ore out of there. So in those cases they'd pick up some, usually a, a guy in a beer

joint someplace that said "Sure I'm a miner I'll show you how to do it, you rent a compressor and a jack hammer". And that was what we did. We rented compressors and jack hammers. We rental purchased them. The first month's rent would apply on a purchase price if you wanted to buy the thing on down the line. We did whatever it took. But we needed our one month's rent in advance and then that was a risky business too. We lost compressors like you can't believe that we never have seen to this day that went out someplace and got moved from where they were supposed to be and we never saw them again. But a lot of people rented a compressor and a jack hammer, went out and drilled and with a wheelbarrow and loaded up a truck and hauled it to the, or got a shipping permit, hauled it to the mill and sold it, and that's the way they got started and turned into a big operation and a lot of them made a lot of money. From a little bitty start like that, but those were the exception rather than the rule. Usually it was someone that either had some mining experience from Hardrock, Old Silver, or some other area that came and, and knew a little bit about the business and started in, but there, theres were stories from all kinds.

MR. VERDOIA: From what you've described, it seems like the uranium boom mining, once, once the strike was made and they got into the mining that the mining during the uranium boom really required an innovative approach to mining that you couldn't do it just the way they had done gold and silver or, or ?molly in the past. You had to approach uranium differently and so it called for, for thinking of new solutions.

MR. DUNHAM: Right, right. That's where like the jack leg came from, the air leg where you could elevate your holes, your blast holes, drill your holes on the floor, and on the ribs and on the roof, and ah all from one position where your leg lifted up you could drill the holes turn your drill and so forth. That came from, from the necessity to, to roll the way the uranium ore rolled instead of being vertical or horizontal like hardrock or coal. So, and then the same way with the shuttle cars. The shuttle cars are fantastic now. They, they we had, ah what they called a Getman Scootcrete, and a scootcrete was a little concrete buggy, a little three-wheeled concrete buggy with a Wisconsin engine that they used in the, in the east to pour concrete on roofs, on floors as they built high-rise buildings. And we took that little machine and, and adapted a diesel engine. The very first one we had was a ?halut, a one cylinder halut diesel and it was a phony if there ever was one. They smoked like mad and they wouldn't start, but it was only thing there was and so people used them. And, and miners were innovative and, and ah sometimes they'd let them run all night because they couldn't get them started the next day so they just let them run 24 hours a day. I know a lot of places, and then eventually we came up with a, with a import engine from Germany a ?Doitz and we sold the, here in Green River the very first ones of those that were ever imported into the United States and a that's a fine little engine and they still use them on many different kinds of, of shuttle cars. Ah, Young Machine Shop in Monticello ah, build them a, a little buggy they called them, they called all

the, all the ah, I guess we called them scootcretes but that was because of the concrete, crete is where that came from but everybody else had to call them something else so they went to buggies and their young buggy was a, was a typical good ah, outfit to move muck with out of a mine and they were diesel engines, pure diesels, started on diesel, ran on diesel. Had to put a little scrubber on them and they smoked and that's why the, you know, the lung situation. Those mines were full of diesel smoke and burn your eyes, burn your lungs, and, and a the air in, innovative there, pumping air into those mines, drill holes, and, and a pump air down and try to exchange the air so that you had half way decent air there, but it was never as good as we'd like, should have been probably.

MR. VERDOIA: I want to ask you. We're talking about a boom that was driven forward, it was created and driven forward and, and the dream came true in the hands of young men most times young men fresh out of the service either with World War II experience, Korean War experience. What was it ah, what was it about that time, these, these young men who had, who'd come out of serving they're country and all of a sudden they were rough and tumblin' ready to go.

MR. DUNHAM: Well, I think they, I think they were looking for an opportunity, you know, everybody at that stage in life, is, is probably looking for an opportunity and, and ah to, to me and a lot of the people that, that came to the boom like, like I did, I think ah it was the, the pot of gold at the end of the

rainbow sort of thing. I mean here today you have nothing and if you happen to find a, a room as big as the room we're sittin' here it could make you wealthy of, of 70 hundred's of one percent uranium and so and it might be around the corner. And every round that you put in there, you could break into it and so it, it was a fever, just like a, just like a fever ah, only it was uranium fever instead of gold fever and it was real. And then everyday in the paper there was somebody made a strike. And in those days the Atomic Energy Commission was paying that ten thousand dollar bonus on the first what ten thousand pounds I think. That, and that was a sizeable amount of money, just like that and it was right around the corner. So, you know, it was a, it was a rags to riches sort of thing that, that any young man I think that, that had a desire to and then it was open, wide open country and fresh air and a frontier and people that have frontier type instincts and blood they came and, and that, that was the type of people we had.

MR. VERDOIA: Anyone, ah, how, how we doing on time. Good? O.K. thank you. Ah anyone who would attempt mining in 1993 knows that the government will make them jump through a thousand and one loop holes there's mining safety, there's BLM restrictions, there's every government agency has, has some type of restriction. When you look back at the uranium boom it seems like it was different, whole difference of rules.

MR. DUNHAM: It, it was just the opposite. It was just the opposite. Because in those days we had the Atomic Energy Commission who was doing all they could to encourage more ore

production, more uranium production. They had Atom.., we had around here a number of Atomic Energy Commission Camps. They would do everything they could to help you. They'd check you ore. They'd come on your property. All you had to do was stake it. They'd help you with drilling. They, they helped you at every turn. Of course at that point we needed uranium for the defense of this country and ah, so it was a different, it was a different story. Nobody, we had a few mining inspectors but they were usually a good bunch of guys too. They didn't try to shut you down like ?Osha and all these things. They, they tried to help you. They'd come in and say, "Hey you've got to get some more air down underground" and ah, "You've got to do, you've got to ventilate that before you go in after you shoot, get the, get the powder smoke out of there" and you've got to do these things but they were, there were all trying to help. They were really not the kind that were regulatory with the, with the big stick out there somewhere. They were, it was a different, different atmosphere completely.

MR. VERDOIA: The boom, ah well there's been lot's of types of the boom, but the boom we're looking at kind of comes to a dramatic end, the first stage, stage of it kind of comes to a dramatic end when the Atomic Energy Commission basically looks out and says "This has all been too successful."

MR. DUNHAM: Right.

MR. VERDOIA: "We, we've got a surplus." Um, as a man that was involved in supplying the industry what happens when the

AEC makes that announcement and says "It's all going to good."

MR. DUNHAM: Yea. Well, it was a, it was a discouragement I'm sure to all of us because ah, ah we thought that it was going to go on forever. They were building roads, some of these roads these fabulous roads off these rims like the Spring Canyon road and ah, Bears Ears road and all the Mineral Canyon road. See the Atomic Energy Commission built those. When they pulled all that out and ah, and the geologists that were out helping, ah it, it was a big discouragement and, and ah it was a change where the little miners were probably phased out about then. The prospectors we were talking about kind of phased out and, and bigger companies came in like ah, Atlas and Union Carbide and, and the old Vanadium Corporation of America, VCA, and the bigger companies bought up the little fellas and they sort of, they sort of changed. It, it was a changing time and if you didn't have a, a, a pretty good sized ore body and a drilling program to keep ahead of the amount of ore that you were trying to mine why it was, it was a, about a thing of the past.

MR. VERDOIA: A what did it do for Gene Dunham's business. How did you survive?

MR. DUNHAM: Well, we had to roll with the punches and take on other, other things other than dynamite and drill steel and jack hammers and compressors. We started selling lumber and building supplies and farm equipment and farm supplies and so on and so forth and hardware and, and ah we, we just had to swing with the tide and change our type of business. But we stayed through

that low ebb and then pretty soon we had another boom but it was, it was a different kind the second time, big companies, oil companies, Phillips, and a all the big, Exxon, everybody got in the name of the game and then, of course, that one eventually died too. But, ah and the United States has low grade uranium compared to other countries and, ah you know when we're mining ore that's a fraction of one percent compared to ore that's in Africa and Canada and certain places that's one plus percent, it's pretty hard to compete. And the mills had the same circumstances. They had to mill that low grade ore and, and try to compete with, with higher grade ore and so. Ah, and then it looked like we were going to use uranium for a nuclear fuel for power plants and that didn't work out because of the little people that are afraid of radioactivity and the disposal of the waste and so forth and so on. But, in my opinion the uranium is, is yet to come because my thinking has always been that the size of the package when you can, when you can get tremendous power in a, in a, a package the size of that pen to power a submarine underground, or underwater around the world and this is equivalent to many trainloads of coal, the size of the package is what's important. When we go in to space or wherever we're going to go under the ocean in future generations, I believe uran.., uranium will come back because of the size of the package where you have so much energy in such a small little container.

MR. VERDOIA: How you doing on time.

[Ah we have about ah nine minutes left.]

MR. VERDOIA: Oh good. Let me move on to another subject

that you brought up that a, that I found ah, very interesting. You talk about looking around Green River and, and this kind of leads in to some of the health implications when in the early days when the mines weren't so, so well ventilated and ah, maybe some miners got exposed to some very hot levels. But you said that you look around Green River now and ah, a lot of the, the old miners are gone and a lot of their widows remain. I'd like you to talk about that. That just, you're perspective on looking around your town and how the impact might of been with some of the health, health implications of the mining.

MR. DUNHAM: Well I'm sure that ah, we didn't really realize, however there were some people like Dr. Sackamono in, in Grand Junction that, that started doing on his own and I guess with some aid from the Atomic Energy Commission on lung ah, and respiratory problems. But most of those miners were a tough, rough bunch. I mean they thought they could eat the world so to speak. And they smoked cigarettes and drank whiskey and a, a good many of them didn't take care of themselves, their bodies like, like ah we think of today, there wasn't the talk about taking care. Look at smoking, everybody, you know the popular thing was to have a cigarette in your hand and so if you combine dust, just plain rock dust like in a, in a gold mine, just plain dust in a field and cigarette smoke and then you go underground where you don't have a adequate amount of fresh air, why you're going to do damage to your body. It doesn't, whether it's coal dust or rock dust or uranium. And then if you get the radio active particles which we know now

and they imbedded in that little cell in your lung ah, big problems. So I think it was just a matter ah, of two things, one, ignorance that they just simply didn't realize they needed more fresh air, or, the fact that they thought they were tough enough that they'll make their few millions or whatever and get out while the gettin's good. But it just caught up with us that's all. It just, ah and looking back her in this little town there...[tape sped up to fast to understand]

MR. VERDOIA: I won't embarrass you in front of them. [Thats, that's, thats a very wise thing.]

MR. DUNHAM: So the, so the a, I think it was, it was a sad thing that a we, we really didn't know how much damage we were doing, you know, to our, to our lungs primarily, but the same thing happened to lots of the rest of your body, your eyes, and, and a the whole body, it was, it was a tough time and I think that people were just careless with their health. It, overlooking the, you know your health versus the amount of money you're trying to make, and ah so.

MR. VERDOIA: You were right at the point where the last tape ran out where you talking about as you looked around your own town, the Green River and you were talking about the impact on families here.

MR. DUNHAM: Yea well we had, you know, like I can see some second generation people ah, much younger than, than ah the, the first generation, that it was a, it was a high paying job ah, so they, they went to the mines and they went to work and they, and

they got a little careless like drilling dry instead of drilling with enough water to keep the dust down and, and even though the regulations were better then, but we have a hole bunch of second generation miners that are, that are dead in this town. So, it was, it was, it was a bad thing as far as ah, as ah not being reminded by somebody I don't know whether it would be the State, the Fed's, your own doctor somebody should have been saying, hey you've got to take better care of yourself. You've got to have better air. That's what it boiled down to. But in this town we have a lot of widows. A lot of young ones, quite a lot of older ones ah, from the, from that very thing. I don't know, looking back on it, probably the same thing would happen again. It's just human nature.

MR. VERDOIA: I want to ask you, not that it's necessarily a, a humorous story but ah, the, the talk of among prospectors there, there's a dirty phrase. The phrase is "claim jumper". Claim jumping fairly typical when your talking about open public land where people can stake claims?

MR. DUNHAM: Well, when you say claim jumping it's kind of a, that's a, that's a term that would say this is illegal. Ah, but in reality what the main claim jumping was, was that a miner failed to file his assessment work or do his legal work that he needed to do at the courthouse in the county and somebody else came along and, and overstaked those claims which was perfectly legal, ah not nice, not, not anything that you win friends and influence people with but it was done on a pretty big scale. Sure. And a

lot of people that, that jumped claims made a lot of money with them especially in that in between time, between the booms when the little guys were going out and the big companies were coming in and buying hundreds of claims. A little guy, ten claims was plenty. If you had ore on one claim was plenty. If you had ore on ten claims, it was all you ever needed. But if you, ah, when, when Exxon and, and ah Conoco and ah the big oil companies, the big mining companies came in, they bought they bought hundreds and hundreds of claims. So, you, you go out and over stake and sell them and be gone. A lot of money was made there.

MR. VERDOIA: A lot of people never stop to think, well I'm living history right now. But really that's what you were doing Gene back in those 50's. You were living a chapter of history that may never be played out again because regulations have gotten in and there's not that much public land that hasn't been prospected left in America. What, it may have been the last go around for a lot of free enterprise taking care of business in this country. So that's, you've got to feel pretty good about that I would think, that you were there when history was made.

MR. DUNHAM: Oh yeah, I think, I think its fabulous and, and I always felt that if there was another boom someplace and I was able I'd go, I mean, it's just in your blood, you know. The, the gold rush days in California or Alaska or wherever. I mean mining booms are, whether it's in the bar or in the drugstore or in the sidewalk or wherever you know it's, it's exciting, it's an exciting time and, and you don't think so much of it being a part

of history, or I didn't but it's, it's exciting and something you want to be in on and so I'd do it again. I mean sure, it's part of history and it's a great part.

MR. VERDOIA: O.K. let's turn a page and talk about a chapter in family history. And I love the story about your daughter's arrival in the world during the boom and I'd love you to share that story with us if you don't mind.

MR. DUNHAM: Well, that's a, that's a, a very interesting part of our life and we've had a, my wife and I have been fortunate. We have six children. We had one that was born in Germany, ah, during the Korean War era and then the number two one happened to be born in the car on the way to, to the hospital here in the Green River area. And that was a real interesting time. My wife worked right along side me in a, in our store business. She did the books and sold merchandise and the whole bit and when the time came to have a child why we ah, had a doctor in Grand Junction, Colorado, and ah, which is 105 miles away and were going to have ah, the baby delivered over there. But when the time came why, my wife was busy working in the store and, and it kind of slipped up and pretty soon it was time to get there and, and we started to Grand Junction with the laundry and a dog, and, and, and the whole works and we got 20 miles east of here at Crescent Junction and she said I don't think I'm going to make it to Grand Junction and so I well we'll go to Moab which is thirty miles south from there and ah, very busy narrow road in those days what year was 50...ah, what year, 56, 1956 and the road was real narrow and,

and ore trucks going and coming both ways and we turned south and got about 20 miles south and or maybe even 10 miles and fidgeting and wiggling around, you know, and, and I was pretty concerned and going just as fast as that old 52 or 3 Chevy would go but my wife said ah, I don't think that, that ah I'm going to make it can you go any faster and I said no, no faster, this, too much too many ore trucks. We started down this winding narrow road sandwiched in between ore trucks and ah, and the next thing I knew I heard a baaaa and, and ah Nancy said, well we've got a baby girl. And so we went to the bottom of the hill where I could stop and said what can we do and she said let's go on to the hospital everything's o.k. So, I didn't do a thing except just drive. She took care of the, bringing the daughter into the world and everything turned out real well. The birth certificate says born in rural Grand County Utah. So, and then we had another one was just almost as, our, our next son was almost the same situation only just got to the hospital in the nick of time, to the same hospital in Moab. So it's a, an exciting time. I had one more, the last one was, or next to the last one was born premature and ah, just barely made it to the Green River Medical Center on that one, so. When your busy, why you know, having babies is just part of the game. You just get there when you can, if you can. Anyway it was real interesting, fantastic part of our life.

MR. VERDOIA: That's great. Gene I think on that note we'll end.