

OH-3003, George Eckman, 4-26-14, Green River, WY In Flight

JUNGE: [00:00:00] Excellent, excellent. It doesn't sound good on that, but when it comes, these are real good mikes. So when it goes into the archives, if anybody ever listens to us, (laughs) somewhere down the road, you know.

ECKMAN: Who knows? You'd be surprised. (laughs)

JUNGE: You'd be surprised is right. Sometimes people are excited about these things and --

ECKMAN: Well, we don't, we'll probably long be dead, but that's fine. (laughs)

JUNGE: Thanks, George.

ECKMAN: No, (laughs) that's reality. (laughter)

JUNGE: You know, I'm 71. How old are you?

ECKMAN: I'm 65. (laughs)

JUNGE: Oh, you're just a kid. Just, you're the younger genera-, you're a full generation beyond --

ECKMAN: Oh God, younger generation. (laughter)

JUNGE: Anyway, let me put something on the front of this tape, then I want to talk to you about your past in this. Today is the 23rd of April, 2014. My name is Mark Junge, and I'm in the home of George Eckman, who is a former mayor of Green River, Wyoming. We're in his kitchen and George, what's the address here again, 12 what?

ECKMAN: 1200 South Dakota Street, Green River, Wyoming.

JUNGE: [00:01:00] OK. Do you realize I went clear to Kansas before I figured out that I had to get back to South Dakota?

ECKMAN: (laughs) Really? (laughs)

JUNGE: Well, I know you said the first left after the [loaf and jug right?], but I thought, no, South Dakota doesn't sound right. So I went clear to Kansas.

ECKMAN: Oh, that's all right.

JUNGE: (laughs) Anyway. When and where were you born?

ECKMAN: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, 1948.

JUNGE: What's the date?

ECKMAN: October 23rd, 1948.

JUNGE: OK, so you will be?

ECKMAN: I'll be 66 this October.

JUNGE: OK. And are -- are you retired?

ECKMAN: I just retired a year and a half ago.

JUNGE: From what position?

ECKMAN: I worked at the Tata Chemical, former General Chemical, former Allied Chemical, Trona Mine, just to the west of Green River, Wyoming for last 40, or 38 years.

JUNGE: OK now, we were, before we went on tape, you were telling me about this book, it's called *Battlefield and Prison Pen* [00:02:00] or *Thrice a Prisoner in Rebel*

Dungeons and it's by, this is a beautiful old book, it's an old book by John Urban and at this point have nothing to do with what you're talking about, 1882, but what's significant to me is that you're a historian, you got your degree in history.

ECKMAN: Yes I did.

JUNGE: OK. Let's talk a little bit about your past and your parents and siblings and you know, where you grew up.

ECKMAN: My father grew up in the city of Baltimore, lived his whole life near Baltimore. My mother was born in West Virginia, rural family farm and she, after graduating from high school, the war broke out, of course, in 1941 and she got a job with Westinghouse Corporation to work in the defense industries and moved to Baltimore with her older sister and that's where my mother and father met and married after the war [00:03:00] and hence I am here.

My father got a deferment because he was partially colorblind, so he couldn't go into the armed forces, so he went into the defense industry and worked throughout the war. And I was born in 1948. My brother, my only brother was born in 1952 and he now works for the University of California system in San Diego.

JUNGE: What does he do there?

ECKMAN: He runs the Sea Grant program, which has to do with coordinating activities in marshes along the coastal regions of the state of California.

JUNGE: Mm-hmm. So how do you get from Maryland to Wyoming?

ECKMAN: I went to college in Maryland. I went to Catonsville Community College for two years, which sparked my interest and now I'm a trustee at the Western Wyoming Community College [00:04:00] in Rock Springs, it's sort of a payback for all the wonderful benefits that that gave me and changed my life and then went to Towson State University and completed my bachelor's degree in history. I taught school for two years and came out west. Helped a friend move out west and fell in love with the west, honestly. I went to, I was traveling across country many years ago, you know, this was the second time I went, first time across the northern part of the country -- he was going to attend Westminster College in Salt Lake City, a Methodist college.

JUNGE: Who was?

ECKMAN: My friend, Harry Robinson, who I helped drive out with all his stuff and, and then went onto Seattle where I had cousins and the second time, after teaching, I drove out across the American south, wanting to see the country and I'd gotten as far as Albuquerque, New Mexico, [00:05:00] where a friend had moved to, that we had been in college

together, was in a car accident and lost my contract, pretty severely injured, laid up for about five months with broken ribs and, and then taught school there. Registered with their school system and taught there for a while.

JUNGE: You had a car accident?

ECKMAN: In Albuquerque, New Mexico.

JUNGE: In Albuquerque? What happened?

ECKMAN: I was the middle of a three-car collision, is basically what happened. Somebody stopped in front of me, I slowed down, somebody hit me from the rear and drove me into him and my car was destroyed and pretty much me, too. Fortunately I had a friend there and he and his wife took me in and I stayed with them, I was staying with them at the time, but just visiting and they let me stay there for a couple months, until I could get on my feet again. But in the meantime I hadn't been able to go back and teach, [00:06:00] so I registered with the school system there, taught for a year there, had some adventures in the west there and decided the west is really where I wanted to live.

JUNGE: Where did you teach in Albuquerque?

ECKMAN: In Albuquerque.

JUNGE: What school?

ECKMAN: Well, it was in the various schools there. I was teaching part time and substituting for about a year. Because I started after the semester had begun. And then I sort of, it was the times, the times were pretty chaotic. This is the early '70s and, and I sort of just dropped out of life for a couple of years. Wound up in California and Washington State and then --

JUNGE: Now wait a minute, George. You didn't get involved in drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll, did you?

ECKMAN: We won't talk about that. (laughs) In any detail. (laughter) But in anyway -- wound up in Salt Lake City where I had friends from Maryland who were going to school there, one at Westminster, [00:07:00] one at the University of Utah and really liked the area and lived there for a year and at that point, being rather poor and not knowing what I was going to do with my life, came to Wyoming to work while they were building the mining projects here.

JUNGE: The trona mining?

ECKMAN: The trona mining. Some of the mines out there. It's a fascinating area. There was no housing available, but people would come up, you know, live out in the desert. I lived on the Blacks Fork River out near the ghost town of Bryan, which no longer even exists, for an entire summer, while I had a very well-paying job at what was then Allied

Chemical Corporation's trona mine and lived in a tent along the river there. Had a wonderful summer with about 30 other people from all over the country including, and then into Canada, even a couple people from Canada.

JUNGE: Did you get your water out of the Blacks Fork?

ECKMAN: Oh no, we came into town and got [00:08:00] water because we were told, being downstream from the (laughs) General Chemical and [FMC?] it was probably not safe to just drip into, take the water out of the river.

JUNGE: What was your job?

ECKMAN: I worked first as a utility, then I worked in the processing plant, running equipment. Mining, processing machine re pumps, holding tanks, filtering agents, cal signing, you know, facilities, it's really involved of what they do. I learned many jobs. I worked in processing plant on the surface and mostly over the 38 years I worked there in the surface stores department, where I was working as a receiver, receiving clerk, all the things that came into the warehouse had to be received by five of us that worked in receiving department and we would go through everything from small [00:09:00] computer parts to a great, big, huge iron pieces of machinery. And we would make sure we got what we were supposed to get, you know, check it and receive it, in the early days on paper, later by computer

and so that the accounting department could pay for what was received. And then we'd get it to where it needed to go, either back into the surface warehouse for storage, into the mine warehouse for storage, or out into the plant to people who wanted this material and had ordered it.

JUNGE: So in a word you could say "inventory and storage."

ECKMAN: Inventory and storage, I mean I did everything from the computer work to driving forklifts. And that, and we all took turns. We used to rotate in our jobs so no one had all the time the good jobs and all the time the bad jobs. We felt it was fair, everybody rotated. [00:10:00] I was a union employee with the steelworkers' union.

JUNGE: Was this an agreement among your peers? Or was this something that they, management said, "You will do."

ECKMAN: No, we agreed that this was the only fair way to do it. There were, of course, objections, but pretty much everyone I ever worked with agreed it was the only way, the fair way to be -- that everyone learned every job and everyone took their turns at those jobs. The union was completely fine with it. The seniority that was dictated had to do with jobs, not what you did at the jobs. So these were all five, these were five people -- we had seven at one time, but they were eventually cut us down to five.

At one point we had over 10 people in the surface stores warehouse.

JUNGE: What union was it?

ECKMAN: Steelworkers Union, US Steelworkers Union.

JUNGE: Steelworkers?

ECKMAN: Yes, "Steelworkers" is what the union had eventually gone with, rather than the mineworkers and I don't remember the reason, [00:11:00] honestly. But because it was surface as well as mine, and FMC Corporation was also Steelworkers Union. Steelworkers was the union that we joined.

JUNGE: How did you like the union?

ECKMAN: I was very favorably impressed by that because it protected workers from the tyranny of incompetent management. (laughs) Seriously.

JUNGE: Well said.

ECKMAN: You know, one of the real faults in capitalism is, is something called the Peter Principle, I don't know if you're aware of it, but it's the, a principle by a man, Dr. Peter, who wrote this after examining why American industry was not competitive with foreign industry back in the '60s and '70s and he said, "Well, it's because of the corporate structure, which is top/down. People advance up the ladder until they reach a job and where they're no longer really

performing and, and showing incompetence and then they just stay there," so it's a whole [00:12:00] rotten system, is what he basically said. (laughs) And because it's top/down, nobody fixes it.

JUNGE: Yeah. You know, I had a chance to interview W.E. Deming. Do you know who he is?

ECKMAN: No, I don't.

JUNGE: Well, he was actually from Wyoming. But he was a globetrotter. He was the man who helped set up Japan after World War II and get them to change their economic system and you can see the result. And the highest, one of the highest awards in Japan, one of the highest awards from the emperor of Japan is the Deming Award. And he came from Wyoming. The Big Horn Basin. Anyway, he said pretty much the same thing. He said, "You have to get your employees involved. And if you have this sort of top/down thing, the exact same thing happens."

ECKMAN: The problem in this country is we're still living with 19th century concepts of business and industry. Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, they're all nineteenth-century terms. And hopefully, you know, [00:13:00] and slowly we are sort of blending together into a social capitalism, you know, whereas everyone's best interests can be protected and promoted, because it can't just be 10%

rich people succeeding and everybody else serving that portion of society. We all go along or nobody goes along.

JUNGE: How do you explain the situation today, then? Where you've got this discrepancy, this huge gap between the very wealthy and the very poor.

ECKMAN: It's gotten much worse and it's because of our financial institutions today. Basically we have a bought and paid for Congress and I think everybody in America knows it. You know, they have to get campaign contributions to mount their campaigns, to hold their positions in Congress, so they solicit people to give them money. And of course, they don't give that money unless they get favors for that money. And this is the rich of the United States supplying the money that keeps office holders in our federal government. [00:14:00] And it's a corrupt system. It needs to be changed.

JUNGE: Are you implying that Wyoming's senators and representatives may be a part of this system?

ECKMAN: I'm saying that they are less a part of it, because the closer you get to the people the less corrupt you can be. Because people see it. And they can do something about it. But gerrymandering, you know, which should be considered a federal crime and should be struck down by the Supreme Court, ensures that people in office maintain

office and perpetually continue in office, because it rigs the voting districts. And that's been done now in the state legislatures, too, but the state legislatures are more attuned to what the people want, simply because they're closer to the people. Now of course, in a state like Wyoming, where business and industry, agri business, but in particular the railroad and the coal and trona and other mining interests, they're all owned by people out of [00:15:00] state, as they've always been owned by people out of state. So the people who make the decisions about them don't live in Wyoming.

JUNGE: So we're a colony.

ECKMAN: We are a colony. And we have been. Wyoming has always been a colony for the rich elsewhere, you know, who want to grab hold of the economic interests here and exploit it for their benefits. You know, and the state fortunately, many years ago, put on a mineral tax, which means for every ton of minerals taken out of the state, and that goes for oil and gas, too, trona, everything, they're taxed and that tax stays in the state, for the benefit of the people who work to produce that wealth. And it's a wonderful thing. Socialism. (laughs) You know. But they won't call it here. (laughs)

JUNGE: I'm not opposed to socialism. I guess you would call me a benevolent capitalist. Maybe that's socialism.

ECKMAN: [00:16:00] Well, we are and, and we need to recognize it more, because Wyoming prides itself on the quality of life it has here. And perpetuating that quality of life. Why would people live here if it wasn't for the quality of life that is here? And we need to maintain it and we have to be very conscious of what is going on in our state, especially by absentee owners, ships, who couldn't care less about the people here. Or their future. Their interest is money. They want to take the ore, the minerals, the gas and oil and trona, coal, uranium and make money off of it. And so somebody, and hopefully it's our own government, here in Wyoming, will protect the people and ensure that our quality of life is a predominant factor in the interplay of that cost.

JUNGE: Do you think that's likely? [00:17:00]

ECKMAN: I think it does go on. I think there are all these people that are attuned to the industry people in the state and that's unfortunate. One of the great things now, and you see it and I think party politics is the ruin of the interests of the people in this country because both parties put up what I call "boogiemen issues," you know, "Vote for us or they'll do something to you," you know,

take your guns away or you know, sell your children into industry, you know, or slavery or whatever. But the government pretty much I think is attuned to people, but there are those who speak and they do get money, campaign interests, or they're of the economic status that they associate with the owners or the managers of the businesses here and that's their philosophy.

You know, that, whether it's [00:18:00] "trickle down," you know, that's the term that is used, is used often. You know, "You'd be glad you have a job," and "Don't make waves or you'll lose it," attitude or the people who stand up and say, "We're fine. We don't mind working here, we don't mind this industry generating profits because the money is invested from out of state. But let's ensure that the quality of life here and the quality of the environment here is preserved," you know, the so-called "war on coal" right now is a false issue, I think, of what you have some elements are trying to do is ensure that when that coal is burned, that you're not getting poisonous minerals out of the stacks, that you're putting in air pollution standards. You know, something that we'll modify because there are many minerals that come out -- mercury, lead, cadmium, other things come out of burning of coal. [00:19:00] What people don't interest or

don't really understand, is that affects our environment.

You know, do you fish?

JUNGE: Yeah.

ECKMAN: Do you ever, have you ever read an article that says be careful about taking these types of fish because of the mercury content in the fish?

JUNGE: I thought it was only to do with the sea.

ECKMAN: Mercury comes from burning of coal. This stuff comes out, precipitates down to the ground, gets in your water supplies and is ingested by the fish. But people don't see the connection. You know, they don't really see the connection between air pollution and their own personal lives. They think the wind blows it away. (laughs)

JUNGE: Yeah, right. As if there were a fence on the outskirts of China, along the border of China.

ECKMAN: Oh, China's a horrible, look what, China now is what America was in the 1950s. You know, but fortunately, you know, some enlightened people put in the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act in the early 1970s and they cleaned up the water. I remember as a child in Baltimore, Maryland, rural Maryland, [00:20:00] where you couldn't swim in the water. Because there were signs along, polluted, because every community just dumped untreated waste into the water. Factories dumped untreated waste right into the rivers,

which took it to the sea and then it went away, right? No, of course, not. You know and how birds were disappearing.

I remember the disappearing of eagles and ospreys around the Chesapeake Bay, where the nests were still there, but the birds were all gone because of DDT, the pesticide used on, you know, insecticides used in agricultural farming, washed off into the rivers and down into the bay and wound up, you know, in the fish, which the birds ate, which made their eggs really fragile and the eggs wouldn't hatch, they'd break. And eagles, for one thing, were disappearing in this country.

JUNGE: It's interesting that, you know, Wyoming is probably a little insular in that it's thinking that maybe our coal plants are clean [00:21:00] and so forth, but we're shipping, we're shipping coal, most, as far as I know it's most of it, to China.

ECKMAN: We want to ship even more.

JUNGE: And we want to ship more.

ECKMAN: And I don't rec-, I'm not against coal. Because it's there, it's cheap, it's burnable, but let's burn it clear. You know, let's spend the money and of course, these out of state owners don't want to spend the money because it decreases their profits, but let's clean it up. You know,

we can do it. The technology is there. Yes, it's expensive, but you phase it in over 15, 20, 25 years.

JUNGE: But it's not, it not the nature of man to be reasonable about profits.

ECKMAN: Well, no, well, the greed. Greed is the -- these doves here, (laughs) I put out birdseed and they get confused and fly into the window. But you know, greed is the case and that's the problem, I think one of the greatest problems in our country today is greed and self-interest. [00:22:00] We do not, for the most part, want to be inconvenienced by worrying about the future. But what person responsibly can watch things like this go on and know that that's the world their grandchildren or great-grandchildren are going to live in and not care. What does that say about a person?

JUNGE: I wonder if people care about their grandchildren that much.

ECKMAN: I don't think they think about it. You know, and they should because you know, we need to at least live as best we can in the world that we live in.

JUNGE: Do you think, George, that there's got to be a practical solution to everything and a spiritual reawakening at the same time?

ECKMAN: Oh, I do certainly, I certainly do. Wyoming is, one of the reasons I live here is because I -- I walked away from civilization when I was younger and I that's what coming to Wyoming [00:23:00] and staying here was about. I had lived in many more civilized states and two or three cities in the west and it was cities was the issue. I grew up outside the city of Baltimore. My parents fortunately moved out of the city when I was six into rural Maryland, what was then rural Maryland, it is now suburban sprawl, you know, where I grew up doesn't exist anymore because the forests that were there that I used to play in are no longer there. They're under housing developments and shopping centers.

But here, this is one of the last states in this country which has the undeveloped and unexploited countryside that America used to be. A fellow I used to work with, Charlie Yates, years ago called Wyoming "America's Outback" as in the outback of Australia -- untouched, unspoiled. [00:24:00] And Wyoming still has that and to me it's an extremely spiritual place. You know, I am a spiritual person and I find more spirituality and a closeness to the, what I call "the spirit of God" being out there in creation than I do in the civilizations that we create.

JUNGE: So maybe, maybe somebody could come along and say, "Well, George, you're a Luddite, you don't believe in progress."

ECKMAN: No, that's not at all the case. I live very comfortably and I do believe that people should. But the earth is changing and we need to be as careful about it as we can. You know, not destroy unnecessarily, you know, the environment we live in. You know, the world is bigger than us and if we're just a cancer on the face of the planet. Eventually we'll die. The planet won't. (laughs) You know, but [00:25:00] we can destroy our ability to live on this planet, by polluting it to the point where it won't sustain our life.

JUNGE: Do you think the problem is capitalism?

ECKMAN: I think that's a part of it, very much, because basically capitalism is based upon greed. It's the accumulation of money. You know, for your personal wealth and comfort. You know, owners. And you know, there has to be, you know, a conscientious change in that of many people. I'm not saying all cap-, all people involved in capitalism, you know, are evil. But the system itself, that's why I say, has to become more social interested, more social aware, because it cannot just go on exploiting. Right now we have a big problem in the state. Governor

Mead was just talking about how the state has to go out there and clean up all these well sites [00:26:00] of the oil and gas industry. They've been abandoned.

Wait a minute. Who abandoned them? Why aren't these people cracked down, you know, and made to pay for it? Because corporate laws protect them. You can form a corporation and the corporation is dissolved and no one has to take personal responsibility for their actions in doing the things they did while they were members and employees of a corporation. So the people of this state now have to go out and spend millions of dollars cleaning up abandoned well sites when the people who did that pollution, you know, did that screwing up of the land, who are mostly out of state, remain (inaudible).

JUNGE: I wonder how many people like you and me, look, read the paper and see an article like that and say, "Wait a minute, this isn't fair that I should have to pay for these people, the mistakes made by these people," or let's say not "mistakes," let's just say they --

ECKMAN: Intentional neglect.

JUNGE: Intentional neg-, yeah, exactly. [00:27:00]

ECKMAN: Because they don't care, they don't live here.

JUNGE: That was my reaction.

ECKMAN: They come here, they earn money, they gain wealth and then they leave. You know, they have no, they don't care about Wyoming.

JUNGE: Do you think we'll have to have World War III before we change? I mean, doesn't it take something catastrophic?

ECKMAN: Catastrophic usually is what happens to cause major changes. You know, the quality of life we enjoy in this country today is really the result of the fact that the people fought the Second World War and when the people came back from the Second World War, they weren't going to put up with the life that they had had before. They wanted to have a good life. They wanted homes. They wanted yards. They wanted their kids to be raised and attending good schools. They wanted jobs with safety requirements in them, you know, so that people weren't at risk of dying, you know, on the job like, old capitalism, prior to the Second World War it was very common. That's what brought on the Labor Movement in this country [00:28:00] is safety issues and the exploitation of labor, with low wages, while rich people, you know, accumulated mass fortunes.

JUNGE: And of course, we don't really need labor unions anymore.

ECKMAN: Well, to the most part, we really don't. Because government has assumed the role that labor unions were

forcing onto capitalism. You know, safety in workplace. You know, where you had hygienic conditions, you know, restrooms, you know, that you weren't, you know, in danger of losing fingers and arms and your lives because of machinery that was, didn't have guards over pulleys and saws that didn't have guards over them and, and sweatshops that had, you know, just fire hazards everywhere. You know, we had so many disasters. Coalmining, you know was an example in Wyoming. Hundreds and hundreds of people have died in the last 100 years in coalmine accidents in this country.

JUNGE: How bad was it in the trona mines? [00:29:00]

ECKMAN: Trona mines actually were very safe because now we have save working environments and for the most part they really are. You know, there's always a struggle and that's why I enjoyed working at a union mine site because you always had that protection. You know, if somebody told you to do something that you knew was unsafe and you didn't have to do it, you had an out, you could call your union and the union could call the state mine inspector's office and say, "Hey, they're telling us to go do this and we know it's against the regulations of safety organizations like OSHA on MSHA," and you get on their back because they're telling us, "We don't want to do our work we can go home."

JUNGE: OSHA and M, what's MSHA.

ECKMAN: MSHA, Mine Health and Safety Administration.

JUNGE: OK, so there is a place --

ECKMAN: Or Safety and Health Administration.

JUNGE: Then there is a place, at least in your life there was a place for unions.

ECKMAN: Absolutely. Because it kept the bar high. That's one of the things [00:30:00] that we felt, in this area, was the reality. There was two union mines and three that were non-union and the people at the other mines always, their corporate people gave them higher wages because if they paid them just what we were getting, they'd go union, too. So they'd pay them higher wages and said, "Well, if you like this, don't go union," and they had to back off and watch it, too, but for the most part you're right. The things that labor organizations first pressured industry to doing had mostly been accomplished because the government now enforces health and safety regulations at mine sites and industry all over this country.

You know, and people think these things are a nuisance, but they're not, they're protecting you. I mean, I was out at a construction site a month and a half ago and I won't go into who or what, but it was a building site and there were people there [00:31:00] wearing safety glasses.

I saw one fellow who was cutting ceramic tile on a cutting saw without eye protection. You know, we walked under scaffolding where we had to go out a door and on the scaffolding above this door were piles of bricks. And I went to the people afterwards and I said, "Look, you get that fixed or I will call, you know, OSHA," which is the federal government's [core?] surface business and industry and I said, "I'll file a complaint," you know, if that young man who was cutting on their had that, one of those tiles and he had to do thousands of those tiles on this job, if that chipped and flew up and put out his eye, you know, he's 23, he's lost an eye. That's for the rest of his life. You don't recover from that. How does that affect that man's life? And he didn't see the need.

[00:32:00] But that's where government says, "Hey, do it," because you're not talking about just you, you're talking about your family, your ability to support your family. Suppose one of them lost an arm? Lost their job because of it. They've got a wife and kids.

JUNGE: Here's an interesting -- my sister in Chicago was a union organizer and a union lawyer and she's defended a number of different organizations from teachers to doctors. The last job she had before she retired and she could retire because of Obamacare, she couldn't have retired

because she had a pre-existing condition, so once Obamacare was passed, then she was able to retire, with health insurance. She said that, I said, "Why were you an organizer and why were you involved with the (clears throat) public health employees in the hospital?" she said, "Because," she said, "The public hospitals hire guys because they know they'll work cheaper because they're looking for a better job, either in private practice [00:33:00] or another hospital, so they utilize these people, they use them up. They work them long hours, until they're dead tired. They don't pay them as much money, because they can get away with it. And she said, "Of course, we need a union, of course, we need a union."

And so I'm thinking, you know, this argument that I hear all over this state and all over this country is, unions are passé. Unions have outlived their purpose. It makes me think, maybe not.

ECKMAN: No they're not. And Obamacare, as far as I'm concerned, is another one of those boogiemens issues. You have in this country a situation where if you noticed in our state, we have Senator Barrasso and Senator Enzi. And then Representative Lummis -- well, Lummis wasn't in national government when Obamacare was passed, but both the other two were. And you'll notice that Senator Barrasso is

a rapid Republican advocate for tearing [00:34:00] down Obamacare. Senator Enzi never says a word about it. In public radio. And the reason was, if you want to go back to the *Casper Star-Tribune*, I can remember him on the front page, because he was very involved in the congressional formation of what we now call Obamacare and he was proud of the fact that he enforced the, through Congress, the not forming a national health service, as every other developed country in the first world, Europe, Canada, all of Europe and Canada has, he ensured that it would be done through existing health insurance firms and existing private hospitals. So the Republic Party, he and the people like him, you know, ensured that when that plan got through Congress, it worked within the system that exists now, instead of going to a system of national [00:35:00] healthcare, which every other country in Europe, every country, you know, Canada and all of Europe, all of the former, you know, Communist countries have national healthcare. And it was with the argument of, oh, well look at them, they all have faults. And I guess that says the American people are too stupid to do it better, doesn't it?

And I think that's an insult to the American people because we can do it better, but they ensured that it stayed basically within the parameters of private

hospitals, private doctors, private, you know, insurance companies, so if there's a problem with the mess we now call Obamacare you can look to the Republican Party for it. (laughs) But they don't get blamed for it.

JUNGE: It is interesting that you'll hear not just Republicans, let's say, let's call them "Conservatives" saying that we've, "They're ruining the finest healthcare system in the world," well, if this is the finest healthcare system in the world, how could it be when 17,000 [00:36:00] people in Wyoming go without insurance and millions more throughout the country go without insurance, and like you say, all the first world countries, so called first world countries, have a system that does not allow their people, whether rich or poor, to suffer.

ECKMAN: Well, and healthcare is paid for out of taxes. I had a French girlfriend at one time, lived with me for a year and I took her over to a local liquor store here in Green River to get some French wine. You know, we had a woman who was European who ran the liquor department in a liquor store here and she was German and she had quality European wines there at that time. And she was amazed. She picked up several bottles of French wine, here in Green River, Wyoming and she looked at the price and she calculated the price and related to what she would pay for the exact same

wine in France [00:37:00] and she said, "It costs exactly the same here as I pay for this bottle in France," and they had to get it all the way here. (laughter) And the reason was that it's taxed there and that additional taxes pay for their healthcare system. Imagine that. You know. The people that smoke and drink, (laughs) you know, wind up needing healthcare pay for it when they buy their tobacco and alcohol. (laughs)

JUNGE: George, you've been in politics. You know a little bit about, more than a little bit about this state, obviously. Why can't we put a five, ten, five cent, ten cent, dollar tax more on coal? Why? Will it really be the demise of the industry if we do that?

ECKMAN: No. Not at all. Not at all. You know, because you know, I've watched (inaudible) air pollution to the mines, the mine where I worked and the other mine, have had coal fire power plants at the mine sites. They generate their own electricity, FMC and Tata Chemical does. And they've been putting pollutants out for years [00:38:00] and they get around pollution standards. They've been doing it for 30 years. The 30 years I've been there. And they do it because they're grandfathered in. There's this concept, "Oh, we built that 30 years ago, so we don't have to change it," you know, but new things do. Well, the latest trona

mine out there solved it -- you don't see the pollution coming out of it. Because it had to, you know, adhere to current air pollution standards.

But I had a factor, when I was in school, I'm doing research years ago, quite a few, that 80% of all air pollution is invisible. So what you see coming out of those stacks is only 10 to 20% of what really is coming out there, which is not good for you to breathe. If they starting phasing this in, you know, and don't tell me they can't get loans, everybody gets bond loans, all governments, all industry gets 20, 30-year loans for money, to put in the pollution [00:39:00] standards that they need to do, to bring it up to a current standard, then they wouldn't be polluting the atmosphere.

And Wyoming sort of doesn't care because it sort of blows away and all goes to Nebraska. But that's not right. It does filter down in our communities because it's in our air. I had a friend here who used to be a pharmacist and I'm asthmatic, severely asthmatic and I should probably have never worked at a mine site. But I would come in at certain times, especially in the wintertime when we would get air inversions, and he would surprise me. He said, "George, I've been expecting you for prescriptions," says, "Everybody's coming in," the air is so thick because we

have an air inversion and the air pollution from the mine sites west of us, as well in the summertime we get fires, soot all the way from California, Nevada, Utah. But in the wintertime, especially the local pollution is so bad that everybody [00:40:00] with respiratory problems has to come in for prescriptions. So it does affect people here. Even here. (laughs) Under the jet stream, which usually takes, drags it away. (laughs)

JUNGE: Wide open spaces, where there's nothing, you can see forever. Well, maybe not forever.

ECKMAN: Not when the fire season's going on. (laughter)

JUNGE: But you know, I guess my point was, in taxation of coal, was not necessarily like a carbon tax, but I mean, why couldn't we just tax the product itself, well, first of all, I don't think we should be counting on, counting on it as our income, but if we did, why couldn't the state have anything it wanted to have if it properly taxed or made industry pay its fair share?

ECKMAN: Because industry which is owned by out of state owners whine and whine, "Oh, we'll have to close down the mines and you'll all lose your jobs and it won't be profitable anymore," and what they're really saying is [00:41:00] that they won't get their cut, as much of a cut that they get now, you know, to support their incredibly extravagant

lifestyles in New York City and New Jersey and the suburbs of New York City back on the east coast.

JUNGE: I couldn't have put it better.

ECKMAN: You know, that's what it really comes down to. You know, I mean, and I understand what the reality is. Work is expensive in this country. That's why for terrible reasons, we've allowed corporate America to ship jobs out of this country and into the third world where they can work people at 19th century working conditions and they don't dare question anything, you know, because Americans won't do that anymore. You know, but why shouldn't we have those jobs still here? You know, there's a problem with so called "free trade" when it allows American jobs to be shipped overseas.

JUNGE: And keeps other people, if not impoverished, at least lower on the economic [00:42:00] level.

ECKMAN: Or you're having people in China now, look at Chinese cities and the air pollution in their cities. It's because of the industry. You know, and that's only getting more and more. You know, 19th century America is being recreated in China. You know, and those poor people, what can they do about it? Nothing. (laughs)

JUNGE: My wife and I went to China this fall and went to all the large cities. The biggest city in the world is

Chunking, we were in Chunking, Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai and a couple of others and we saw pollution big time.

People wouldn't believe the pollution and I looked at the air, or tried to (laughs) look at the sky, there is no sky. Unless conditions are just right to give you a blue sky and then it's gorgeous. What a beautiful country.

ECKMAN: As it should be. (laughs) Everywhere. (laughs)

JUNGE: Yeah. And I'm thinking to myself, look at this smog? And I'm just pondering, as I'm riding, you know, looking out the window of the bus and I'm just pondering, I wonder if that, [00:43:00] that cloud or that smog blanket is Wyoming coal?

ECKMAN: Well, it could be, but you know, the problem is they should be doing there, and their government is, I think actually more attuned to it than our government was in the 19th century.

JUNGE: Oh, they have to be.

ECKMAN: You know, because their government, you know, Communist though they may be, are attuned more to keeping their people happy, because if they don't they're going to lose power. And that's the kick. You know, if they want to maintain power, they're going to have to meet the needs of their people and they're more conscious of that than people still are in this country.

JUNGE: And the other reason is that, it seems to me that if, and according to what I've read in *National Geographic* and other magazines, if pollution has an effect on global warming, if the glaciers are indeed melting, and if the Himalayas lose their glaciers, then the Yellow River, the Yangtze River and all the other rivers that serve Southeast Asia, if they go dry, who's going to raise the farm products? And if the farm products [00:44:00] can't be raised, what happens to the people?

ECKMAN: It's right here. You know, you can, I won't say that manmade pollution is the cause of global warming, but it's certainly a contributing factor to it. You know, and I hate to dwell on the words, "global warming" because I think the issue and should be pollution. You know, people don't remember, you know, they get lost in global warming, but they're really aware when you say "pollution" and we should be consciously using that word much more than we do, because the glaciers here in Wyoming are an issue that we need to be facing and we'll face in the next 100 years.

We have professors at the college here in Rock Springs, two wonderful professors, Charlie Love and [Cray?] Thompson, who have done studies of the glaciers in the Wind River Mountains. They've compared the earliest photographs taken up there in the 1920s to photographs they [00:45:00]

took in the, Charlie did, anyway, in the 1980s and then photographs taken in the last 10 years. The glaciers are disappearing, they're almost gone. It's amazing. And you know, whether you want to say this is an earth cycle or not, the reality is they're gone. And when those glaciers stop running, you know, stop, you know, are gone, then that means the rivers coming down out of those mountains will dry up. By August and September. And what happens when nothing comes down the Green River in September? What happens when other rivers in the state that are fed by glaciers, you know, it only snows in the wintertime, it doesn't rain much in the summer here in Wyoming. So the water we're getting is melting glaciers in the summertime. And that holds us over until there's new snow in the next, in the next fall. But when those glaciers are gone and we get no rain in the summertime, what happens when nothing's [00:46:00] come down those streams? And the rivers here stop. We're going to have to walk away from towns here in Wyoming, because you're not going to have any water to take, take out of the ground.

JUNGE: Not to mention tourism.

ECKMAN: You know, tourism support industry. Industry's a massive consumer of water in the state, massive.

JUNGE: Yeah, and I wonder if we have the political will to understand that and do something about it.

ECKMAN: Well, people are people and people will ignore an issue until it becomes a crisis. That's typical. You know, there are always people that are aware of these things, but mobilizing public opinion and forcing them to be aware of an issue usually doesn't hit them until it slaps them in the face. And that's a sad statement about humanity, but that's reality. And our state legislature will avoid dealing with it because, you know, money you spend one place is money you don't spend in other place, and there's only so much money. Industry puts, out of state industry [00:47:00] ownerships put pressure on our legislature with threats of losing jobs and so the interstate, our legislators are worried to death, you know, that their incomes will all go down, too.

JUNGE: If you read T.A. Larson's *History of Wyoming*, you're familiar with that, they've always said that. They've said that since, since coal was discovered along the U.P. line, for heaven's sake.

ECKMAN: There's another, there's an earlier history book, Velma Linford, who wrote back in the, I think she published a *History of Wyoming* back in the 1940s. Read that one, too. It was designed for high school students, but it

plays up a whole bunch of things and the changing patterns. You know, there was I think a telling one in one of her books, where there was a state representative from Rock Springs and he was named (inaudible) and he was in the legislature and he said, he asked a question, "How come when I buy a gallon of gasoline that's refined over in Sinclair, Wyoming, [00:48:00] it costs the same amount here as it does for somebody to buy Sinclair gasoline on the east coast?"

JUNGE: Larson said it was "Tulsa Plus," whatever it cost to ship to Tulsa to refine or whatever they do and bring it back, that's the price you have to pay.

ECKMAN: Well, that's what the old Adam Smith's philosophy of capitalism was, but that isn't the reality. You know, we all pay the same. You know, and he said, "How come? When it's made here it isn't cheaper here?" (laughs) You know. Another thing. You know, we see the development of wind power here. And what's happening with those wind power? I've asked several industry people, "Well, are you connected into the local power grids?" "Oh no," they say, "We want to build transmission towers to take all of that wind-generated energy across state lines to Nevada and California," I said, "Well, why isn't it just plugged into our local power grid?" "Oh no, we can't do that," "What do

you mean you can't do that?" [00:49:00] you know, it's like, it's one grid, you know, (laughs) you could call yourselves different companies, but it's all one power grid. Well, the key is, once it crosses a state line it's no longer regulated by the Wyoming Public Service Commission, which maintains that industries can only charge a fair price for monopoly services. You know.

Corporations, because we keep it private, we don't have state companies in this country, like Communist or a more socialist countries, their regulated if they have a monopoly. Most of them are regulated, or some of them are regulated, we're not talking about the gasoline industries, but some are, you know, power companies, telephone, you know, that sort of thing, electric. They're regulated. The company can earn a fair profit. But it has to set it's rates by what it costs to generate, you know, which includes the labor costs and the manufacturing [00:50:00] or whatever, you know, and they're guaranteed a fair profit. Well, once it gets out across the state line, it disappears into the great grid, how can the Wyoming Service Commission regulate it anymore? They can't.

So all this so called wonderful wind powered, you know, electricity being generated in these new farms here in Wyoming, are all shipping their power across state lines

to avoid that. So we're not getting any advantage of it. You know. If the people in Los Angeles, you know, want power, let them generate their own power, down there, you know, (laughs) why does it have to come from way up here? (laughs)

JUNGE: Well, you know, what did I come here for?

ECKMAN: Oh yes, we're back to that. (laughs) It's been a pleasure talking with you.

JUNGE: It's been pretty great. This has been great. You're one of the best in explaining the overall problems that I've ever heard.

ECKMAN: That's it. [00:51:00] I have a wide background and you know, (inaudible) that's it, I went to college in Maryland, I worked, I had the fortune of, good fortune back then, a lot of refugees from Europe had come over to the United States after the war, the Second World War, a lot of educated people. I had a number of European history professors and other professors at the colleges that I attended. And they gave me a worldview, you know, that you just do not get here in this country. And we don't, from our local media. Television news is headline news, it's not in depth and how much do people actually read anymore? I read, it's a sad statement, but I read *The Economist*, which is a British publication news magazine, weekly news

magazine and it's, it is a Right wing British publication, it's Tory, it's industry, it's business-oriented, but it's, [00:52:00] I get a better perspective of world affairs than I will from *Time* and *Newsweek*.

JUNGE: Same from the BBC.

ECKMAN: Which are totally, yeah, and the BBC. You know, you've got to understand, they are slanted and you have to look at that. But you get a better presentation of what's going on out there in the world than any American will by reading American publications and that's a sad statement.

JUNGE: It is, it is.

ECKMAN: I mean, I know more about celebrity, you know, social crises, (laughs) than I do about what's really going on in the world, if you read, if you only watch television, television news.

JUNGE: So you do not, what do you, I thought to myself that Rupert Murdoch was one of the most pernicious influences in American life.

ECKMAN: Oh, he is, he's a terrible person. (laughs)

JUNGE: And yet how many of my colleagues, people I see at the YMCA in Cheyenne every day, watch Fox News. How do they get their information? It seems to me that, and this could be hyperbole, George, but I think Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, [00:53:00] the other talk show hosts, that's where they're

getting their information and I'm questioning whether it's truly information or if it's, and even if it's misinformation --

ECKMAN: They're pawns of the rich. (laughs) They really are. I mean, their interest is sustaining the system that we have and not changing it to anything better.

JUNGE: How can a lower class person or a lower middle class person or even a middle class person buy into something that's not good for them?

ECKMAN: It's the only thing they have. It's the only thing they have available. You know, I mean, you turn on the television and you're going to get pabulum, you know, out of a baby's, you know, baby food. You know, they give you just what's necessary to let you be so called "informed" about what's going on, which is nothing. You know, and they keep you, you know, to a point where you think you know something about what's going on, you think you can intelligently vote, but you don't, [00:54:00] you can't, and that system perpetuates itself, because it's run by the same economic interests who's interest is in supporting the system as it is. (laughs)

JUNGE: These same people will tell me, "Well, what do you read?" I read the local paper, I read the *New York Times*, occasionally I read *Rolling Stone*, when their articles are

political or economic-related. I watch, I listen to NPR. I watch *The News Hour*, I see those little economic reports that what's his name does, I can't think of his name, Krug, not Krugman. Yeah, might be Krugman. Anyway, I see these things and they'll say, "Well, see, yours is just an opinion, too. You're just getting your stuff from other sources."

ECKMAN: You know, in Great Britain they have two public television stations, in France they have five. So every segment of the population can choose between public funded broadcasting corporations. [00:55:00] And of course, you have some that are a little more conservative viewpoints, you have some that are more liberal viewpoints, which you can choose, but because they're state-run, there is the insurance that viewpoints will be presented and can be presented. When your news corporations are all run by corporate America, what do you think you really get to publish? You know, people complain in this country, well, the Conservatives complain constantly about the liberal press. Well, the liberal press is all controlled by very conservative rich people, you know, and you don't think those conservative rich people tell the liberal people down below them what they can't print? (laughs)

JUNGE: I once went to a talk and this was when I was into photography and I was shooting pictures of celebrities and I went to Laramie to shoot pictures of and to listen to Noam Chomsky. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky?

ECKMAN: Yes, I am.

JUNGE: A genius.

ECKMAN: Vaguely, yes.

JUNGE: In linguistics as well as politics. And Noam Chomsky [00:56:00] got behind the podium and basically said, "We don't have freedom of the press in this country," and after his talk, some lanky cowboy stood up and said, "I disagree with you. Our press isn't told what to do. We can say whatever we want. That's freedom of the press," and Noam Chomsky basically said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Who pays their salaries?"

ECKMAN: Exactly. In this country, prior to the Second World War, every town had at least two newspapers. One gave the Republican viewpoint, one gave the Democratic viewpoint. You know, that's the way it was, all through, back in our history, from the revolutionary times all the way up to the Second World War. Now after the Second World War, with the advent of radio and television, newspapers had a hard time selling and they were all bought out by mega corporations, you know, which are very wealthy people [00:57:00] and now

you're lucky you have a newspaper in a town. You know, most towns do not have them. You know, I read the *Casper Star-Tribune* from Casper, which is pretty much the only statewide paper we have in Wyoming. I read the *Rocket-Miner* here in Sweetwater County, published in Rock Springs, because it tells me what's going on in southwest Wyoming.

You know, I've lived here for 40 years. I read *The Economist* because it gives me a worldview. It talks about things in every continent, every issue, every week.

JUNGE: Even though it's right, right of center.

ECKMAN: Even though it's a little to the right, but I look at it in that viewpoint and it still gives you at least, you know, gee, has nothing happened in South America in the last year? You wouldn't know it from watching television, you know. (laughs) Or Southeast Asia or --

JUNGE: But the newspaper would be full of articles about the landslide in Jackson Hole. [00:58:00]

ECKMAN: Yeah, you know, or a plane that disappeared, three weeks of coverage of a plane that fell into the Indian Ocean, you know, or the mudslide in Jackson Hole or --

JUNGE: Pat Tilmon.

ECKMAN: Yeah, something's trivial. You know, and that's what we get now. We don't get the playback of viewpoints. You

don't have the for and against presented to you by local newspapers anymore, so you can read both and then decide.

JUNGE: Mm-hmm. Do you watch the *News Hour*?

ECKMAN: No.

JUNGE: PBS?

ECKMAN: I occasionally will watch PBS if something really important has happened, but I tend not to watch television news programs simply because I find them so disappointing.

JUNGE: Well, don't watch the *News Hour* then, because, because I'd hate to see you get hooked. These people truly have debates between right and left.

ECKMAN: And that's important, it is. [00:59:00]

JUNGE: It is. And to me, like you know, if somebody were to ever ask me, "Well, what's, Fox News has the debates, they have different people on to discuss issues," and so forth, or even argue issues, and I say, "Wait a minute. An example of their, the kind of debate that they promulgate is, OK, you've got two people sitting there and a moderator and the moderator is saying something like, "I think we can all agree that Obama is a horrible president, but just how horrible is he? OK, you tell me," "Well, I don't think he's so bad, but there are some things I really don't like," and the other person is saying, "He's horrible!" well, they've already decided that Obama wasn't a good

president, there's no issue there. It's a matter of degree. How much do you think he's, how terrible do you think he is?

ECKMAN: Well, and that's the whole issue. It's, you know, and this is getting back to what we've been talking about, Obama has been a disappointment to me in primarily because he had the opportunity, the first opportunity since the Great Depression [01:00:00] to recreate capitalism in this country and he didn't do it. He let the people that run the economic system, the people who caused the recession, by violating the laws of this country and getting Congress to repeal regulations, letting the banks combine until they're too big to fail. Letting, you know, predatory mortgages be put out, whatever, but massive things -- that could have all been stopped and changed. He had the legislative power behind him. He could have got through Congress, just as FDR did, a complete change in our economic system, our financial system, you know, as Roosevelt did with first instituting government regulation of the economy for the protection of the people.

You know, that's what he did it for. Roosevelt was a banker from New York, a very rich man. [01:01:00] But he said, "We can't allow this. Look at people, they're out there starving to death. No jobs," no Social Security at

that time. You know, how can we let this go on? Which had been going on since before the Civil War. It's a factor of economic systems. The way they're run and they're misused. He said, "We've got to stop that and we've got to create a middle road," you know, OK, there won't be the highs. That's what the rich give up. Where they make huge fortunes. But there won't be the lows where people die and starve to death, either. And Obama could have done that.

But he brought in the Timothy Geithners, who were lap dogs of Wall Street, you know, to reformulate the system and bring it back and he had the American tax payers as did the issue under George Bush and Ronald Reagan, where they rescued the Savings and Loan Administration, with taxpayer bailouts. You know, they used public money, [01:02:00] people's money to bail out the people who had caused the catastrophe that destroyed our economy and we still haven't fully recovered from. And not one of those bastards went to jail for it, for violating Walls, not one of them. We saved their fortunes first and then worked on the economy. And that to me, you know, was my greatest disappointment with Barak Obama.

JUNGE: Does he have any redeeming graces at all?

ECKMAN: Oh, I think he is, I think he's a decent man, I think he's an honest man. He hasn't got us into the, the

unnecessary wars that George Bush did, you know, for economic interests. I mean you know, we went, you know, we responded, supposed to an attack, you know, on our people in New York City and then we invaded Afghanistan and we're still there 13 years later, wait a minute, you know. Why didn't we, (laughs) you know we went there because that's where the people that did the crime were hiding, you know. And then we invaded Iraq, [01:03:00] who was not even involved in it, you know. These are secular people in Iraq. They had nothing to do with it. Horrible though they were, (laughs) you know, you know why? Because they controlled 20% of the entire world's oil supply and we wanted to get our hands on it. (laughs)

JUNGE: It seems like we haven't learned anything since World War II, since, through the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, all those.

ECKMAN: There's a book that was written by, years ago in the '40s, by a general, a Marine Corps general named Smedley. And he was, he had won three Medals of Honor, Congressional Medals of Honor in the service of his country over 40 years. He had been involved in the Boxer Rebellion, in suppressing it in China, why like, it was a rebellion against who? (laughs) The colonial powers, you know. But he did that. He was involved in the Caribbean suppressing,

you know, governments that didn't cater to the, the United Fruit Company and other, other [01:04:00] mineral exploiters in the Caribbean. You know, every time we invaded there, he'd gone to France and he, he cleaned up the holding and staging areas. You know, unfortunately, he wanted to go into combat, three-time Medal of Honor winner and they wouldn't let him lead Marines into combat.

They said, "We have a better job for you. People coming in here are going to unsanitary camps. They're not getting proper training and we're feeding them into the German machine guns, you know, would you do that?" and he completely organized it for us. And he wrote this book, when he finally retired from the Marine Corps, and he said, I think it was *War is Bunk*. [*War is a Racket: The Profit Motive Behind Warfare*] He said basically he was ashamed of his service to this country, not because he was ashamed of serving this country and his people, but said all he was was a gangster for the economic, you know, interest of Wall Street. He said his entire military [01:05:00] career was suppressing local people for the interests of America business's interests overseas. And he won three Medals of Honor for doing that.

JUNGE: What was his book?

ECKMAN: I think it's *War is Bunk*. Smedley Butler was his name. Smedley Butler. I've got it. Something like that. If you look it up --

JUNGE: I will.

ECKMAN: Butler, I think was his last name. Smedley Butler. And brilliant man. And he basically in this little book said, in fact, they even tried to get him in the 1930s, economic interest in this country, tried to recruit him to lead a coup against Franklin Roosevelt and he appeared in congressional hearings about it. He went along with it until he found out what was going on and then he went to several congressmen and he said, "Do you know what these people are trying to get me to do?" and he was leading a series of hearings before Congress over it, embarrassed the hell out of a lot of [01:06:00] people on Wall Street. None of them ever went to jail over it, however.

JUNGE: They were trying to get him to unseat an Egalitarian, somebody with, you know, maybe who had money, but at least the sense of, what do they call it? Noblesse oblige?

ECKMAN: And nobody's perfect. Franklin Roosevelt wasn't perfect, but god, he contributed to saving this country.

JUNGE: And now we're trying to get rid of every single New Deal Program.

ECKMAN: Oh. And we shouldn't. Of course, they need to be updated. Of course, they're out of date. Of course, they need to be brought up to the world as it now exists; which is much more complicated than the world that was then. But that doesn't mean the theory behind them, which is preserving the balance between ordinary people and the extreme rich isn't still important. You know, everybody in this country who opposes the present administration is all against Washington, everything is Washington's fault. But they never talk about, it's all New York's fault. It's all the economic [01:07:00] center of this country's fault.

JUNGE: Because they hold stock.

ECKMAN: And they pay off the politicians.

JUNGE: Yeah. How did a guy like you ever become mayor of Green River?

ECKMAN: Oh, I came in here in 1974, not really knowing what I was going to do, but I needed to do something with my life. And lived out in the desert for five and half months in a tent, while I had a good job, you know, but there was no housing. These towns were really small. Green River, between 1970 and 1980 grew from a town of 500, 5,000 people to 15,000 people. You know, massive things happening. And all being done by out of state corporations coming in, building the schools, building roads. There's nobody here

who was capable of transformation. Rock Springs was the same thing. And I watched all this going on. Now I've lived in several, five other states. And I'm an educated man. I was involved in politics back in [01:08:00] as a student, very active, gaining political savvy back there and being known, but I walked away from all that and I started to think, these people are being taken for a ride here. You know and I saw a lot of good-minded people trying to cope with things that were far over their heads.

You know, not that I'm the most brilliant person in the world, but I can see things that obviously others weren't seeing and I thought, I live here now. I bought this house in 1982. I was about to get married and bought a house and settled down here and decided, this is where I want to live. And it's my responsibility to maybe get involved here and I saw that here in Wyoming, and that's one of the, our great attributes, people can get involved here in Wyoming. You know, one of the best things I always thought is, things are on a first name basis here.

Everywhere. You know, plant managers [01:09:00] and workers all call each other by their first names.

You couldn't get away with that back in the east. They'd insist, oh, I'm Mr. So-and-so. "Don't you even dare talk to me. Talk to my secretary," you know, here

everybody gets along and everybody can speak their mind and everybody can be vocal in a public forum and can get involved and I did. And I started attending city council meetings here in Green River. And I did that for a year and a half. I was inspired by a mayor when she was campaigning, Bonnie Pendleton, you know, came to the door, we had a wonderful talk one day and I decided I would get involved.

JUNGE: Pendleton?

ECKMAN: Pendleton. Bonnie Pendleton. And she was mayor in the mid-19, early 1980s.

JUNGE: And you were working for her? Campaigning for her?

ECKMAN: No. No, actually I didn't but I, you know, I did support her after that and did advise people to support her because she was trying to cope with the change [01:10:00] that was taking place and not very successfully because you had, you had the old people who grew up here very resentful of the two-thirds of the now people who had moved into here, you know, and wanted things to be better than they were and there was a real stymie in things. So I started attending council meetings and I became very vocal about issues. And I think to shut me up they appointed me to a commission, (laughs) to give me something else to do. I was on the Board of Adjustment for three years and I served

on the Zoning Ordinance Revision Commission for a year and a half, while we completely revised the zoning laws in the city. People hate zoning, but zoning is good. People think zoning is what deprives you of the ability to use your private property. Well no, it protects you from what the guy next to you would like to do, which would screw up your property [01:11:00] values, you know, and screw up your neighborhoods. We took a 13-page zoning ordinance and made it a 60-page zoning ordinance in a year and a half.

JUNGE: See, that just goes to show you, you're a bureaucrat.

ECKMAN: Well, I'm not afraid of it. You know, one of my favorite television shows from the BBC was "Yes, Minister," I don't know if you're familiar about it, but it's worth watching. You'll understand government a lot better. It's the interplay between an elected official and the head of the bureaucracy, which he's supposedly in charge of.

(laughs) And the fights that go back and forth between them. But anyway, we revised the zoning ordinance. I was on the Board of Adjustments, which settles zoning complaints, when somebody wants to contest, you know, zoning laws and say, "Well hey, why can't I do this with my property?" sometimes we let them, sometimes we wouldn't because it was too extravagant. You know you're not, you're protecting the property values of people around you,

that's what the [01:12:00] -- that agency is, a government is for. And then I ran for city council.

Then I lost the first time I ran and then I got appointed to a term, somebody that resigned. And served for two years. Then I was elected to that position in a vote. Because people liked what I was doing and liked what I was standing for.

JUNGE: Were you a Democrat at the time?

ECKMAN: No, see in local -- I am a Democrat, but I work very well with Republicans, who are good, decent people, you know. That's what I think is one of the big strong points of politics in Wyoming. Local politics is not partisan. They do not run as Democrats or Republicans until you get to the County Commissioner level and legislative level. So you know, you don't go out there as a Democrat or Republican. It doesn't matter what they're doing in Washington, DC, because your focus [01:13:00] is here. So good people, Democrats, Republicans, independents, I don't care what they are, you know, whether they're socialists or fascists, whatever you know, those that want to work in their community and work for their community can work together without that distraction, which to me is only a distraction mostly. Party politics, partisan politics for the most part, I think, is hype. It's PR. It's scandal.

It's public relations. But here, I ran and I have always worked on the local level and I still do. I'm an elected official as a board of, on the Board of Trustees at the college, at the community college, we're elected by the counties we serve in, that the colleges are in.

JUNGE: So you were on the council when?

ECKMAN: From 1987 through 1990.

JUNGE: So it took basically [01:14:00] 13 -- in 1990 you became mayor?

ECKMAN: And then I'd run that year for mayor and became mayor and I served a term as mayor. And it pretty well was killing me. I was working a 40-hour-a-week job (laughs) out at the mine, plus overtime when I could, when I had to do it. I couldn't afford to do it most of the time and I had to take days off to do my public jobs. That's another wonderful thing about Wyoming, they passed a law long ago which says that if you are elected to public office, any person that you work for, any business or industry that you work for, must give you time off to perform the necessary requirements of your elected office.

They cannot fire you, penalize you or in another way run you off because of it. So you don't lose your income. But I'd seen most people in politic office were either retirees or they were management level, salary employees,

who got paid anyway, whether they showed up at work or not [01:15:00] because they were serving the interests of their corporations, you know, as well as the public interest. I'm not saying they were all guilty of terrible things, but you know, the companies all let them do it. But working people are mostly excluded from elective office --

JUNGE: Same thing is true of lobbying. I mean, I had a little tête-à-tête with a reporter in Cheyenne for the *Tribune Eagle* and I said you know, "I don't think it's --" what's that?

ECKMAN: I was looking if you needed more coffee.

JUNGE: Oh. No, I'm fine. I said, "How can you say that lobbying is open to anybody when the common man, the worker can't take off work to go down to the legislature and lobby those guys," and it pretty much shut him up because his contention in his article was, look, don't complain about lobbyists because you, as a citizen of the state, can go down and lobby for anything (laughter) you want.

ECKMAN: Yeah, right. (laughs) You know, that's sort of it. You can't afford --

JUNGE: Practically speaking -- [01:16:00]

ECKMAN: Ordinary people, which is, you know, 80% of the population, you know, wealth-wise, can't afford to miss work. They won't let them miss work, to go to Cheyenne,

which is what, 250 miles away, go into a motel, pay that and then go lobby people on the floor of the legislature. You can't afford to do that. But every company in this state is represented in that, by lobbyists in that legislative, when it meets, you know, every February.

JUNGE: Yeah, it's amazing to me that lobbyists don't lobby for the people. Have you ever heard of a lobbyist who basically lobbied for people?

ECKMAN: Nope. Well, some of us do. (laughs) Because we're in government. We're in local government. And I do go, I go there. So anyway --

JUNGE: I'm on the track. So now -- yeah, in 1990 you went from council to mayor?

ECKMAN: I was elected mayor in 1990 because people obviously thought I was doing a good job and there had been five people running for mayor in that election. [01:17:00] And I won.

JUNGE: Handily or was it narrow?

ECKMAN: No, it was narrow but the person, the previous mayor, who was a good person and he is now a county commissioner here, I get along with him very well, who's Don [Van Meter?], he was, he wanted to go back, his big thing was going back to the way things were, because he grew up here. And he wanted to eliminate the professional staff running

the city, you know, the city administrator system of government and department heads that responded to him. And you know, the city had really outgrown that. You know, a mayor, you know, but in Rock Springs they still do that, but they have, you know, professionals that work under the mayor there, who understand federal regulations, state regulations, IRS rules and there are so many complications that the average citizen just would not be able to, to do the job well. [01:18:00]

Now in small towns like, excuse me, Granger and Wamsutta and Bairoil, they're able to, because they're very small towns. But a city the size of Green River, we're the seventh largest city in the state, with only 13,000 people, but still you know, we have a large amount of things that we're responsible for. Wastewater plants and its rules that govern how much, you know, what, how we treat water to put it back into the river, so it goes downstream for other communities to draw from. You know, just all kinds of things. So he wanted to go back to that.

He'd just come out of the military, 20 years of military service. You know, served his country. As an officer. And he did not make the final two out of the primary. Most people in this community I think wanted a more progressive future and that's not so much [01:19:00] a

criticism of him, it's just a comment. You know, on his orientation at the time. He's doing a good job now as the county commissioner and we talk very well. But one other councilman and I wound up in the run off for the election and pretty much we usually voted alike. So (laughs) (clears throat) it pretty well went 51-49, (laughs) and I was elected and I'm glad I was. I thought I was the better candidate, more prepared to do the job and I think that generally was seen by my peers. But in any case, I, I did win the election and then I worked, I still continued to work at the trona mine and would come from work usually right to city hall and spend four or five hours there, at least four virtually every night and then come home (laughs) and then get up and go and start it again.

And some parts of that time I was working shift work. [01:20:00] So, rotating shifts. And my health suffered from it, it really did. But that was it and I can say honestly that the thing I'm most proud of is my service on the council and as mayor, was I opened doors for a lot of good people in this community who wanted to make this community better. And I made it possible for them to do what they wanted to do with others, likeminded, to make this community the better place it is today.

And it still has a lot to go and we're still working on it. But we set a direction, I think a progressive direction, that the town assume responsibilities to ensure that the quality of life for people in this community is primary in its focus, and that goes from everywhere, that's not just parks and recreation-oriented. You know, that goes back to quality water and sewer, [01:21:00] you know, the water and sewer system was 70 years old in this town, or 60 years old, it was falling apart. Streets were falling apart because we had an old system which was predominant everywhere and certainly in this state, where if you wanted to repair streets, you formed an assessment district of everybody on that street and you were assessed the cost and loans were taken out and you had 10 years to pay for the reconstruction of your streets.

Well, the ones that were in the worst shape were the people that were the oldest, many retired in this community and they couldn't afford to do it, so nothing ever got fixed. You know, and the roads were falling apart. You know, one of the ordinances I brought out as mayor, just to throw on the table, we had a terrible winter one year, '91, '92 maybe or '02, '03, I can't remember and the potholes everywhere, the infrastructure was collapsing, as far as road structure. And there was this [01:22:00] ordinance

that had been passed by the city in either 1917 or 1919 by the mayor and council at the time had said that on Saturday next, you know, every able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and 57, you know, would appear in front of their house with a shovel and do road work under penalty of arrest.

(laughter) They didn't do it. (laughter) You know and I put that in, you know, on the agenda. (laughs)

I said, "This is the way they did it in the old days. Now let's do something better here," so instead of doing that, we decided we would form a plan. Throughout the city we'd go out and judge every road, because a lot of outside contractors had come in, quality of the work wasn't as good. Water and sewer lines weren't buried seven and a half feet, as is required. Some of them were only three and a half feet under the ground, they were freezing up. The road surfaces were breaking up because the quality wasn't as good. I said, "Listen, let's do an inventory town-wide," and we had three wards in the city [01:23:00] and "Let's take the worst in every ward, one in each ward every year, tear it up and fix it and we'll do this starting with the worst and over 20 years we'll do it all. That's the plan, and at that time we'll have to start over again, because that's your average length of roads in this

country," I've looked into this. You know, asphalt will last about 20 years and then it starts deteriorating.

You can put it off like cracked ceiling and things, but sooner or later you've got to tear it up and do it again. But we started tearing up the roads and then we went down and replaced all the water and sewer lines, while we were at it did curbs and gutters and sidewalks even in the old areas where it was worse and we started doing that throughout the town.

JUNGE: Where did you get the money?

ECKMAN: Well, times were better. You know, by the 1990s the economy was much better. We were recovering, there had been a recession in the early '80s under, when Reagan was [01:24:00] president and then again in the transition, a second one between Reagan and the Bush administration, we entered another reception, but now everything was booming again. Trona is a wonderful resource in Sweetwater County because it's absolutely essential for the making of glass. And 90% of all Trona in this country comes from here. (laughs) There's a 10% little mine down, down in called Trona, California, that's the only other place. All the synthetic manufacturers back on the east coast went out of business in the '70s and '80s.

JUNGE: Take a second now and explain to me, because I don't know this, how Trona, and I've wondered about this, how Trona is essential to making glass.

ECKMAN: Trona is basically bicarbonate of soda, soda ash. It's the ancient sediment of a sea bed that's now about, well, there's one vein that's 800 feet down and another vein, the main vein is like 1600 feet under the ground, an ancient sea bed, that stretches over [01:25:00] I guess 50 miles, square miles.

JUNGE: These are all the vertebrate fossils?

ECKMAN: No, it's salt.

JUNGE: It's salt?

ECKMAN: Alkaline salt, baking soda, bicarbonate of soda. You know Arm & Hammer baking soda? You know their products? They're made right out here. They come from here. Because they're made from Trona soda ash, which is a cruder form of baking soda and laundry detergents, even in toothpaste and things, they're more refined, Church & Dwight has a plant right next door, is out there, takes 15% of our product to make all this stuff. Not the only place, but they do it here. The soda ash is shipped by rail because it's, it's absolutely essential in the combination required to make glass. They used to do it chemically by a process called the Solvay process and that was formulated in the 1890s, in

Belgium, I think, or the Netherlands, Solvay, [01:26:00] that's where that came from, where they still own a mine here. But they create a lot of pollutants when you do it synthetically. And you know, these companies used to just dump it in the rivers back in New York. And they can't do that anymore. (laughs) Fortunately, you know, the byproducts and now it's too expensive to deal with the byproducts, you know, from the processing, back, so they shut down and they found that it's just as cheap to mine it here, get it to the surface, basically the processing taking the dirt out, the muds out, the impurities out and creating what is called "soda ash" and shipping it to industry all over this country and the world, than it was to make it synthetically back there and then dispose of the byproducts.

JUNGE: So it's used in the making of glass, but not, it doesn't become a part of the glass?

ECKMAN: It is part of the glass.

JUNGE: Oh, it is part of the glass.

ECKMAN: Yeah, it's part of the glass. It's part of what --

JUNGE: The silicate compound?

ECKMAN: Yeah, silica is another, you know, another compound, [01:27:00] but they're necessary and I don't know the chemical formulations. But it's necessary. All glass made

in this country uses it and it's virtually all coming from right here in Sweetwater County. And we ship all over, we ship to the world.

JUNGE: So going back to your original point on how times were good, when you were mayor times were better.

ECKMAN: Times were better. Times were picking up and we had money again. It had been really hard when my predecessor, when Don Van Meter was married, we didn't have much money, we couldn't do much. And we had some crises. We had to rebuild the wastewater plant and that was a big struggle. You know, when he and our city administrator and our city attorney [Ford Buzzard?], who's one of the best lawyers in the state, had been a state senator, might have been governor, went to Washington, petitioned our senators at that time, Malcolm Wallop was one. You know, and got the EPA to help us and the Department of the Interior and others to help us with [01:28:00] rebuilding the plant, it had been a failed plant. But anyway, times were better.

We had more money, we could start investing back into the town and that's it. You've got to invest in your infrastructure. That has to be a part of your budget every year. Municipal government is serving the interests of the town and if you don't keep it up it just falls apart. Once you let it fall apart, then it gets beyond saving. Detroit

is a perfect example of that today, where the town has just deteriorated to the point that there's no tax bates that could possibly save it. You know. You'd have to confiscate the wealth of (laughs) everybody in the surrounding area, you know.

JUNGE: But it's not just, it's not just wealth, it's not just taxes on minerals that create things like you're talking about, it takes --

ECKMAN: Property taxes.

JUNGE: The property taxes and not just that. What I'm saying is that it takes, it takes the will and the leadership in, of individuals to get that done.

ECKMAN: There was such a perception here that we'd been taken for a ride [01:29:00] as a community, by out of state people who came in here and built everything shabbily, but it had to be fixed. You know, when water lines were freezing going to neighborhoods, you know, you need to change that. You need to fix it, which required digging up streets and our, you know, burying water and sewer lines down below the frost line, which can go as deep as seven and a half feet. You know, when the road surfaces are falling apart, you know, when their kids are walking to schools, you know, across sidewalks that are cracking and buckling and things, you know, you've got, you had a

consensus that we needed to change. We needed to not only change what had been done wrongly, shabbily, but make sure it wasn't done that way anymore, so we did.

We organized the government and we started investing and we got the community behind, everybody that was interested in this because in every ward, [01:30:00] every one of the three wards, they could see the improvements taking place every year. And they could see, when they complained, "Well, how come you didn't do my street?" we could say, "You call the Public Works Department and your street is on a list and it will tell you when we can get to you when we can get to your street, you know, your street will not be ignored, it will be dealt with. But we're doing the worst first," people bought into that, they accepted that and we have a better community because of it.

JUNGE: How many years were you mayor?

ECKMAN: Only four. It was killing me. I couldn't do another term. (laughs)

JUNGE: You mean the stress was causing your asthma to kick up?

ECKMAN: Oh, absolutely. You know, I'm severely asthmatic and this tension and stress was just killing me. And back then they didn't have the drugs that were available to treat asthma now. And I'll tell you, it was just, I had to be

taking steroids a lot, simply because I had reached the point where I couldn't breathe.

JUNGE: Do you have an inhaler?

ECKMAN: I'd use inhalers. You know, I'd carry them everywhere and use them all day. You know, beyond what I was supposed to be using. [01:31:00]

JUNGE: Didn't that make you crazy?

ECKMAN: No, it didn't make me crazy, it was just, wore me to death, wore me out. But I signed up for that, you know, that term and job and we were doing good things and we were changing direction, so I saw that it was going better. We had a building inspector that actually inspected and enforced regulations. You know, he would go to contractors. We adopted the systems that needed to be in place. We had the rec center that had been built here, but we maintain a subsidy for it. We have parks all over the town, some of which were built then, some were built since. But you know, providing activities for youth. I mean, you know, if you don't give kids something to do that's wholesome they're going to do things that aren't wholesome, (laughs) so the community suffers, so you keep them happy. You keep them active. You know and for adults, too.

When I first moved here there were only three or four things that people could do [01:32:00] after their jobs.

Go home, which many of them didn't want to do, to their screaming wives and kids, you know and you know, so they went to bars, you know, or they had the churches or they had the public library. Now tell me where they wound up, you know.

JUNGE: Well, obviously the churches.

ECKMAN: (laughs) Yeah, sure. So you know, we provided (laughs) recreation facilities, you know, here. And you know, if you give people a wholesome thing, a wholesome choice, they're less likely to be stressed out, you know.

JUNGE: Were, did you see yourself as mayor as the leader, the decision-maker, or more of an enabler?

ECKMAN: Oh, an enabler and a coordinator. Yes, I came up with many ideas myself, but many of the ideas were everybody's. You know, were group ideas. You know, people, as I said, one of the things I'm most proud about is that when people came to me with good ideas, if we could possibly do it, I helped open the doors so that they could get done. You know, I take no credit for everything that's [01:33:00] going to happen in this town today because I helped other people make that possible.

JUNGE: OK. Well, tell me about this very advanced concept called the "Green River Intergalactic Spaceport."

ECKMAN: Your tape's still running? (laughs) We've been talking for a while.

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah, an hour and a half. No, I love this, by the way. But yeah, OK, I want to hear the whole story.

ECKMAN: All right, anyway, while we were, you know, in my term, one of the things that at the time and it's since been unfortunately changed, the city's, if something major was going to be done just outside their limits, the cities had a rule and had to be consulted about it. Because it going to impact your community.

JUNGE: Well, that's why we have county commissioners, right?

ECKMAN: (laughs)

JUNGE: No?

ECKMAN: Well, supposedly, but they're limited in what they can do, actually, too. You know, they don't have the development plans as sophisticated, they do now mostly but they didn't then, the towns had it, you know, zoning [orders?], now there were county zoning plans. There didn't used to be in [01:34:00] this state. But anyway, so I thought we should expand our city limits. Everybody was talking about the city potentially expanding. Everybody looked to the future and saw that, you know, towns in Wyoming, our population was growing. I mean, in 1970 the population of the state was less than 400,000, you know.

By 1980 it was over 500,000, you know. Where did all those people settle? You know, in the towns, of course. You know. Statistics from the National -- or from the Wyoming Association of Municipalities back then was that Wyoming was the most urban state in the country because 90%, 92% of all the people in the state of Wyoming lived within the borders of an incorporated city or town.

JUNGE: Ninety-two percent.

ECKMAN: Ninety-two percent. This was back in the late '80s.

JUNGE: Wait a minute. Where are the cowboys staying? What happened? [01:35:00]

ECKMAN: Well, there's not very many of them out there, (laughs) you know. Or they live in the towns and go out there in their pickup trucks to herd their cattle and sheep and (laughs) and take their horses out of their horse trailers. You know, but anyway, so we were going to -- annex surrounding areas around our town to protect them, to see that they were developed properly. And one of the ones was going up to the emergency landing strip up on the top of the south hill out here. It was not in the city limits, but it was under our jurisdiction and we had the responsibility to maintain it, which essentially meant going out there several times a year and grading it, to make sure that the high school kids didn't go out there, do

wheelies in the mud, you know, and make it unsuitable (laughs) for a plane to land, you know and we had, we were supposed to be patrolling it, you know and checking on it and seeing when that needed to be done.

And I saw the possibilities. I mean, the airport that we have here, [01:36:00] is way over on the other side of Rock Springs, it's Sweetwater County Airport, but it's 35 miles from Green River. And there were people in our community here, including a couple local people, who wanted to, to keep their private planes up there. Which meant developing it. You know, development. And I then, I said, "We didn't have the money to develop that airport. But what we can start with is incorporating it within the borders of the community, so it becomes fully our responsibility and a future mayor and council down the road, you know, when Green River grows and sees a need, we'd allow private development of it, keeping it public and public controlled, it could be done," and see, that's what I like to do. I like to plant seeds because you have to look into the future. You can't just look at what is.

You have to look at what you can become and what would be the best ways to get there. [01:37:00] You know, the best for your community. So we were developing a plan and going through the annexation process when I stopped being

mayor of, when my term ended and I didn't run for another term. But that was part of it, the airport up there was part of the annexation, expansion of the town and I think we expanded by a third. The city, you know, the size of the community. And we're advancing into those areas now. But in any case, that was one of the things. So I wanted to bring the airport in. Well, at that time, if you remember back, there was a comet that was crashing into the planet Jupiter.

JUNGE: This was in '76?

ECKMAN: No, this was in '94, or '93, 1993, I think, or maybe spring of 1994, I can't remember. [01:38:00] But anyway, and I was up at city hall where I was spending most of my life, you know, other than out at work and one night I just, it just came to me. Why don't we generate some public interest in this? And I came up with the concept of -- creating the Greater Green River Intergalactic Spaceport, (laughs) and I said, you know, you know, I wrote up a resolution, which my secretary had a good time with (laughs) and you know, [Marna Grub?] wonderful woman, grew up here, helped me get my job done, I mean, she's like associate mayor, you know, (laughs) administrator, but anyway, she wrote it up and I wrote it up as a resolution offering sanctuary to the potential residents of the planet

Jupiter in eminent peril. (laughs) And you know, to make it a humorous thing and get it out to the public.

You know, let's look [01:39:00] at the concept of this expansion and what, what we could maybe do. Why are we doing this? So I, you know, I put a section in there which authorized me as mayor to contact the manager of the Rock Springs Sweetwater County Airport, who was a personal friend of mine, his name was McFarland, he was originally from Texas, a nephew of Spanky McFarland, from the *Our Gang* comedies of the '30s and he and I used to shoot black powder together. We were, you know, I was in (inaudible) reenactments and things and he and I (laughs) knew each other and authorizing me to, to go to him and to apply to the Federal Aviation Administration to formally request that the name be changed on all existing United States aircraft maps in official publications. And you know, a couple other things [01:40:00] saying that we would use our emergency rescue equipment, should anybody show up offer them potential sanctuary (laughs) until they can be resettled by the federal government, you know, whatever.

JUNGE: Jovians. (laughter) These are Jovians.

ECKMAN: Yeah, Jovians, potential Jovians. Jupiterians, whatever you want to call them, anyway. So -- you know, this came out in a council meeting and it was quite, you

know, I thought it was humorous and I thought it was just an enjoyable thing to enlighten the mood, because we were going through, I think it was the spring because bad pothole problems in the summer, you know, in the winter and we were dealing with other some kind of crises of one sort or another. And it passed five to two. On the city council. Two people just, for lack of a sense of humor I would say didn't vote for it, but the others (laughs) thought it was OK and we passed it. So I went to, to my friend and we mailed off [01:41:00] our certificate and it now has been changed on all federal aviation maps you can look it up on your, on the Internet and we are, you know, on all maps, that all pilots have in their planes, the Greater Green River Intergalactic Spaceport. (laughs) I've had numerous calls about that by people all over the country. One of my cousins came out of the Naval Aviation and flew for commercial planes for a number of years and she got a kick out of telling that to everybody. (laughs)

But you know, when NASA was doing the space shuttle, you know, eventually they were looking for a place for it to land, you know, other than, you know, Florida and, and we were actually, that people in Wyoming considered getting a place up here. But of course, we didn't have the population or the money interest that would promote it.

So, and they built it down in Southern California, I think, you know, but you know, why shouldn't you have things like that? You know, the space shuttle could have come down anywhere. In fact, one of them crashed [01:42:00] over Texas, blew up, you know.

JUNGE: Yeah. You could go to Edwards Air Force Base, right?

ECKMAN: There was only two or the one in Florida. That was it, you know, in the whole wide world. Think about that.
(laughs)

JUNGE: And you were in the middle. Yeah. So you had two dissenting opinions. Five to two.

ECKMAN: Yeah, I figured they just didn't have a sense of humor. And but the other four --

JUNGE: Wait a minute, wait a minute. This is tangential. This is tangential to one of our national problems. Is that I read that one of those persons was concerned about more aliens in a world or a country that was already
(laughter) suffering problems from illegal ali-...

ECKMAN: (laughs) Oh, who knows? Who knows? You know, they didn't want to talk about it afterwards, but they in fact were very frustrated that it passed and it was like, oh, we'll be treated like a joke. Well you know, the local press and I always get along very well, Miss [Holly Dab?], who is now the editor of the Rock Springs *Rocket-Miner*,

[01:43:00] she was a reporter at that time and she and another reporter had covered the Green River city council member or meetings, I'd gotten to know over the years and - - they took it, put it on the Associated Press, which is the national news service for people everywhere who want to pick up articles about what's going on outside their communities. And Paul Harvey, who was a national radio commentator, really well known, used to do a program called *The Rest of the Story*, humorous, you know, stories about America. He picked up on it and did a noon broadcast about the friendly little town in Wyoming. (laughs) And it was just great. You know, free publicity, you know, about Green River, and that's what I always looked at it. You know, it's potential, for free, you know, why shouldn't they sell little purple people eater Jovian or Jupitarian dolls in the Chamber of Commerce to tourists or something, you know. [01:44:00]

JUNGE: Wouldn't be any worse than the jackalope, for heaven's sakes.

ECKMAN: No, absolutely not. (inaudible) exactly the same way. You know, as something that can be used for promotion of the town. But you know, sort of did that fact -- it just didn't get the popular support that I thought it needed to be and it just was sort of a failed effort, but it's there

and now the current administration, you know, is picking up on it. Well, let's see. You know, we're at a point where -- it required that we do a, the city do -- I'm no longer part of the city, but a general, you know, development study of it -- what could be done? What shape is it in? What can be done there? How should it be done? And the city mayor and administrator, with the backing of most of the council, applied for [01:45:00] -- it's [Hank Castillon?] who's the mayor now, and Marty Black is the city administrator, they applied for federal and state monies to do this development study of the emergency landing strip up there, which does get used a few times a year, if we should in the future develop it or people want to promote development of it, how should it be done?

And what can be done? And they got state funding, they got 80% state and federal funding for this. They had to contribute \$35,000 out of city money to do it. You know I mean, we just spent \$25,000 on Fourth of July fireworks for the city of Green River. You know, most communities do, don't think that isn't uncommon. You know, and we should have fireworks on the Fourth of July, so \$35,000 is a lot of money for everybody like us, but, but it's not in the whole budget, you know. So anyway, they contributed, you know, [01:46:00] \$35,000 and we're going to do the

study of it, with the idea is that we're not going to develop it, the city, you know, there's no need or desirability for the city to do it right now, but if private people want to come in, there will be a plan that they must adhere to and it will have parameters of what they can and cannot do. What size aircraft can use it?

You know, can we get grant money to pave it? As a, you know, which would be a wonderful thing. Once it got paved, anybody could use it. Now it's basically a gravel graded and treated gravel landing strip. Single-engine and even small two-engine planes could use it. But you know, you're landing on a dirt railroad, or a dirt runway.

JUNGE: How long was it?

ECKMAN: It's over 3,000 feet. I don't know the exact measurement honestly.

JUNGE: But it has capabilities of being expanded in either direction?

ECKMAN: Not too much, not too much. [01:47:00] It's on the high, it's up on a bluff to the south of town, so it does have a limit. I mean, it's not going to be commercial traffic there and we're not competing with the airport in Rock Springs and we don't want to compete with the airport in Rock Springs, that's a commercial airport, it's only 35 miles, that's not very far. And you know, that needs

customers to sustain itself. So what we were thinking is, this could be utilized for private, private aircraft. You know, we have Flaming Gorge Reservoir here, which is world-renowned trout fishing, you know, and other fish. It's a recreational area where, you know, on the road to Yellowstone, you know, and other places, we have beautiful things in our area for people to see, if their tourism could be really promoted here. And imagine the appeal to somebody that owns a private airplane, who could say they landed at the Greater Green River Intergalactic Airport and then went down to Flaming Gorge [01:48:00] and caught a 22-pound, you know, rainbow trout or something, you know, and took it home to wherever they came from.

JUNGE: What a story.

ECKMAN: Yeah, what a story. So you know, there's promotional, you know, things that you can do here. And hopefully at some point it will be developed. I'd like to see it, as the town continues to grow. We have over the years, at the mines, especially, years ago, most especially, had to fly in parts. You know, these things run 24 hours a day, the machinery runs 24 hours a day. You know, and I've been working in the [stores?] department, receiving material numerous times, had to have parts brought by taxi cab from the Rock Springs Airport, all the way out to the Trona mine

out there, that were essential to repair a machine that's in the mine, say, or on the surface, that's either generating power for, that keeps the plant running or [01:49:00] mining that keeps men occupied and working in the face of, you know, and myself, years ago, have had to drive to the airport to pick up parts in the middle of the night. They were flown in. One time a part was flown in from Germany to repair German mining machinery that we were using in the mine. Had to be there. No, maybe it had to do with the hoist, it might have been the hoist controls.

But had to be, or we'd have to shut down production. You know, you just don't stop production waiting on things, you know. You want to keep that going. But -- so there's industry that are interested in the potential of, you know, I mean, we're that much closer and in the wintertime that's an important closer.

JUNGE: But then all of the sudden you've become a competitor to Sweetwater County Airport.

ECKMAN: You know, to a degree, but only for small planes, not the commercial, not commercial aviation. It would be commercial in somebody flying in from somewhere else.

JUNGE: Yeah, this town is how big now? [01:50:00]

ECKMAN: We're still about 12,000 people. Rock Springs is probably about 25,000.

JUNGE: And that's not big enough to have an airport? Not just for an occasional private pilot to enjoy himself or to fly in a part, but maybe have a service to the people here, so they don't have to drive 35 miles?

ECKMAN: It's potential and, and it certainly would be potential. But I don't think the, you know, it's not going to serve passenger planes, it's not big enough to serve passenger planes, it cannot be big enough to serve commercial aviation, although a small two-engine plane could fly in and out with passengers and that's the key. And hopefully the tourism, you know, could be the key to opening that up as a reality. You know, people flying in here can rent a car, stay in a motel in Green River, go down there, enjoy world class fishing, boating in Flaming Gorge, you know, do the sights, the scenic sights in southwestern [01:51:00] Wyoming, which are just phenomenal. And then go home. You know, spend a week, a weekend, a week, you know whatever.

JUNGE: Do you know, you've explained this so well, you've taken all the mystery out of it.

ECKMAN: (laughs) But you know --

JUNGE: (laughs) I mean, I read about this and then I went online and read what you were talking about and I went, Intergalactic Spaceport, this was done by people who were

twiddling their thumbs on city council or the mayor didn't have any --

ECKMAN: No, not at all, not at all.

JUNGE: Anything else to do at this time so he just said, "Hey, let's liven up the meeting today --"

ECKMAN: I'll tell you, I was, I was literally exhausted the night I wrote it up and people accused me of drinking. (laughs) But I swear, I never drank on city time or gone before city time. You know, I just, I wouldn't consciously do that.

JUNGE: So there's a purpose, there was a purpose behind it.

ECKMAN: Of course there is. You know, and you've got to see the future. You've got to see the potential. You know, this could help develop the community, it could add to what we are. You know, it's just like the recreation center, it's just like our ball fields. [01:52:00] You know, they don't produce anything themselves, except contented citizens, more productive citizens, citizens, kids who didn't get in trouble because there was nothing for them to do. You know, these are all investments in yourself. You know, they're not things that produce wealth, like a business or company.

JUNGE: And the way I see it, it fits into the history of aviation in this state and that, yeah, it could actually be utilized to do exactly as you say.

ECKMAN: We have an airport here. We had an airport right down by the river on what used to be called Hutton Heights.

JUNGE: Is that right along Old 30?

ECKMAN: When you cross the river, if you look to your right, to the west, there's river, River View Drive, that's, that community development there had an airport landing strip in it. And prior to that, out on Peru Hill, when you came over the big hill at the La Barge exit, off the Interstate 80, that's called Peru Hill because there was a little old railroad [01:53:00] down there called Peru, it was a --

JUNGE: P-E-R-U?

ECKMAN: Yeah, P-E-R-U, as in the country. There was a landing strip there that serviced US mail, back in the 1920s.

JUNGE: Oh, it was part of the air, Transcontinental Air Route.

ECKMAN: Yeah. Back in the 1920s. So we've had these things here. And we have an untapped resource up there on the hill that can eventually, you know, be something for this community.

JUNGE: What's it zoned for?

ECKMAN: Well, it's zoned in agricultural use. Anything that hasn't been made residential, commercial, industrial, remains agricultural, which means it's subject to grazing, mining, you know, (cough) excuse me, or anything else. But because it's the property of the people of Green River, there's not going to be any oil wells drilled in the middle of the runway.

JUNGE: What's its current use? [01:54:00]

ECKMAN: It has no use, really. (laughs)

JUNGE: Nobody lands there?

ECKMAN: Oh, occasionally. We do have, but they're -- people can come in with their own sandbags, which I think is silly -- we should have tie-down places, you know, concrete buried by down, you know, or you could tie your plane down, because the wind gets pretty severe here, you know, and if we have some commercial or some private people that want to keep planes there, some Quonset hut type buildings or some kind of buildings where we can rent, you know, the facility, so they can taxi them inside of a building, a steel building and you know, charge them rent for rental of keeping their planes. You know and then utilize, utilize the landing strip there. Every year the crop dusters come in here to not dust crops, but to spray insecticides several times in the summer up and down the Green River.

[01:55:00] We go all the way, we used to go all the way to Granger, almost, on the Green River because those mosquitoes will follow the river down and you know, as soon as the river starts dropping and you have pools along the river, where you got mosquito larva -- if you don't deal with them while they're in, you know, in the ground, they're going to be flying there around, you know, making your life miserable.

JUNGE: Yeah, and this town would be unbearable then, if there was a good mosquito crop.

ECKMAN: Oh, if you've got a lot of stagnant water, you know, here when the river goes down. It used to be far less, or far more years ago, before they built Fontenelle Dam that controls the flow. It used to overflow its banks every year. I'm sure the mosquitoes were horrible. And so you know, they come in and use it every summer, when you know, for the days that they're here. But it doesn't really get much use and that's unfortunate because it is something that could generate not only use for the people here, but revenue that comes into the town. Anybody that would fly in here, [01:56:00] to spend the weekend in the area or in Flaming Gorge, stays in a motel, spends money in restaurants, you know, all that money goes out to the employees of those facilities, you know and helps sustain

the population of this town. One of the biggest things in this town and in Wyoming has always been, how come our youth always leave? When they grow up they can't find jobs here so they go elsewhere. Well, provide jobs here, you know, (laughs) so some of them can stay, more of them can stay. You know, if you don't grow you lose.

JUNGE: Although it wouldn't hurt if most kids did get out and see what the world is --

ECKMAN: And that isn't a problem. But a lot do come back and that's really surprising. Not a lot, I would say, but there's a significant amount of people who leave and then maybe eventually come back here, because they like it here.

JUNGE: OK, so we got the practical end of this, which I didn't expect. (laughter) But what was the, what was the other end of it, [01:57:00] the comical end of it? Did you get, did you get phone calls? Did you get messages?

ECKMAN: Oh yeah, absolutely. I had a radio announcer from Denver call up, wanted to do an interview with me. And so we had a little, you know, he thought it was humorous and they were having, you know, a promotion day and they interviewed me on the radio and, and just recently at that point they had, when one of the national tabloids that you see in the supermarket, it said something about you know, aliens had captured Elvis, you know, he didn't really just

die, he was taken by the space aliens. So I ended the interview with this, I said, and I said, "Do you mind if I talk to your listeners for a minute?" they said, "Sure," I said, "Well, as you know, radio waves don't just beam across this country, they go out into outer space. So if you're out there and you're listening, come home, Elvis, we miss you," (laughs) [01:58:00] of course, we all burst into laughing on that. (laughter)

JUNGE: That's good, that's great.

ECKMAN: So I mean you know, but anyway, we got a lot of interviews and still occasionally people from around the country will call and ask about it.

JUNGE: Really?

ECKMAN: Oh, every couple years somebody, you know, an aviation magazine, a writer from up in Washington State called the city once and they referred him to me. You know, so I gave him an, you know, an interview about the thing. And you know, people just are curious. You know, I've given the story out to a lot of people, I sent a hat and a copy of the resolution to my cousin, the airline pilot and of course, that got around (laughs) at TWA, at American Airlines. (laughs) You know. But he used to, he used to fly across here, actually. He was on a route from, I think he used to fly from St. Louis to Seattle and of course,

they'd fly right acrossed here, or Portland, [01:59:00] I can't remember which. And he'd always announce it over the plane's intercom, "Look down there and you'll see --"

(laughs)

JUNGE: What did he say?

ECKMAN: "The Greater Green River Intergalactic Spaceport, my cousin named that," (laughter) you know so I mean it, but it's an incredible potential public promotional thing. And that's what I see is the reality now. But hopefully I think, you know, looking out into the future, you know, 20, 30, 40 years, the town grows, if it does, we can be using that. And we should be using, it's there. Why would you not use a resource that's right there? (laughs)

JUNGE: Well, wouldn't George Eckman be surprised if it actually did turn out to be an intergalactic spaceport.

ECKMAN: Well, the potential is always there. (laughs)

JUNGE: That's great, George, that --

ECKMAN: You know, do you think we're alone in the universe? God only knows. (laughter) NASA hasn't figured it out yet. (laughs)

JUNGE: So [02:00:00] when you thought about -- you were thinking promotion, right? Did it just pop into your skull?

ECKMAN: Because of the expansion of the community, it was one reason to, to accept what we were doing.

JUNGE: Tell me what you were doing. Were you frying an egg when this happened? When this brainstorm hit you?

ECKMAN: No, I was up at city hall working. I'd worked an eight-hour day at the mine. I was up there, it was like 7:00, 7:30 at night, I'm working on the paperwork that I've got to do every day after, you know, for, I'd come in about 4:30, my secretary would spend 45 minutes with me saying, "You've got to do this, this, this, sign this, this and this," I'd talk to whoever I needed to talk to, usually by 5:30, they all wanted to go home. So then I would stay and do things, you know. I had to deal with, catch up, I had everything to read, you know, as to what's going on in my community. I had paperwork, you know, forms to fill out, I mean, I had correspondence to do. Signing of ledgers and bills [02:01:00] and whatever and I was just exhausted one night and yeah, it came to me. (laughs) You know, and it was because this thing, this comet was crashing into the planet Jupiter I thought, well OK, let's do something with that. (laughs)

JUNGE: You know, Colbert would have a lot of fun with this.

ECKMAN: Oh yeah, you know, in the same way that Paul Harvey did a program on it, on national radio.

JUNGE: George, what are your ambitions now that you're retired, what do you want to do? Would you like to get involved in politics again?

ECKMAN: I still am involved in politics. I've served two terms on the Board of Trustees of Western Wyoming Community College. If you don't think that's political, it certainly is, because we have to fight every year with the legislature for the appropriation of funds to the community colleges, there are seven of them in the state of Wyoming and one university. So I'm actively involved in politics. I choose not to become involved in partisan politics, for the betterment of my community. [02:02:00] You know, I really don't like what our partisan politics are. They're filled with what I told you, what I consider boogieman issues, to divert public opinion from the real issues of what's going on in this country, Republican and Democrat.

I think our national government is bought and paid for, for the economic interests of this country, and but yet everybody talks about that. They don't talk about local issues and the local issues are what really matters to people.

JUNGE: Wasn't [Ford Bussert?] a representative?

ECKMAN: He was a state representative. He served in the State Legislature for at least, he was a senator, I think, and I

think he served a four-year term. He considered running for governor in 1986. He didn't. That was his choice and Mike Sullivan got the Democratic nomination and won. Ford Bussert was a Democrat. [02:03:00]

JUNGE: Why didn't Ford Bussert decide to run?

ECKMAN: I know him very well and, you know, he, there were many reasons. Some were personal, family reasons. He liked it here, he didn't want to move, for one reason, his family didn't want to move. But he, he felt the economy was bad and he was not able to do, he was not going to be able to do the things that he would have liked to have done. And unfortunately he made the decision not to run for the Democratic nomination.

JUNGE: Well, that economic problem hit [Sullivan?] right --

ECKMAN: Because this was the late '80s, we were in a recession at the time and it was, it was a sad point in, in our history here because things weren't possible. We did not have, I mean, Wyoming is a very wealthy state. We could potentially, potentially be much wealthier locally.

[02:04:00] But again --

JUNGE: What kind of guy was Ford Bussert?

ECKMAN: He was a very intelligent man. I think he was one of the smartest men in the state. He was certainly one of the best lawyers in the state. People feared him in

courtrooms. People wouldn't litigate against him because he always did his homework. He had, he was a good person. He really cared about the people and he, he served on the, he was a city attorney. He was the attorney for the college in Rock Springs. He was the attorney for the school district here in Green River.

JUNGE: So he knew the issues.

ECKMAN: Yeah, he knew the issues, but they were local issues. He protected the community that he lived in. You know, and I'll tell you, if you went into a courtroom you wanted him on your side, not the other person's side. Because he was smart and he did his homework and he was always prepared.

JUNGE: George, it's very seldom [02:05:00] that I recommend to people that I interview that they should enter politics, but we need people like you in, on the state level, either as an elected, elected people on the state level or, or you know, representing the state on the national level. We need people like that.

ECKMAN: And I think you need them in the local level. And that's the most important, because when you get up in the morning and go in the bathroom and you turn on the faucet, you expect water to come out. When you flush the toilet you expect it all to go away. And it does that because of local government. You know, you have power here because

it's regulated by local government. You know, your roads out there are all provided by local government, they're maintained by local government. Your garbage is picked up by local government.

JUNGE: So are you saying that you would feel frustrated by the lack of being able to do, change things on a state or national level?

ECKMAN: Well, you need to start locally. One of the biggest problems with state and national politicians is they don't know the reality of the issues. [02:06:00] They've never been involved first in local issues. Now Mike Enzi, our senator now is one exception to that. He was mayor of Gillette at one time, was a good mayor of Gillette. You know, I knew him, he was mayor when I was mayor. And he and I and a woman over in Laramie, I think, were considered the most progressive mayors at that time by Mike Sullivan, our governor. Because I got to know Mike Sullivan, our governor, very well. He probably won't remember me today, he knows so many people, but --

JUNGE: Oh yeah, he would.

ECKMAN: You know, when we got this overpass that you drove over to get here, I went to him at that time with George [Jost?] and oh gosh, I can picture his name, another man on our city council at the time and I'm not forgetting the

other guy's name because he was a Republican but, Rich Dixon, Rich Dixon, very good person, very community-minded. The three of us went to Governor Sullivan and I led it off by [02:007:00] saying, "Governor," and he knew me, he always knew me when I, you know, then, when I'd come to him. I said, "We've got some problems in Green River. We need to get a second overpass done over the railroad yard, oriented towards back around to the road so that it was conduit to not only person, you know, private automobiles but trucks. Because we're on 530, which is a major route going south. Especially in the wintertime, you can't go on 191 on the other side of Flaming Gorge, it's down to Utah, down to Vernal, Utah," and at that time the state roads were being run by a man who lived, who was from Rock Springs and they had got the belt loop around the city of Rock Springs done and they were getting all kinds of public road work done over in Rock Springs.

JUNGE: Oh, [Mendini?], [Lee Mengini?].

ECKMAN: Yeah. And I said to the governor, I said, "We figure in Green River that sooner or [02:08:00] later they're going to run out of roads to build Rock Springs and then we hope you can get one done over here in Green River," (laughs) and Mike said, "Let me look into that, George," (laughter) and within months that project was back off of

hold, because it had been held from the previous administration, Don Van Meer had started trying to get that done and we could never get it off the back burners. Within months that project was on the front burner. And it didn't get done until after I'd left office, but the three of us that went there, we went to the governor and we got it done.

JUNGE: See, there should be, well --

ECKMAN: You've got to have that personal connection. And it was in part because I'd worked on Mike Sullivan's campaign when he ran for governor.

JUNGE: Oh, did you?

ECKMAN: He remembered me. He always remembered me. I was out on, at, in the line of going into the mine with his wife and kids, you know, handing out leaflets to workers. Never forgot that. [02:09:00] You've got to have that influence. And you've got to know the local issues. Because the local issues are what it's about. You know, as Tip O'Neil, former Speaker of the House of Representatives once said, "Everything is local," you've got to know how it impacts the people in your districts. And they've got to be aware of what they need and want. And that should influence your state politics and it should influence your federal politics.

JUNGE: What do you want to do? What do you foresee yourself doing?

ECKMAN: My -- I'm going to run again for trustee, my third term at the college in Rock Springs, Western Wyoming Community College and I consider, probably I will just fade away after that. I considered a number of years ago running for the State Legislature, but -- I've had three personal friends of mine run for the seat that I would run for. Mark Harris was the first back in the '80s and then it was Bill Thompson, [02:10:00] who was a high school teacher here in Green River and have known him for many years. Used to come talk to his classes. And then Chris Boswell, who wound up later becoming --

JUNGE: An aide-de-camp to Freudenthal.

ECKMAN: Aide to Governor Freudenthal. But he was very strong in the, you know, positions in the Legislature. I don't know if he was Minority Speaker, but I think he was whip, Minority Whip in the House.

JUNGE: And now he's working for the university.

ECKMAN: Now he works for, now he works for the college, the university, he works for the University of Wyoming. And you know, so I mean, I wasn't going to run against those friends, so I never ran for the Legislature. Because I figured you've got to start at the House and then go to the

Senate. You know, you don't start big. You know, these are not starting, you know, level jobs. You've got to work your way in, as I did with the city of Green River, because if you want to be able to serve adequately, you've got to educate yourself and you've got to understand how things work. And people have got to know you and you've got to know people. [02:11:00] And so I didn't take those positions. I was encouraged to run -- for, no, eight years ago, no four, yeah, eight years ago, but when Bill Thompson retired from the Legislature. He served after Chris Boswell and -- but a good friend of mine, you know, filed to run and I wasn't going to challenge him.

JUNGE: What about in the future?

ECKMAN: Oh, I'm getting old. (laughs) I'm tired.

JUNGE: Wait a minute. You're five, six years younger than I am.

ECKMAN: That's true.

JUNGE: And I have some pretty strong political opinions.

ECKMAN: That's true. It's possible, but -- you know, I don't -- I don't know, we'll see. I don't rule anything out. As my time becomes my own, I am still busy with the college. [02:12:00] And last year I traveled all over the country, it was sort of like a -- stopping work and doing all the

things I'd wanted to for years, I did road trips, drove all over the country last year.

JUNGE: By yourself?

ECKMAN: Yeah. For months. I took a month and a half and drove down towards where my brother lives now in Long Beach, or not Long Beach, in San Diego and then came back through Arizona and saw friends there and came back and saw the Grand Canyon, which I hadn't seen in 40 years, you know and green, it was green in March. People don't know it's green. But I did, I took a month and a half and did that trip. Took back roads as much as possible. You know, because I could afford it with my pension and Social Security and, and then in May my nephew was graduating from college in Oregon, in Portland from [02:13:00] Lewis and Clark College there and I drove out for his graduation and looked up an old friend from here, actually, a woman who retired out there and visited with her for a bit.

Went up and looked up a cousin in Seattle I hadn't seen in 15 years, fortunately, because she died in August and I got to spend four days with her and talked family and we had a wonderful time and looked up an old friend, a woman I used to work with out at the mine 40 years ago, one of the first two, her name was Pam [Dollen?], it's now Pam Brown.

JUNGE: Is she still around?

ECKMAN: No, she lives up in Montana. She lives in Missoula now.

JUNGE: Pam Brown?

ECKMAN: Now. And she was one of the first two women, she and another woman were the first two women that got hired on at a mining operation. Here in Sweetwater County. In our mind, anyway.

JUNGE: Who was the other one?

ECKMAN: Her name was [Cox?], Elaine Cox and I have no idea whatever became of her. She moved to Jackson and got married and I haven't seen her in 40 years. [02:14:00]

JUNGE: Well, you know, William Least Heat-Moon wrote a book about his travels called *Blue Highways*. Maybe you need to do that.

ECKMAN: And I might. You know, because I -- and then in the fall I came back from Montana, went up back roads as much as possible. And in the fall I went back east to Maryland, spent a month and a half back there. One of my closest friends from college lives back there. He's a restaurant owner and used his home as sort of a base and went out to see old friends and a few relatives I still have and visited places I haven't seen in years and spent almost a

month and a half doing that and driving back across country.

JUNGE: One last thing. And we've gone two hours. This has been wonderful. We started out, before we were on tape, about this book, *Battlefield Prison Pen*, you were telling me something, can you just briefly describe your ancient history, I mean your --

ECKMAN: Well, my great-grandfather fought in the Civil War. He was in the Union cavalry. I'm from Maryland, which was a slave state, [02:15:00] a southern state, but it did not secede. It had voted not to secede, actually. And then one-third of the legislature was arrested by federal forces and kept (laughs) in seclusion for a year, you know, until the Union Army had successfully occupied Maryland. But my great-grandfather had enlisted in the cavalry in September of 1860, prior to the election, not knowing any of this was going on, but my father's family are German and English and they were from what's now central Maryland, but was then more western and German-speaking communities and he fought in the Civil War and he got captured twice in battle, was wounded and captured. First was in the Peninsula Campaign, when Jeb Stuart's Confederate cavalry rode a ring around the federal forces, embarrassing, the whole point of it was to embarrass the Federal Army. [02:16:00]

You know, he circled it. My great-grandfather was in the federal troops that went out (laughs) and tried to stop him, outnumbered 10 to one, you know, and he got captured in that, that battle.

JUNGE: Is this the Delmarva Peninsula?

ECKMAN: No, this is the peninsula between the James River and I can't remember the other one that leads to Richmond. The Union forces went down there and they fought their way up toward, they were trying to take Richmond, the Confederate capital. So he got captured there and he was captured again around the time of the Chancellor's Berg Battle, Chancellorsville. No. No it wasn't. It was, I'm sorry, it was the Petersburg Campaign.

JUNGE: Oh, OK, outside of Richmond.

ECKMAN: When Grant was moving down and he fought the Wilderness Battle in Cold Harbor and he was, and he was moving towards Petersburg and hadn't started the [02:17:00] Siege of Petersburg yet, this would be in 1864. Because I tracked him. I got a history book of US cavalry in the Civil War and I tracked his unit. Through all this I know exactly. And I had gotten the dates from a cousin of when he was captured. So I could easily link it to what campaign his unit was in and he was in a rear guard action, just north of Richmond, north of Petersburg, guarding

supplies that his cavalry unit and he got ambushed by Confederate cavalry and was taken prisoner a second time.

And the first time he had been exchanged. But Lincoln stopped exchanging prisoners of war, simply because he figured, well, these guys are just going to go back there and get right back into the army and if we're going to starve them from men, that's the only way we're going to defeat them. So we stopped exchanging prisoners. And unfortunately that led to just horrible prisoner of war camps on both sides.

JUNGE: Andersonville.

ECKMAN: Well, Andersonville gets the [02:18:00] worst, you know, infamous credit, but Union prisons weren't any better, really. They were both sides, horrible places. You know, you got unsanitary conditions, cold, you know, these are your enemies, you know, so you're not treating them really well, you're not feeding them very well. Sickness and death, I mean, the die off rates in federal as well as confederate prisons were horrible. And my great-grandfather was captured, sent south and I found out from a cousin who lives in Georgia that he was -- she had tracked this -- he had been transferred from a prison in Georgia, it wasn't Andersonville, this book talks about it, that's

why I picked this book up, cost about 50 bucks but it was worth it because it talks about these prisons.

This author served in, he was in Andersonville, he was in this other prison in Georgia where I'm pretty sure my [02:19:00] great-grandfather was at, he also was in, and I know he was in Florence, South Carolina, because when Sherman was moved from Atlanta towards Savannah, they evacuated, the Confederate forces evacuated these prisons and tried to ship the men, the prisoners ahead of the Union Army, because they didn't want them to, to be retaken by federal forces. And he was transferred by rail to Florence, South Carolina, I think and he was injured.

He was getting off a train and of course, everybody's shoving and he gets pushed down and falls into the rail or something and injures his back. And after the war is over, after he's recaptured by federal forces and released and sent home, you know, in decrepit shape, he eventually filed for a pension, for medical pension from the federal government. And they had him listed as a deserter from the army, because he'd [02:20:00] disappeared in battle, you know. And he had to get, and she had these hand copies of handwritten testimonies by people he served with. He had to write and get them to write and say, "We saw him

captured," and the federal government honored the claim and he got a \$7 a month pension. Because he was a blacksmith.

You know, his family was a blacksmith and he couldn't go back and do that job at this point. He still did. So he got this \$7 a month pension from the federal government for the rest of his life. (laughs)

JUNGE: Did he, he had kids, obviously, before he went to the
--

ECKMAN: No, he had no kids. In fact, after the war he married a woman -- one of his brothers had married a woman and this woman's sister he married. And she had been married to another person who had died in the war and so he had four kids with her. My great-grandfather was [02:21:00] the old-, or my grandfather was the oldest. This is from Keedysville, Maryland, is where he settled. That was her, the wife's home. And my father remembers visiting his grandmother, who was a little girl during the Civil War and hearing her talk about during the Battle of Antietam, the armies marched through Keedysville, which used to be called Centerville during the war, from -- after the Battle of South Mountain they moved towards Sharpsburg, acrossed Antietam Creek and she had a farm there, she grew up on a farm there. And she talked about the first, the Confederate armies moving through and then the Union armies

moving through, how they stole everything. Literally stole everything and this was in September and they literally stole everything that they had canned and harvested to sustain them through the next winter.

There's a great book about the Battle of Antietam, I don't have the name of it right now, but it talks about the impact on the community, [02:22:00] first book I've ever seen about a Civil War battle or any that talks about what happens when an army, you know, an army of first 40,000 men and then 60,000 men march through an area that has 4,000 people living there. They steal everything. They destroy everything. Literally. They kill all the stock. They steal the chickens and the cows and butcher them for fresh meat, because they're getting salted pork, you know, the rations. You know, the water supplies are poisoned.

Their dead is laying in the fields. You know, who's going to bury them? You know and then you can't plow, you know, because -- dead, dead horses, you know, what do you do with a dead horse? (laughs) You know. You know, and it's September in Maryland, when it's 70 degrees, 80 degrees in the daytime, you know, the water supplies become polluted from the dead. [02:23:00] Literally the rotting bodies. The runoff pollutes all the water -- cholera, dysentery breaks out. You know, she remembers this. And

she remembers her home being used as a hospital after the battle. And she told my father the story about this, you know, the dead are laying in her house for months, until finally they took them all away. They either all died or they took them all away.

JUNGE: How could they stand the smell?

ECKMAN: You did. You just had to. I mean, you couldn't leave them out in the sun. You know, Union and Confederate. You know, when the Confederate armies left they didn't take the worst injured. They couldn't. Because people were wounded to the point where they couldn't be moved. So they left them for the Union Army and one of the reasons that McClellan didn't pursue Lee's army and he got cashiered by Lincoln because of it, was he couldn't just leave all this, you know. You know, you're at a mess, you're at a battlefield. You know, you just take the army and leave and leave all the wounded? You know, who's taking care [02:24:00] of this? There was only 4,000 people in this community, no, in this county, where my ancestors lived.

JUNGE: Now your dad told you all this?

ECKMAN: He told me what his grandmother had been telling the stories of, he did. And in fact, my cousin up in Seattle, that I saw just before she died, she was 84 and she confirmed it. As a young girl she had gone with my

grandfather, who died before I was born, to the home, their ancestral home in Keedysville, because his mother was still alive. Took her father's father was my grandfather. They went up there and they went to the house and the people that, the family that was living there pulled the rugs up and showed her the blood stains that were still in the floor. You know. So anyway, that book has meaning. Because it tells me what my [02:25:00] great-grandfather endured in a POW camp in Georgia during the war in South Carolina then. And I just picked it up for that reason.

And I'm going to share it with some other relatives that I have, you know, all of whom are back east, who want to know what that experience is. You know, they're curious but they don't have any avenue. The book next to it is a diary. That's the second part. The first is, or that's the first part. It's written by Thomas Hart Benton, senator from Missouri, who is greatly responsible for the westward expansion of our country and he wrote this book of, what is it? *Thirty Years in Washington?*

JUNGE: *Thirty Years in the US Senate* by Thomas H. Benton, Volume II.

ECKMAN: Now I've got Volume I, I found these. These are published in what, 1850, '53 something? I've got a lot of historic books like this.

JUNGE: Well, this one's signed by somebody in 1857, oh my goodness. [02:26:00] This is *Volume II, 1857*, D. Appleton and Company.

ECKMAN: I've got the first volume downstairs. But I'm reading it. I'm a historian. I love American history.

JUNGE: Is it interesting?

ECKMAN: Oh, well you're reading the -- what goes on in the US Senate. You know, you don't see much, you don't get much of this in the public schools. You know, when they talk about the prior Civil War, they mostly talk about the slavery, the anti-slavery movement. There was a hell of a lot more going on in this country prior to the Civil War than that. And these people, you know, didn't know, anybody at that time didn't know there was going to be a Civil War. You know, there shouldn't have been a Civil War, there didn't need to be a Civil War. Slavery would have died out in this country. Horrible as it was, it would have probably taken another 25 years and it would have collapsed here as it did and the last holdout in the American's Brazil by 1885.

JUNGE: That supports the opinion of a guy that was interviewed by Colbert, I think, one [02:27:00] night on his show, where he said it was Lincoln's fault for, the Civil War didn't have to be.

ECKMAN: It didn't have to be. It really didn't. One, the country didn't have to break up. And a lot of misguided politicians, just like you see in our House of Representatives and Senate today, let that crisis become the crisis it became. You know, northern politicians always would say, "I'm against slavery. I'm voting against slavery," well, they couldn't change anything. They couldn't do anything about it, it was like again, a boogiemer issue. You know, vote for me because I'm against -- well, what are you for? Should be the question that should be asked. What are you doing for us? Not -- what are you fighting against that you can't do anything about.

Because slavery existed in the slave states, it was constitutional. Horrible as it is, that's the reality. What was going to kill slavery was the fact that cotton was produced on those plantations [02:28:00] and tobacco was produced on those plantations and that fed the needs of Europe as well as the United States. And the British were adamantly turned against slavery in the 1830s and the British is where all the cotton went, to their mills. And Great Britain and France would have stopped slavery, just like they finally did in Brazil, because they refused to support the economic system that did it.

JUNGE: There would have been a popular uprising like we were in the period, when we were fighting the war in Vietnam?

ECKMAN: Well no, there wouldn't have been so -- well, there was, there would have been that, and that was happening. People were turning against slavery in this country, of, and I'm not in any way justified, I would never justify it. I supported civil rights as a young man in college in the east when I was in college and -- but what happened was, they didn't have to buy their cotton here. [02:29:00]

And what they did during the Civil War when their cotton supply stopped, they went to India and they went to Egypt and they started cotton plantations there. And after the war, that's where their cotton came from and that's what they would have done. And they said, "Keep your damn cotton," and the plantation system would have collapsed. It was collapsing anyway. There's a good book, it was published in 1860 and it had to do with the decline of the southern economic system. I don't have the exact title in my mind right now. But it's rarely ever seen. You can get a reprint of it, it's finally been reprinted in the 18, or in the 1980s or '90s and it has to do, *The Impending Crisis in the South*, I think is the title and it's basically says, look, the system is falling apart. It cannot sustain

itself. And one of the reasons was that [02:30:00] couldn't support the agriculture.

The two worst crops to be grown in land is cotton and tobacco in the American South. It strips it of all minerals and, and nobody had, nobody knew what or how to do about it. You didn't have artificial fertilizers then. You had no way to restore the land. All our agriculture today runs from artificial fertilizers. You know, if you had to just expect things to grow, they will for a couple of years and then the soil is depleted and then your crops fail. And that's what happened back then. People were moving westward because they were wearing out the farmland in the east.

JUNGE: You know, it's interesting, you've got a great historical perspective, but it's hindsight, isn't it? Because at the time, like you said before, people didn't expect there to be a war. There were personal factors involved. I think the South Carolinians, South Carolina was a hotbed of [02:31:00] -- hatred, secessionists, yeah, hatred and --

ECKMAN: They wanted to leave. But most people in the South didn't want to.

JUNGE: Well, the guys in the west, the emerging west, you know, in the west, the Appalachians, they didn't, some of those people didn't care. They had lives to lead.

ECKMAN: You know, in the southern states, you know at first, when after Lincoln was elected and the Republican Party didn't even run candidates in the South. You know, you still had the remains of the Whig Party, which later become Republicans -- they were who the Republicans came out of, was northern Whigs.

JUNGE: Under Lincoln, yeah.

ECKMAN: Under, you know, Lincoln and -- who was the general before him that had run? I can't, Fremont, who had run in 1856 for the Republican Party. This was old Whigs that formed the Republican Party. Well, there were old Whigs in the South because Whigs were the wealthier class, they were the Republican Party of their time. You know, national party. Well, when it became a northern party, and it was running [02:32:00] on, and one big issue was the slavery issue, an issue they could do nothing about, but they were campaigning on it. "We're going to stop the expansion of slavery," and to the territories. That they could do.

But Lincoln constantly through the war, you know, and this doesn't get said much, he constantly through the war said, "If you lay down your arms and rejoin the Union, you

can keep slavery in the South," he constantly told them that. It's in several, you know, messages to State of the Union Addresses, it's in his campaign. He was not, his wife was from Kentucky, slave-owning family from Kentucky. He know about slavery. (laughs) You know, part of his money came from that, from Daddy's plantation, Daddy-in-law's plantation. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, as far as I know, the Emancipation Proclamation only applied to those --

ECKMAN: Areas still in rebellion.

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah. [02:33:00] So we're freeing your slaves because you're in rebellion against us. And I don't see why the South just didn't tell them to go to Hell.

ECKMAN: Well, the upper Southern states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, which were not in rebellion and actually Louisiana, which had been occupied prior to this proclamation, kept slavery right up until 1866.

JUNGE: Now didn't the Mason-Dixon line go right through Maryland?

ECKMAN: Maryland/Pennsylvania is the border. That was the border, the colonial border between Maryland and Pennsylvania, that's the subject by -- Mason and Dixon were surveyors. They were surveying it in the colonial period.

And that was the sort of line that went south, or went west.

JUNGE: So what is the sentiment in Maryland today? Is it southern or is it northern or is it?

ECKMAN: Well, Maryland is a very liberal southern state. When I was growing up it was a very conservative southern state. But Maryland had ended segregation before, when I was growing up there. But down in what was then still a confederacy, [02:34:00] you know, segregation was by law.

JUNGE: Jim Crow.

ECKMAN: Well, let me tell you, after the election of 1860, when Lincoln was elected, secession only happened in seven southern states, the Gulf states. Starting with South Carolina, all the way across to Texas. Those states seceded and they formed the Confederacy. Now Virginia and Maryland called constitutional conventions to consider slavery or to consider secession. They weren't even considered, you know, in Kentucky and Missouri, they didn't consider seceding. But it was only after Fort Sumpter, which was provoked by Lincoln, you know, I mean you have a fort in the mouth of South Carolina's only harbor, you know, you don't think you're provoking something? He consciously did it. He wanted, you know, forces in South Carolina, hotbed of secession, to fire on the fort.

[02:35:00] You know, because that would precipitate war. You know, and only by war could he stop, you know, the secession. And why? Because Lincoln's from Illinois. There are no roads back then. Roads are just mud plots most of the year in the east because it rains all the time. Everything that was moved in the east was moved by rivers. And all rivers fed into the Mississippi and the Mississippi went down through Louisiana, the port of Louisiana, and that dared not be allowed to go into a foreign country. And that's why everyone west of Pennsylvania fought the Civil War in the north. They were not going to let a foreign country have a stranglehold on the Mississippi River, which was their livelihood and their commerce, as it had been, as it had been until annexed, we bought Louisiana from the French in [02:36:00] 1803, which Jefferson was roundly criticized for doing. You know. It had been under Spanish rule and the Spanish at numerous times cut off commerce going down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

All rivers in central United States feed into the Mississippi and go out through the Port of Louisiana. And that's why we fought the Civil War. It had nothing to do with slavery. We could not allow, the northern states could not allow that port to become part of a foreign country. And only when Lincoln in response to Fort

Sumpter, called up federal troops and he petitioned all the states to send militia, federal, you know, state militia units to defend the federal capital. And the people in Virginia looked over their shoulder and said, "Against who? We're still in the country, we're still Americans," and they knew there was going to be a war against slavery.

And that's when [02:37:00] Virginia seceded. In fact, North Carolina in their Proclamation of Secession, when they were debating it, condemned South Carolina for precipitating the crisis. They didn't want to leave. And they were treated very well by Sherman's army when it marched through North Carolina. He said, "Don't bother these people, they didn't want the war."

JUNGE: Interesting. [Ardith?] and I, my wife and I were taking a bus tour of Charleston and we had two tours -- one was by a black guy who talked about the black point of, from the black point of view. The other, the first guy, though, was a white guy named Bubba. (laughter)

ECKMAN: Bubba's the white guy, right? (laughs)

JUNGE: Yeah. It's not like *Forrest Gump*. But yeah, Bubba was the white guy and as we're passing, you know, in view of Fort Sumpter, he's telling us that the reason why it broke out there was because Lincoln figured that, people had, ships had gotten through there, [02:38:00] through the

harbor or into the harbor with goods without paying their taxes. They had just more or less been pretty easy on enforcing the tariff laws and so Lincoln figured, hey, there's a source of revenue, we're going to actually enforce this, and that's why the Civil War broke out at Fort Sumpter. Then afterwards I talked to a lady who was a docent at one of the mansions in Charleston and she was from Vermont, (laughs) and she said, "No, that's not true. This was a hot, South Carolina was hotbed of secessionism," and she said, "They had fire eaters that were preaching secession."

ECKMAN: Of course, they did. They were the most. During, when the seven states along the Gulf voted secession, and they all called popular, they either voted it up by legislature, by their state legislatures, or they called -- the same kind of conventions that ratified the Constitution back in 1787, to debate the issue of secession. [02:39:00] In Alabama it almost failed. Almost failed. It was very close.

JUNGE: George Wallace country.

ECKMAN: Yeah, Alabama almost didn't secede. But they, but it barely passed in Alabama. So it wasn't universal. We can do that. But he thought there was more Union sentiment than there was and as the war went on, of course, as your

sons and friends' sons are being killed, you know, you take sides. That's sort of what happened. But your friend was right about the revenue issue. Because remember back in your old pre-Civil War history, one of the biggest federal debates was over tariffs. Tariffs was the income that was taxed on anything that came into the country. Now of course, as an agricultural country, most things, you know, clothing, refined clothing and --

JUNGE: Manufactured good.

ECKMAN: Manufactured goods, plows, knives, guns were brought in. [02:40:00] Well, the federal government constantly maintained a high tariff of 30s or more percent on tariffs. I mean, 27 was probably the lowest they would usually get. Sometime, the one that precipitated the crisis in the 1830s with South Carolina was they'd raised it to 33%. You know, and these people down in agricultural South Carolina said, "The only reason you're doing this is, one, to finance the federal government, which was the principal financing of the federal government and two, to prevent, to promote the emerging manufacturing interests in the northeast," in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, you know. So we're paying higher money for clothing and agricultural, you know, plows and shovels and rakes down here, which we don't make, simply because you want us to buy them at greater

cost from people out in New England, in their developing, you know, factories [02:41:00] up there.

First thing the Confederate government did, when it seceded was lower the national tariff to 10%. They figure, hell, we can buy it cheaper from Great Britain, even sending the cost of you sending it all the way over here and we'll make a lot more money. You know, that's how we sell our agricultural products to anyway.

JUNGE: Plus wasn't there a little bit of a fear that maybe there would be reciprocal tariffs on the agricultural goods?

ECKMAN: Well, the North was scared to death because if Great Britain and France could get their stuff into the country through southern ports, you didn't think it was going to filter up into the north central United States? Nobody could control that. So the whole economic system of tariffs would collapse. You could enforce the Port of Boston, but how are you going to enforce it going up these little rivers up the Mississippi Valley?

JUNGE: George, were these guys in the northeast, these merchants, were they the same, of the same ilk as those who expect --

ECKMAN: Run the country today? (laughter) [02:42:00]

JUNGE: And attack Bunker Hill going back?

ECKMAN: Oh yeah, of course.

JUNGE: And threw tea in the harbor?

ECKMAN: Of course, economic reasons. Economic reasons.

JUNGE: Yeah, I think Charles Beard wrote a book about that.

ECKMAN: Charles Beard, I was just going to say him. He was discounted back when I was a student, back in the '60s. Because people thought he was Socialist or you know, Communist even maybe. Because he wrote about the economic causes of things.

JUNGE: And everybody knew it was slavery.

ECKMAN: (laughs) Well, slavery of course, was part of the system. You know. Slavery was part of the southern system but that wasn't the northern system. Although slavery existed in the northern states. Even after the Revolutionary War. Even after the adoption of the Constitution. I think it was only abolished in Rhode Island in the 1800s, you know, it continued in Maryland and Delaware, primarily because of tobacco. Tobacco plantations. Cotton was grown in the Deep South. Tobacco was grown in the northern southern states. It was a cash crop [02:43:00] for plantation farming. You know, it wasn't the sustaining farms that kept your families fed. But if you wanted to make money off of it --

JUNGE: Cash crop.

ECKMAN: You could cotton or tobacco. Because there was a great demand in Europe for it. And there was great need to make money off of it.

JUNGE: Was Philip Morris behind all of this?

ECKMAN: You think? The ancestors of. But you know, in any way, you had, you know, the economic powers that be and they were in this constant battle with the economic powers of the northeast, you know, who were in the, you know, it used to be shipping. But shipping was destroyed during the War of 1812 and the wealth turned to manufacturing, during the War of 1812 and then constantly developing the manufacturing of cloth, manufacturing of iron, because we had --

JUNGE: The Industrial Revolution.

ECKMAN: We had minerals here, but we didn't have the manufac-, the British wouldn't allow us to develop [02:44:00] manufacturing while we were a colony, to be exploited. But once that was gone we could start doing those things. And as the northeast developed, you know, manufacturing facilities and economic wealth, then those two constantly butted heads and the tariff was the national issue. Over, you know, we protect the emergency economy of the northeast. Do we protect the economy in the south?

JUNGE: So I guess to open up a whole new topic, would you say that Wyoming citizens are beholding to the minerals of (inaudible)? (laughs)

ECKMAN: You think? (laughs)

JUNGE: Thanks, George.

ECKMAN: And that's all dictated by the northeast still.
(laughs)

JUNGE: Yeah, if there's any economic pow-, I don't know, it's pretty fractured, fractionated? Or what would you say? It's fractured. I don't think you have one economic power like you did during the Civil War, against another economic power.

ECKMAN: No.

JUNGE: You've got, you've got -- [02:45:00]

ECKMAN: You've got one economic --

JUNGE: You've got the lords and the barons of ind-...

ECKMAN: Well, against the rest of us. (laughs) Against the ordinary people.

JUNGE: Yeah, and I don't think people realize that.

ECKMAN: Oh, one of the biggest crises here over state lands, you know and taking federal land and restoring it to the states, like it was ever --

JUNGE: Restoring it?

ECKMAN: Yeah, that's their argument. You know, was, so the state can sell it off to the interests. And what are the interests going to do? They're going to keep the people of Wyoming from driving on it. You see that over there in the checkerboard system of use of federal lands by the agricultural interests in the east.

JUNGE: I don't think a lot of people realize this, but the federal government offered the land for sale to the people of Wyoming, maybe not just Wyoming, maybe the entire west, they offered the acreage for sale. And you know why they didn't take it? Because this was an agricultural state, the ranchers said, "Why should we pay for anything we're getting for nothing?"

ECKMAN: Exactly.

JUNGE: It's stupid.

ECKMAN: Exactly. When it was all open range. Yeah. You know, the worst thing we could do. You know, and I've seen [02:46:00] the history of eastern states, you know, where the legislatures were so corrupt, because they were bought out by the industries, not that that could happen today, of course. (laughter) But where -- the country was ravaged. By wealth that wanted to exploit, you know, coal especially, back in, in West Virginia, say. Or timber, you know, in the east Maryland and West Virginia, say, I'm

familiar with, where it was ravaged by industries, owned by people out of state. Same kind of thing. You know, and the state legislatures took the money, one way or another, you either take it straight in the hand in an envelope, or you get a campaign contribution, but tell me it isn't a bribe one way or the other.

JUNGE: There's a whole book written about that called --

ECKMAN: And that'll happen here. If we ever do succeed in getting the federal government to give up rights to federal lands in this state, legislatures will be bought out and they will sell it, sell it lock, stock and [02:47:00] barrel to economic interests that are owned by people out of the state, as we once were all owned back in the 19th century. You know, back in the 19th century, you know, this whole state was being developed by economic interests, primarily from Great Britain. [Wallop?] family. Second son of wealthy English familiar came over here and opened ranching interests, you know, on restricted ranching.

You know, the open range. They shot, they sent Tom [Oren?] out to kill the homesteaders because they were interfering with the open range of their cattle empires. You know those stories. Drive the homesteaders and the squatters off.

JUNGE: It's interesting, I talked to a lady who was partly responsible for bringing wolves back into the national parks, I mean Yellowstone National Park. Can't remember her name right offhand, but we were talking and I kept trying to be the devil's advocate saying, [02:48:00] "Yeah, but the ranchers don't like this," and she had an answer for every one of my, a rebuttal for every one of my propositions. And then I said, but, and finally I said something that ticked her off and I said, "But the ranchers won't buy off on that," and she said, "Wait a minute. Who owns Yellowstone Park? The people of this country own Yellowstone Park, not the ranchers, and that really stuck with me, George. It really stuck with me because now when people say, "Well, what about the ranchers this, and what about this narrow, parochial interest over here?" I say to myself, wait a minute. This land, the BOM, maybe we own, maybe the BOM forcer is the official wildlife service, the Bureau of Reclamation, all those federal agencies own 50 to 60% of Wyoming. But it doesn't belong to the state of Wyoming. It belongs to the people of this country.

ECKMAN: And it certainly doesn't belong to economic interests that don't live in the state of Wyoming. You know, the ownerships of the exploiters that would come here, [02:49:00] and I know many ranchers, you know, I've become

acquainted with them over the many years that I've been involved in politics in the state of Wyoming and they're good and decent people for the most part. They don't want to screw anything up. You know, they're as horrified by, you know, look at the people over in Pavillion. It's the ranchers complaining about the fracking. You know, poisoning their water supplies. Contaminating it with oil, you know, when you turn on your faucet and what was once clean water now has a soap scum on and oil scum on it --

JUNGE: Or there's a fire.

ECKMAN: (laughs) Or you can light with a match, you know, that's, that's Lake Erie back in the '60s, before, before the Clean Water Act.

JUNGE: I don't have to ask you this, but I'm going to. So why are we not helping those people?

ECKMAN: Well, we should. And you know, go back to the thing with the wolves. I'm not a complete, you know, advocate of wolves or bears, you know, because there's goods and bads about it. They were killed off for a reason. They were killed off because people wanted to live [02:50:00] here. You know, the ranching populations around here have a, you know, a fair interest in that. You know, if you want to restore an ecosystem, which was the original claim for this, then you need to be prepared to compensate people

fairly for damage these animals are going to do to their property.

JUNGE: And I don't think she had a problem -- Renee Askins, Renee Askins, yeah, she didn't have a problem with that.

ECKMAN: And that should be the issue. If no bears come out and wolves come out and kill cattle, then fine, if the rancher is putting up with those animals, OK, we compensate them for it. That's fair. You know, just like we do for the impact of antelope and deer, on haystacks, on farms, you know, we subsidize, you know, ranching in this country, in this state, because of damage by natural animals. You know, all wild game in this state is owned by state, not individuals. [02:51:00] Private property owners do not own wild game, wild animals. Not just game, all wild animals.

And that's a good philosophy and I think Wyoming has a good, good policy there and Wyoming and the federal government need and do, for the most part, honor that, because if those wild animals impact livelihoods on private property, there are programs in which ranchers are compensated for it. And most farmers and most ranchers are very happy with that system. You know, they get compensated, you know, sheepherders, you know, lambs taken by coyotes or eagles, you know, they get compensation every year for it, they get a subsidy. And that's, tell me

that's not Socialism, you know, by good Republicans, Conservatives, you know, they buy right into that because they're fairly compensated for damages done.

The whole key is, is it fair? [02:52:00] You know, it has to be fair. And you maintain the balance that way. Now of course, if you've got a wild animal that's dangerous and it's a danger to children, especially, I mean, I carry firearms when I'm out in the forest for that very reason. I carry bear spray and I carry firearms, because I'm often in a camp with children. And you've got to protect kids.

JUNGE: Did I ever ask you opinion on gun regulation?

ECKMAN: (laughs) I probably own two dozen guns. Half of them are black powder.

JUNGE: Oh, I'm in an arsenal.

ECKMAN: Half of them are black powder, you know, historic things. But when I was younger I hunted. I haven't hunted for --

JUNGE: In Maryland?

ECKMAN: No. Actually, actually I hunted with my mother's relatives in West Virginia, I learned to hunt. Rabbits, say, you know, squirrels, things like that. When I came out here, and I did a deer, but it's an Eastern deer. When I came out here, [02:53:00] I had two women friends, one of whom I lived with, that I met working here and who are

vegetarians. One was a complete vegetarian, one was a partial vegetarian. And I had, you know, they me face the reality of what I was doing. Hunting. And I did, I decided I was not willing, as a person, to give up meat. That's part of who we are. Although I have, off and on, reduced the amount that I eat, but I felt it was only right that I face the reality of what I was doing, killing something for food. And I learned to hunt and I hunted for a number of years. And I was very conscious of what I was doing. You take the animal for food. I don't trophy hunt.

I would never do that. I don't look at hunting as sports. I look at it as survival. I look at it for what it is. [02:54:00] You take an animal, as most hunters do, they're taking that animal to provide food for your family, and that's the way it should be. That's human history. You know, that's the balance and the fish and game in this state tries its best, I've known many fish and game people, good people, you know, I work with [Jon Freeman?] to develop and Roger Mullen to work for the city to develop a green, they'll pass through here, that's one of the big things I helped get done in the city. Not me, I don't take all the credit, but the three of us helped a lot of other people make that happen. The population, we have a deer herd, a resident deer herd in Green River. You know, elk

and moose occasionally come through the city, following the river down from the mountains.

But you know, you have to have a balance and you have to accept a balance. You know, you can take meat for your family, but you can't wipe out the population. You know, it has a right to live, too. [02:55:00] It was here first. You know. I mean, man does not have the right to destroy the earth for his own benefit.

JUNGE: Are you a spiritual person?

ECKMAN: I am a very spiritual person. I am so spiritual, I don't often attend church. For the only reason of, I feel closer to God out there in the country than I do in any building.

JUNGE: I don't think religion is spiritual.

ECKMAN: Well, most religion isn't and unfortunately they don't see it. They try to do good. I know many wonderful, good, decent people who attend churches regularly and they don't see that, they don't see it. (laughs) You know, if you read Jesus, you know, which is what it's supposedly all about, read Jesus, you read what he said, in the gospels we have and the apocryphal gospels and what he said. He talked about living. He talked about living in the world, in peace and [02:56:00] harmony. You know, he talked about spirituality in God's kingdom as being beyond the earth.

Before Pilot he says, his Pilot's pilots, "But be what is God's gods," you know, you have to do that. I read.

I read religious tracks, I read the Bible, because there's good things in there. You need to know that because, and unfortunately many other tracks of various other religions, old ones which were destroyed and burned by our Christian forefathers, you know, talked about the same types of spiritualism. You know, if you believe in the spirit of God it can come to every man, you know, if you open your heart to God. And you have to be conscious of your environment and the balance of our life and it, to have harmony on this earth. Because you're not going to live (laughs) very long [02:57:00] if we destroy the earth, (laughs) you know, and it's ability to sustain people.

And why, you know, wipe out populations, you know, we've got any number of species that are on the very verge of extinction -- rhinos, tigers, you know, and if everybody got to go out with a gun we'd have no wild population here. My mother, from West Virginia, farm family in West Virginia once came out here to visit me with one sister and one sister-in-law, and I fed them elk and deer and they thought it was great, because this was 40 or 35 years ago when I was still hunting. And you know, I asked my mom how she liked it and she said, oh, she'd never had deer before. I

said, "Mom, you grew up on a farm in West Virginia," I said, "When I grew up all the land was farmed." There were no forests left back there, [02:58:00] they'd cut them all down. There were no wild animals back there.

You know, the only thing you found were rabbits and squirrels and groundhogs, which you could shoot and eat, you know, if you didn't raise it, you didn't eat, (laughter) you know. She said she'd never eaten it. Now of course, there's deer everywhere back there because all those farms have gone back to forest. Out here, you know, we were wiping out our game here. You know, we not only had killed off all the wolves and the grizzly bears, who were our co-predators, (laughs) competing for the same land and food supplies, you know and dangerous to us as we were to them, you know, imagine being out there with a single shot muzzle nosing rifle and facing a grizzly bear. Who do you think's going to win? Because it's bigger than you. (laughs) You know, they usually won. You know, read the old Tom Glass Mountain Man saga.

JUNGE: Hugh Glass, yeah, yeah.

ECKMAN: You know, almost killed [02:59:00] by a grizzly bear. You know, until after the Civil War when you had multi-shot firearms, people didn't have the advantage in a confrontation with wild animals. So they killed them all

off. They virtually wiped out the bears, they wiped out the wolves and then they were killing off any competitor for wild grazing. You know, there weren't very many wild horses left because they were wiping them all out, they'd just kill them. They killed off the antelope, they killed off the deer, they killed off the elk because it was competitors for grazing. You know, I remember when they were arguing about sheep, or they were arguing about the development of White Mountain area, the opening up for gas, natural gas exploration and they were talking about, in public meetings, the sustaining of the wild populations.

They figured that there were somewhere in Sweetwater County three thousand wild horses and [03:00:00] three thousand elk, which crossed out there in the desert. Well, they did cross out there in the desert, but why they ever thought there were three thousand of elk out there is beyond me. You know, you get maybe, I don't know, 50 to 100 permits, hunting permits and half of them don't get elk out there. But, and old John Hay, who used to be a banker in Rock Springs, he was, this was back in the late '80s and he was in his 80's then, he's now dead, he used to, you know, be one of the primary people with the Rock Springs Grazing Association. Now he stood up in the meeting, he says, "Back when I was young, back in the '30s and '40s we

used to graze ninety thousand sheep out there," and I got up after him and I said, "And what are we arguing about three thousand and three thousand wild horses for?"

(laughs) "You know, if you used to graze ninety thousand sheep out there, (laughs) what are three thousand horses and elk?" [03:01:00] you know, but they wanted those animals gone, because it's competition. You know, it takes, they figure, 25 acres of land to keep a cow alive a year.

JUNGE: Have you ever heard of "chaos theory"?

ECKMAN: Yes.

JUNGE: Do you know anything about it?

ECKMAN: Oh, somewhat. I'm science-oriented, too.

JUNGE: Yeah. I read it because even though I'm a layman, I can get just enough of it to be dangerous, but it's the idea that, you know, a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon can affect a tsunami in Japan. Everything's tied together, is the idea.

ECKMAN: Well, it's all interrelated.

JUNGE: It's all interrelated.

ECKMAN: You know, our climate with the El Niño in the South Pacific or Central Pacific, you know, it's all interrelated.

JUNGE: Oh yeah. I have a friend from Massachusetts, as a matter of fact, Boston, and he'd lived out here in Wyoming for a while and helped me with my computer and helped other people with their computer problems. We both had Macs and he's a Mac man, certified technical expert. Anyway, he involved himself [03:02:00] in a number of different issues during his life and one of the issues recently is the issue of the disappearance of the monarch butterfly. And he was going to march on, what's the name of that chemical? Monsanto, he was going to march --

ECKMAN: Monsanto, I was just going to say Monsanto. (laughs)

JUNGE: He was going to march on the headquarters in I guess it's St. Louis or Omaha, someplace in the Midwest and in protest, what they were doing, because what they're doing is they've develop a highbred seed that impervious to 2, 4D and 2, 4D is weed killer and a plant killer. It'll kill --

ECKMAN: Insecticide.

JUNGE: Yeah, well, it'll kill broad leaf plants. OK. And that's why they spray it on sagebrush, so the grass grows up. It's not a broad leaf plant. The sage dies, the grass comes up, more feed for the cattle and the sheep. So because they developed this highbred seed in the corn, the corn was impervious to, I mean it didn't have to worry about [03:03:00] this spray.

ECKMAN: Defertilizer and insecticide mixes.

JUNGE: Right. All the other plants would go. And among those plants were the habitat for Monarch butterflies, which is the milkweed.

ECKMAN: That's why they're disappearing.

JUNGE: Yeah. And we've had the lowest percentage of migrant Monarchs, then they go down to Mexico, the lowest acreage of Monarch butterflies ever, this year. I mean they're almost, it made front-page news, a little column, but it made front-page news on the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, was that Monarch is becoming extinct.

ECKMAN: You know what one of the greatest agricultural crises in this country now is? The death of honeybees. Why? They ship honeybees all over this country to farming areas to pollinate crops. Because without insects carrying pollen from flower to flower, you don't have pollination [03:04:00] taking place and the insecticide/fertilizer mixes that we're using now kills these things off.

JUNGE: What? An airport --

ECKMAN: So why are we shipping bees all over the country? Now they've got some virus and it's wiping them out and we're facing a real agricultural crisis because without pollination we don't get fruit to grow. (laughs)

JUNGE: And most of it's grown in California, in the Central Valley and the San Joaquin Valley and that's where the breadbasket is.

ECKMAN: We don't have fruit without insects pollinating. And we're creating --

JUNGE: OK, now you're the mayor and I'm a spray pilot and I just interviewed a spray pilot and he said, "This guy was complaining up in Sheridan about his honeybees being killed off by this insect spray, because we had to spray for mosquitoes up there," and he says, "First of all, the mosquitoes cause encephalitis and they're a nuisance to the city, so we're spraying these strains, we're doing a public service and this guy is claiming that they're, we're killing his honeybees. Why, we no more killed his honeybees than..."

ECKMAN: Oh, yes we did. Just like DDT used to [03:05:00] kill everything back in the '40s and '50s, it was developed back in the '40s. I'm not sure if the Germans developed it first in the '30s or not, but we were all using it. You know, it was great, killed off all the bugs, you know. But here, when I was mayor this came up. My brother's always been in science and he turned me on, many years ago, to *Science Magazine*, which I used to read every month.

JUNGE: Just like *Scientific American* or something?

ECKMAN: It was *Science*, just random articles about things going on, science-oriented in the world. About the world, our environment. And they did an article, this was back in the '80s, I was still reading it then. I just haven't got the time anymore. But (inaudible) insecticides and how it was being noticed that frogs were having mutations. You're having frogs born without legs or extra legs, (laughs) you know [03:06:00] and they figure it was because of the insects the frogs were eating and this is related to the insecticides that were being sprayed that were getting in the water supply, that were into the bugs, that were into then the food for frogs. And a lot of insecticides got taken off the market because of that. And you know, I read this back when I was, I'm pretty sure it's while I was mayor they published this. I immediately went down to our (laughs) Parks and Recreation manager, who's a personal friend of mine at the time, Roger [Mullendorf?] and showed him this article. And we checked into it, made sure that we were using one that wasn't one of these. You know, because you know, what does it do? You know, you spray it.

This is the water we use to drink, you know. You know, we do clean it, but we don't clean everything out of it. You still get traces of all kinds of things in it and fortunately we're at the top of the water pipeline. You

know, imagine the people downstream, what they get.

[03:07:00] You know, Wyoming is very lucky being the top of the continent here. Everything goes downstream from us, so at least we get a crack at the good stuff.

JUNGE: And the wind drives everything else to Nebraska.

ECKMAN: Yeah, everything else goes to Nebraska. (laughs) You know so anyway, so we looked at that and we examined what was being used and we changed. Said, "Look, we've got to be conscious of this. You know, let's find something that, you know, is better," and they came up with something at that time and it caused a mutation to the insect. They didn't grow legs. The larva. It was a biological mutation. And god knows what that could potentially do, getting in the food chain. But I don't know what they use now, but hopefully they're on the right track about it.

You want to kill the mosquitoes, but you don't want to kill everything else, [03:08:00] too, you know, you have to look at the long-term thing and look again, long-term, what we ingest gets in our body, which is not meant for any of these things and is this the cause of autism, cancers, god knows what else that we develop later in life. You know, do eating chemical preservatives in our food for 40 years or 50 years eventually give us cancer? You know.

JUNGE: Yeah. Well, like you say, I mean you have to balance things.

ECKMAN: You know, do you want the quality of life we have? Yes, of course we do. So we reach a balance. But you've got to be conscious of what you're doing. You know, I mean humans a physically animals, like everybody else and we're not designed to ingest the chemicals that we're constantly bombarded with -- food, air, everything, by the quality of life, the standards of life that we have.

JUNGE: That we're just now beginning to find out about.

ECKMAN: Yeah, it's only been in the last 60, 70 years. You know, you figure 60 or 70 [03:09:00] years ago, you go back before the Second World War, they didn't have any of this stuff. You know, food was grown and just grew, you know. You didn't have, most farms that raised food did not use fertilizer. Or they used natural (inaudible) fertilizer, you know, animal crap, you know, (laughs) basically, you know. You turned it back in. You know, or you know, for animal feed, you know what was one of the great foods for animals back years ago? The residue from beer and cheese. You know, what do you do with the stuff after you brew beer? What do you do with the byproducts of making cheese? You know, animal feed. It's used for animal feed. Still is. You know, but you didn't have these chemicals.

JUNGE: You didn't feed them concrete and chopped up paper.

ECKMAN: No. And you didn't feed them all the chemicals used to treat paper. You know, what used to go right into our water supply before the Clean Water Act. I mean I remember [03:10:00] a paper mill near where I grew up being shut down because it was just dumping all the sewer, all the acids and everything else used to treat, make paper, directly into the river.

JUNGE: Well, this is why Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*.

ECKMAN: Exactly. That was one of the most enlightening books I ever encountered as a kid. I had a great, as I said, great professors when I was in college. And one of mine, besides several of them who taught me to challenge what is. One of them said it best when he said, "Always question the obvious. Stop just going through life like a sleepwalker. Look around you. Look at what is and say, is this the way it should be? Is this the way it has to be? Can it be better?" not just the obviously bad things, but even the so-called good things we're doing. You know, the transformation in agriculture [03:11:00] was designed to feed the world. You know, to make it cheap, make food cheap for the American people. Make food cheap for the world's population. We export food. And so we are the breadbasket of not just America but the world out there.

And these advances in agriculture were designed to make that better. You know, corporate farming, that's what it is. Birdseye and the rest, you know, they feed us.

JUNGE: George, you need to go back into politics. I foresee this happening.

ECKMAN: Well, you know, can you beat your head against the wall how many times before you (laughs) finally get a dent. (laughs)

JUNGE: Yeah, but, yeah, you were beating your head against the wall for local issues, I'm thinking state and national issues. You'd be wonderful.

ECKMAN: If I were the emperor of America it would all be different. (laughs)

JUNGE: If I were the king of the forest -- (laughter) OK, I'm going to shut this, do you know how many hours we've been talking?

ECKMAN: No, not really, what?

JUNGE: Three hours and 11 minutes and 56 seconds.

ECKMAN: OK, I hope, I've had a good time. I hope you have.

JUNGE: I have. All right. [03:12:00]

END OF AUDIO FILE