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WLBZ Radio, (April 01 1955) "Bangor Resident's Description of Atomic Bomb Test Near Las Vegas". *WLBZ Radio Station Records*. MS 608. Tape 6, part 2. Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine.

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University of Maine Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department

Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Bangor Resident's Description of Atomic Bomb Blast Test Near Las Vegas

Date: Spring, 1955

Recording number: Reel-to-reel Tape 6, part 2

Length of recording: 3:54

[transcript begins]

Announcer: [First 19 seconds is the noise of an explosion.] This was the sound of an atomic bomb, the sound of the latest explosion on an atomic device exploding over the yucca flats of Las Vegas, Nevada. Directly concerned with this particular atomic test was General Benjamin W. Chidlaw, Commander in Chief of the Continental Air Defense Command. At this time we take pleasure in presenting General Chidlaw.

Chidlaw: This in General Ben Chidlaw, the Commander in Chief of the Continental Air Defense System and the latest atomic device has just been exploded here near Las Vegas, Nevada. This was witnessed by more than 1,000 members of Civil Defense agencies and among them were more than 40 of the Civilian Administrative Supervisors who work in our Air Defense Filter Centers in many of the key cities of this county. These Civilian Administrative Supervisors were there as our guests, the guests of the Atomic Energy Commission and the guests of the Continental Air Defense Command because they have been working side by side with us in the Continental Air Defense System for many months. They have at last been face to face with the actual, with the devastating blast, which we are all laboring to prevent ever falling on any part of these United States or on the lands of any of its allies.

One of the people on our guest list is from your area, a neighbor of yours, a comrade in arms of ours, whose reaction as an eye witness I'm sure you'll want to hear.

McCarthy: This is Elizabeth McCarthy of the Bangor Air Defense Filter Center speaking to you from Las Vegas, Nevada, where I witnessed the latest explosion of an atomic device. My position was eight miles from the center of the target, but the power of this weapon, while burning, mangling, obliterating the target zone, reached out eight miles to me. First, the early dawn was broken by a bright flash of light. In a few seconds, the shock and heat waves struck me, pushing me as if by the hand of an unseen giant. A rumbling roar was next to tell of this power which had been set off. I looked at the faces of my fellow observers. Not one of them without an expression of awe. As I watched this blast, saw it become that big ball of fire, then a radioactive column of smoke and dust, it translated itself into a personal thing. I could not help wondering about what it could do to a city like the one I live in, what it might do to my family, friends, my home, if the enemy dropped such a bomb. For many months now, along with 400,000 other Americans, I have been a member of the Ground Observer Corps, a part of the warning

net of the Air Defense System. After seeing this atomic explosion, it seemed to me that if only one Ground Observer's report helped shoot down an enemy plane before its bomb dropped, it would justify the Ground Observer Corps' effort.

[transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

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