

## Dr. LeRoy Moore Email Interview

April 2, 2014

**Dr. LeRoy Moore, founder of the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, worked with others to end production at the Rocky Flats nuclear bomb factory near Denver, then sought the best possible cleanup of the plant's highly contaminated site. He served on various oversight bodies related to Rocky Flats and for several years was a member of two committees of the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements. He seeks the implementation of Nuclear Guardianship at Rocky Flats. From 1980 until he retired in 1996, he taught courses on nonviolent social change at the University of Colorado.**

Q: How are you involved with Rocky Flats and Kristen Iversen?

A: I arrived in Denver in 1974 to teach at the University of Denver. I learned about Rocky Flats in 1978 and immediately became involved in efforts to end production there. I have been engaged with all aspects of the Rocky Flats issue since then, now more than 35 years. I have written and spoken about Rocky Flats extensively in this period and am one of the most knowledgeable of their critics. Kristen Iversen contacted me when she began work on her book. We met several times and I reviewed drafts of her book and corresponded with her constantly when she was writing it and since then. Two years ago I presented an award to her in Washington, DC, on behalf of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability.

Q: Our project is about the rights of people to be safe from hazardous materials and the responsibility of the United States government to protect the people. What should the government have done to protect the people of Rocky Flats?

A: The government should have been forthright in informing people in the Denver area about accidents and releases of toxins into the environment repeatedly over the years. Neither the federal government, the Rocky Flats contractor, nor the health department of the State of Colorado informed the public about dangers to the public health from Rocky Flats. The public learned of such dangers from independent scientists who had no affiliation with operations at

Rocky Flats or the pertinent government agencies. This story has been repeated over and over. The government has continued its failure to tell the public the full truth about operations and conditions at Rocky Flats. It has on occasion paid for citizen oversight bodies, but generally to use these bodies to win public favor rather than to know the full truth. This was true in the Superfund “cleanup” as well as in production years.

Q: Knowing that people were largely in the dark about Rocky Flats during its time of operation, can you contrast how they felt about it then and now? Are people afraid, angry, upset, or apathetic? We are trying to get a feel for how people felt about the hazardous materials stored in their areas then and now.

A: All the words you use to describe public attitudes toward Rocky Flats – afraid, angry, upset or apathetic – are appropriate descriptions of present-day feelings among the public. For every person who is apathetic and willing to accept things as they are, others are afraid (especially on public health) or angry. Kristen Iversen’s book has helped to keep the issue alive.

Q: The last clean-up efforts ended in 2006; do you think the government will take more responsibility and clean up the site more?

A: The DOE funded Rocky Flats Future Site Use Working Group (of which I was a member) spend a full year answering one question: What does the public want for the future with regard to the Rocky Flats site? The group recommended in June 2005 that the site be cleaned to average background level for radioactive material in the environment as soon as this was possible technologically and fiscally to do this in an environmentally responsible manner. This consensus recommendation was very quickly the most widely supported recommendation from the public about the cleanup. It was totally ignored and rejected by DOE, the EPA and the Colo. Dept. of Public Health and Environment. No effort was made to clean the site to the fullest extent

possible with existing technology. The agencies responsible for the cleanup knowingly left some quantity of plutonium in the environment on and off the site. Because of its toxicity and 23,110 year half-life, this means the Rocky Flats site will be an environmental hazard forever. Yet most of the site is now a wildlife refuge that is intended to be opened for public recreation. It would be wise to do a better cleanup, but this is not likely to happen. The best thing that can happen alternatively is to keep the refuge as open space that is closed to the public. The government has met its legal obligations and no more; the Rocky Flats experience reveals that the applicable laws do not well serve the public.

Q: Do you think the government did everything it could to protect the people both during production and during cleanup?

A: In answers to previous questions I have made it clear that the government, both federal and state, failed to protect the health of the local population in both the production and cleanup years.

Q: Do you know of any documented cancer rates or other health problems for those living near Rocky Flats.

A: Generally such studies have been avoided. There have never been any government studies of the actual health effects of Rocky Flats. The best work has been epidemiological, first by Carl Johnson, for a period the Director of the Jefferson County Health Dept., and Richard W. Clapp of Boston University. These two studies are documented and discussed in my “Democracy and Public Health at Rocky Flats,” available on line at

<http://www.rockyflatsnuclearguardianship.org/leroy-moores-blog/papers-by-leroy-moore-phd-2/democracy-and-public-health-at-rocky-flats-11-6-12/>