

# The Gatekeeper

DOE's media man holds key to public data drawer

As the U.S. Department of Energy's public information officer, Jim Boyer is the gate keeper of data and numbers.

Few others who stand on the north side of the cattle guard at the Nevada Test Site are willing and able to talk to anyone on the other side.

But by the morning of April 14, Boyer had counted the previous night's total arrests for media releases and was ready to take more counts over the weekend, when thousands more protesters were expected to be arrested.

Boyer remains undaunted by the arrest numbers and by the number of people who showed for the American Peace Test's "Reclaim the Test Site II."

It's just part of the job.

He has been counting arrests since anti-nuclear activists began demonstrating eight years ago.

But Boyer warns that the numbers do not indicate how many people have actually been arrested. Some activists are arrested more than once throughout the 10-day event.

Dressed in a military green hat, long pants, an oxford shirt, neck scarf and black leather gloves, Boyer cautions against the sun's heat.

"You don't see Arabs in the Sahara Desert walking around in T-shirts and cut-off shorts, do you?"

Boyer also is cautious to take the names and phone numbers of all media he encounters.

"I've been lied to too many times," he says. No media personnel are allowed to cross into the Nevada Test Site.

Boyer remembers six incidents when "reporters" have lied to him. When he called to verify their employment, he was told no such person worked for that newspaper.

It is caution also that requires the Department of Energy to hire about 100 extra security personnel during large protests like "Reclaim the Test Site II."

Boyer speaks with pride about the camouflage-clad officers standing on either side of the access road to the test site.

"They know how to use weapons," he says.

"They can run faster and longer," he says.

If he were a security officer, he says he would know "that the guy standing next to me can run a quarter mile just as fast as I can." Boyer adds that each security inspector or guard must undergo 16 weeks of special training.

Boyer denies that security guards have been anything but cooperative during the arrests, although many have been accused of handling protesters with unnecessary roughness.

"That is absolutely false," he says.

"I think we have been bending over backwards," he says, pointing to large plywood planks placed across the cattle guard to keep protesters from falling between the metal bars.

"Where in the world can you go and say 'OK, I'm here to break the law' and expect not to be arrested," he says.

Officers were more than tolerant, Boyer says, during a rally April 13, which finally ended around 7 a.m. the next morning. Several protesters who had spent the night in front of the cattle guard were arrested.

"If they don't move, we move them," Boyer says of those who refused to leave the road after a two-minute warning. "What do they expect?"

But security personnel do experience what Boyer calls a "wear-down."

Many of the more than 100 officers are former military officers or guards who are brought in from other nuclear sites, Boyer says. All work is contracted under the Department of Energy.

Most are separated from their families and work as many as 40 to 60 hours overtime during the week of protests, Boyer says.

They sometimes work seven days a week, almost 24 hours a day, he says.

Wes Fleetwood, a Nye County deputy sheriff, says he had put in 60 hours of overtime since he went on the job during the early part of the protest. He stays in temporary housing in Mercury, a temporary worker's town 4 1/2 miles into the site.

Fleetwood says he respects anyone's right to protest as long as they're not breaking the law.

But he questions the protesters' intentions.

"They were smoking dope out here last night," he says. The smell was so bad, he says, "it about knocked me over."

He also wonders about their work ethic.

"Half of them don't have homes," he says. "They should get a job and pay taxes. Then they'd have a right to be out here."

Although many of the people Fleetwood has arrested have been "real decent," he thinks their protests "would stand a better chance in Washington D.C."

Fleetwood adds that he'd rather be at home taking care of the yard or playing with his children.

"But as long as they're here," he says, nodding his head in the direction of Peace City, "I'll be here."

"There's definitely a fatigue factor here," he says. "They're forced to rearrange their schedules for these people. How would you like that?"

Boyer says he doesn't have any idea how much money it costs the federal government to hire additional security, but he does admonish that at least 100 security officers are paid \$125 a day plus overtime.

"You just figure that out for yourself," he says. "I don't know anything about costs."

Arithmetic shows the government paid over \$1.25 million in law enforcement salaries for the 10-day event, not including housing and food costs.

Officers will do whatever they have to do in order to move protesters from the access road more than 8,000 workers use to get into the site, Boyer says.

It's not necessarily that security wants to manhandle protesters, Boyer says. It's simply that they're doing their job.

Although Boyer says the spontaneous, almost riotous actions do not cause any anxiety among security, the lack of organization among protesters surprises him.

Protests were better organized when they first began, Boyer says.

Groups, which were church sponsored, alerted the DOE when they planned to arrive and walked four to six abreast on one side of the road to Mercury. Permits were issued to individuals by the DOE in order for them to make that 4 1/2-mile walk without being cited for trespassing.

These protesters sometimes stood at the entrance to Mercury for an hour or two listening to speakers or talking among themselves, Boyer says. Then they would simply turn around and walk back in the same fashion they came. No minors were allowed on the walk.

But protests have changed, Boyer says.

"These people aren't as dedicated," he says. "Those people really meant what they say they felt."

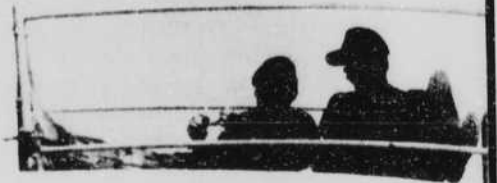
The crowd is made of a different kind of protester now. "It's a different element," he says.

"I doubt that 10 percent care or don't care," he says. "It's all just one great big party for them."

The number of children wandering among the crowd troubles him, he says.

"Now I see children playing in the street while their parents are off somewhere else," he says. "That could cause a lot of legal problems for us if any of those children happened to be on the road when a truck or car comes through."

So up went the wall of hundreds of security guards to stop protesters at the cattle guard.



YOU ARE NOW ENTERING  
NEVADA TEST SITE  
NO TRESPASSING

BY ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

"It's for their own protection," he says, "and for ours." Boyer shakes his head.

"It seems more like a picnic to me," he says. "You see them dancing and singing. That's not a protest to me."

Now when Boyer stands atop that hill, he says he "counts anything that could walk."

Boyer says he also is concerned with the number of young people he sees at the protest.

"They think 'Hey, this is fun. Let's go get arrested,'" he says. "What they don't realize is that they are creating an arrest record that could haunt them 20 years from now."

Boyer says he also doesn't understand what the protest actually accomplishes.

"What they don't remember is that we're not policy makers," he says. "The site is run by the Department of Energy, which takes orders from the federal government. We can't do a damned thing until the big boys tell us to."

But Boyer is quick to add that he's not trying to tell protesters what to do.

"This is not a policy office," he says. "But everyone has the right to speak his opinion in this country."

-- Diana Johnson

Daily Nebraskan

## 105 protesters arrested, 4 hurt at nuclear test site

Friday, April 14, 1989

INDIAN SPRINGS, Nev. -- A colorful, musical "Mardi Gras" parade turned violent last night when four protesters were injured in confrontations with U.S. Department of Energy special security forces at the Nevada Test Site.

Several others were arrested when they refused to leave the access road leading to the entrance today, blocking the way for workers shortly after dawn.

Jim Boyer, DOE public information officer, said 105 people had been arrested Thursday night

and into Friday morning. The arrests included one citation for assault on a police officer, 39 for trespassing on federal property and 65 for public nuisance or obstructing traffic.

Although Boyer denies any unnecessary roughness occurred, at least two protesters Stephen Luccini and Norm Deward, showed visible injuries such as scratches on their backs and bruises on their bodies.

Torch lights burned into night sky as fingers softly tapped the

skins of bongo drums and slightly uplifted voices accompanied footsteps of hundreds along a well-traveled dusty path toward the Nevada Test Site.

"Masks of procession" covered the faces of some as they moved eerily through the darkness in the stark white masks marked with bright colors. Others walked arm in arm, hand in hand, through colorfully painted, graffiti-marked tunnels beneath U.S. Highway 95.

The procession brought the lively group inches away from the

faces of 80-90 DOE security guards, lined shoulder to shoulder on the north side of the gate. About 25 police cars and vans lined either side the blacktop access road.

The protesters' dancing and chanting went on for about an hour and a half as some willfully crossed the cattle guard and allowed guards to place plastic flex-cuffs on their wrists.

But disgruntlement broke out when some protesters allegedly were provoked by undercover officers, and others were dragged

bareback across the asphalt.

The group then crowded together on the road for about an hour to discuss what the group's next action would be. Many decided to spend the night on the road hoping their action would force the release of fellow protesters.

At 7 a.m., Boyer said, protesters were given a two-minute warning to leave the road to allow workers into the site.

Those who did not move were arrested as public nuisances for obstructing traffic, Boyer said.