

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

DON PAULSEN

AUGUST 25, 2005

WALL, SOUTH DAKOTA

INTERVIEWED BY STEVEN BUCKLIN

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MINUTEMAN MISSILE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

Don Paulsen is a local landowner, born in New Underwood, SD on August 20, 1930. Mr. Paulsen was the office manager of West River Electric Association, Inc. for fourteen years, beginning in 1953. Around 1967, Mr. Paulsen became the general manager of the new company, Golden West Telephone Cooperative, which was spun off from the West River Electric Association. Mr. Paulsen provides his insight and views on the Minuteman Missile system in South Dakota as well as working with other companies during this project.

EDITORIAL NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. After a draft of this transcript was made, the park provided a copy to the interviewee and requested that he or she return the transcript with any corrections or modifications that he or she wished to be included in the final transcript. The interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff-member, also reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. The corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer have been incorporated into this final transcript. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the Chicago Manual of Style, 14th edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

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INFORMANT: DON PAULSEN
INTERVIEWER: STEVEN BUCKLIN. PHD
DATE: AUGUST 25, 2005

SUBJECTS SPOKEN ABOUT IN INTERVIEW:

Wall Community Center, Wall, South Dakota, Steven Bucklin, Don Paulsen, Minuteman Missile National Historical Site, New Underwood, Rapid City, West River Electric, REA, Quinn, Korean War, Soviet Union, Draft, Air Force, Ranchers, USDA, Crop Planes, Fort Lewis, WA, Fort Ord, CA, Fort Benjamin Harrison, IN, Camp Yokohoma, Japan, Far East Command, Golden West Telephone Company, RTA, US West, Northwestern Bell, Titan, Wicksville, Telephony, New Jersey, AT&T, Civilians, Ellsworth, Sturgis, Hermosa, FCC, North Dakota, Sid Soma, NTCA, Telephone Cooperatives, Electrical, Electricity, Cables, Wires, South Dakota School of Mines, Watertown, MAOLA, Wall Drug, West River Electric Association, Inc., National Park Service, Engineer, Golden West Telecommunications, George Strandell, Public Utility Commission of South Dakota, LCF, Controversy, Launch Facility, Meade, Boeing, Resistance, Back up Cables, Patriotism, Reagan, Gorbochav, Black Blaster

THE INTERVIEW:

[Beginning of side one, tape one.]
[Interview begins.]

STEVE BUCKLIN: [Recording begins.] This is Steve Bucklin and I am conducting an interview with Don Paulsen at the Wall community center, Wall, South Dakota, it's the 25th of August 2005, this is part of the project for the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. Don you are Native of South Dakota?

DON PAULSEN: Yes, I am and in fact born and raised here...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] And where were you born?

PAULSEN: New Underwood, South Dakota...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] New Underwood, South Dakota, that's between Wall and Rapid City?...

PAULSEN: That's right.

BUCKLIN: And when were you born?

PAULSEN: August 20, 1930.

BUCKLIN: Ok, you're just a young one [Laughs.]

PAULSEN: Well, didn't want that to come out [Laughs]

BUCKLIN: Can you tell us about your education?

PAULSEN: Well I went to High school in New Underwood and then went to business college in Rapid City and there after I got employment with West River Electric Association, REA, which is locally based here in Wall. My folks moved to a ranch north of Quinn which is close by and so consequently when I came back to work at West River Electric here, the Korean War came along and of course there we had draft status yet and some of the guys that were working there at West River were starting to be called up. I was in the accounting department there and so seeing how some of my buddies were going, I thought I will go up and see when my draft call is. So I went to Rapid City and talked to the lady in charge up there and she said you will be coming up in thirty days. So I thought well why don't you just move me up, you know and so I did, I went to Ft. Lewis Washington, processed there and they sent us down to Ft. Ord, California for basic training. I was put in a six week basic course and after completing that, I was transferred to Ft. Benjamin Harrison in Indiana.

BUCKLIN: Yes ok.

PAULSEN: And so that was a nice assignment. I spent about sixteen weeks at finance school and when we finished we could select our future assignments based on how we finished in our class of fifty. I finished twelfth and there were opportunities to go to Europe in a lot of cases, but two of the other guys decided that we should all hang together on this thing and go to FECOM, that's the Far East Command, for the U. S. Army.

I was sent to Japan, to Camp Drake. Processed through there and they sent me down to Camp Yokohama. Where was we had a small base right in the middle of the city and was assigned to the 8141st Finance Unit which was the head office for finance in the Far East Command. I worked in the commercial accounts contracting section where we audited partial payments, on contracts. We had ten thousand contracts on file and worked in a courthouse style building that the Japanese had used for a shipping office. It was down near the harbor. And when troops come in from stateside had about twelve cashier's stations they'd go out and take the currency and give them script [that was the Army's medium of exchange in the Far East Command].

And of course when the troops went back to the states they would exchange it back for currency. Worked in that section, the contracting, it was very interesting work. It was a large finance installation. They had payroll they'd exchange all the cash there and handled all the script for Japan and mostly in the Far East Command. So I was there, I guess probably about sixteen months.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] So 1951 to...

PAULSEN: Yeah '51 and '52 and would come back and then my completion of duty was on January 15 of 1953...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Ok, I am gonna stop here and do equipment check here and make sure we're recording and then we'll get right back...

PAULSEN: Yeah... [Recording stops]

BUCKLIN: [Recording Begins] We are indeed recording...

PAULSEN: We were working on it.

BUCKLIN: Yes, so you returned from Korea and tell me what you did then?

PAULSEN: Ok so after getting back here I went back to West River Electric in capacity of office manager and worked there for about fourteen years before we started the Golden West Telephone Cooperative [Inaudible] and that was a REA type project as West River Electric was. [Inaudible] That was RTA Rural Telephone Association, [Inaudible] so that particular telephone company, Golden West, was a number was about fourteen or fifteen in the state now. And the fact the density of the farms were quite spread out here, it was a joint operation by the Rural Electrician Administration at D.C. part of Agriculture, to run it with West River to establish feasibility and that's what we did. And we ran Golden West through West River Electric Association for probably about fourteen years. At that time the growth had got large enough so we split off and when we did that I took the general manager's job at Golden West. And at that time we only had about five or six exchanges, towns like this, Wall and New Underwood to the east and the rural areas that were certified by the Public Utilities Commission to us. Over the years it continued to grow and we were involved, as I indicated, with the Titan missile program because we had one of the sites in our service area certified by the commission. And so consequently we worked with Northwestern Bell that existed in those days and what we did was install a full blown switch board in the Titan site, Titan I site at Wicksville or in that neighborhood of Wicksville.

BUCKLIN: And Wicksville is where and in relationship to Wall?

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Wicksville from Wall is probably just about thirty miles directly west of here and a little bit north on the interstate.

BUCKLIN: And this would have been '69 what?

PAULSEN: This would go back to about 1960.

BUCKLIN: Ok.

PAULSEN: Titan I was a liquid propellant fueled type of a missile and there was three stations there and they were missile that had to come up on a platform and then they would, of course, fire them or energize them from those points. And the underground complex at the site was amazing, they had a full kitchen in there, we put in a full blown toll switch board type of an installation and we had two men that alternated there seven days a week...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Civilians.

PAULSEN: Yeah.

BUCKLIN: Hm.

PAULSEN: And they monitored the switch board which went back to Ellsworth and as the other sites did the same thing, Sturgis and Hermosa...

Hermosa's south there and there's Sturgis north of Rapid in Ellsworth. But any how that was one of our first military installations that we helped serve. Thereafter over the years we continued to grow and the cooperative as far as telephony we had open wire lines and used high frequency aerial carrier to add circuits over a physical pair; we expanded into six or seven lines by frequency status...

Ok, and that particular face of the operation lasted until we came along with buried cable, and there was a lot of progress being made, Rural Electrician Administration in Washington had a good engineering department, high tech stuff. And there was a lot of progress being made in telephony through AT and T...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Can you explain that term, telephony?

PAULSEN: Telephony is just a composite of all the communication systems. Maybe you have a voice line, but now you have computer technology. It's all tied together and we use the term of telephony.

BUCKLIN: Ok.

PAULSEN: In fact there is a magazine called telephony which was an industry type publication. What we in the advance of electronics would take a cable like a twenty five pair buried cable, we would plow it in, with two large D9 caterpillars, pulling this plow.

PAULSEN: We plowed thousands of miles because we covered a large area. By doing that and using the high frequency carrier imposed over it, we were successful

because we had environmental control over that pair. We had used similar electronics on open wire, which was exposed to frost and ice and that was a bad situation because when you imposed a carrier on it you have so much added resistance in the two wires and once it loaded up with ice the resistance increased and you could lose the circuit.

BUCKLIN: Now was that the case at the Titan site?

PAULSEN: No. The Titan site all buried cable...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] It was buried cable.

PAULSEN: At that, it was a large cable and it was trenched...Where we used the plow and that was done according to Air Force specifications. But that site lasted and was very serviceable for the Air Force, we had good relations with Northwestern Bell we worked closely with their techs and it went along fine until it become an outdated facility.

BUCKLIN: I've got a question just out of curiosity and it's off the subject but when did telephone service come to rural South Dakotans like ranchers here in west river?

PAULSEN: Ok, actually we started the original Golden West Telephone Company not cooperative, the company was started by a group of farmers, Inglebert Fauske...

BUCKLIN: OH sure I heard the name. [Inaudible speech]

PAULSEN: I am sure you do...A very good friend of mine, he was president of the board...And actually he had the telephone system which went back to his father which is right down here, six miles from Quinn...They started the country line that were familiar with that you know, getting a few ash poles out of the creek and putting line on and sometimes on a fence post. His father was a good successful rancher but he spent a lot of time getting the whole neighborhood connected so they could communicate as they did in those days.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] The Phone system?

PAULSEN: Yes, that was Inglebert's father and he was driving along and happened to run into a back of a hay rack or something with his service truck and set on fire and he couldn't get out, but that was a tragedy, but Inglebert kept the idea alive and he brought it back. And he watched it closely, he spent many times flying to Washington in the old crop planes, they had back there and that was in the late '50s and anyhow he pushed for the Rural Electrician Administration to be expanded to a rural telephone section which it did, and eventually we

were on the first floor of the USDA Department of Agriculture building, it was a rural electric installation there. As far as all the administration engineering what they had, upper level was telephony, telephone.

So Inglebert finally got down and of course they had to, they argued, you know there was a lot of private company's in the United States. People were stock holders they looked down upon many coming in with a government backed financed type of a system.

BUCKLIN: Kind of a profit type opportunity or?

PAULSEN: Yes, in competitions and of course they said that we would skim the cream from 'em or something like that by modernization and using tax money to finance it, was something they didn't approve of. So there was a lot of battles, there was a lot of debate in the senate, in the house, and which I happen to come by and still have in my files yet is really interesting to go back and review the arguments. But eventually it did happen and the rural development program was started, similar to what they did with the rural electrics. It started out with two percent interest. The notes on it were actually I think thirty-five year notes so the amount of requirements debt service and you didn't start paying principal back until the five year period, but anyhow that's the start of it.

BUCKLIN: Ok.

PAULSEN: Inglebert Fauske did just an amazing job, there were others on the board here of the local area that were very good people too, on it, but uh...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Senator Francis Case, involved in this?

PAULSEN: Yes, he was, because Inglebert Fauske went to South Dakota State College, and he knew most of the guys and of course Francis Case was in there then at that time. So Inglebert was very familiar with them which helped a lot but he was the key to getting the things going in the rural area. But over the years then it expanded, and it did it across the whole fifty-...forty-eight states actually, so consequently Golden West grew. The Minuteman project came along that was one thing that we participated in which we'll probably talk about and its been a very successful operation, and we have spread across the state. We have national boards like one of the things that the rural electrics have and then rural telephone has, is a national office in Washington D.C. theirs is NRECA and ours is NTCA, National Telephone Cooperative Association. By having the expertise of these people we've hired and then the people that were in the actual Department of Agriculture electric and telephone there was a good close hand and glove relationship there and we moved forward and the progress was enormous, the benefits to the rural areas turned around and a lot of money actually was created through the other business that came

about from those and uh...

BUCKLIN: [Inaudible speech] enterprises.

PAULSEN: That's right, peripheral and even small towns that got medical facilities, everything had just grew and grew on it and West River Electric here serves around Rapid City and Golden West is state wide. And of course then were a partner in the National defense, That we were glad to participate in.

BUCKLIN: I'm curious, now what was your position in Golden West in 1961 and '62?

PAULSEN: At that time manager of West River Electric was Sid Soma, who later went to North Dakota and to another rural electric in Bismarck, but we were the two joint employees. We did hire techs, they were full time Golden West, and I was office manager of both of them and that went along until 1964. In 1964, Sid had then taken the job of Capital Electric REA in Bismarck, North Dakota. He left and at that time it was decided by the electric board maybe the telephone and electric should separate because the telephone was growing and I think it was a good idea. So we had to run that, of course, through the USDA on both sides electric and telephone programs and it was approved. So we had to move out of the building and we moved just next door here to an old bank building...

And I was a young neophyte manager that they wanted...So I took the job, sometime with a little hesitation because the electric was well founded but this was an opportunity and Inglebert was a pretty good sales person...

He said "Don, you'll be glad you're gonna make the change", and he was right. I enjoyed everyday of it since then. And then of course we worked close, we had a lot of good friends with Northwestern Bell. And then we had thirteen telephone cooperatives in the state through state association and our national NTCA association, there was meetings and annual meetings here, state meetings, we had all kinds of expertise come in and of course what you did you had a consultant in the engineering group. One of the primary and very excellent one was Martin and Associates of Mitchell, and of course the other one that we used was Strandell Engineering, Byron Strandell is a Mines graduate, and he was in Watertown.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] That's would be South Dakota School of Mines and Technology?

PAULSEN: Yes. He did a lot of electric line work and of course he had his own office in Watertown. Eventually he came out here and he expanded telephone into the business and I interviewed him here across the street in Wall Drug. While we were drinking a nickel coffee. [Laughs.]

We come to an agreement and I went before the board and brought him and he became our engineer then. And of course over the years all through all exchanges we acquired from Bell and that is another story but just to add it in, the current manager of Golden West Telecommunications or Golden West Company as they call it now, is George Strandell...

BUCKLIN: From the engineering firm?

PAULSEN: Yes, he is the son of Byron and George worked out here. He had staked line, he had worked as a project engineer to go with the cable crews as was required. And we had REA field engineers come in and do sporadic checks to.

BUCKLIN: So about how long did you work for Golden West then?

PAULSEN: I started in '64 and retired in October first of '91, so if it was...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Twenty seven years.

PAULSEN: And that was at full time. Before then I worked part time with Sid Soma. So I had about a total of forty-one years where I had my finger on something with Golden West...

BUCKLIN: Well I would like to talk about having your involvement in the Minuteman missile project?

PAULSEN: Ok.

BUCKLIN: How were you brought into that?

PAULSEN: Ok, we have certified service areas by the public utilities commission of South Dakota and we guard those very carefully because we want the control, and to provide all the communications in our service areas. And having a good relationship with US West at that time [Inaudible speech.] And was the fact that we wanted to furnish all the services that fell into our certified area by the public utilities commission. And that's how we worked with the Wicksville Titan site and it worked with the Minuteman sites because they were spread out over the West River area and consequently we plowed in cable, we met with the Air Force officials and then we corroborated with Northwestern Bell. Went to all the meetings, the type of cable they needed and what we were going to do, the hardened system was put in by the Air Force themselves which feed right back to the control centers in Ellsworth and that for a large case that was a lot of backhoe work, that went down sixty inches, and those were trenches In fact some of farmer's cattle would get down into those trenches [Laughs] once in awhile. Caused a little consternation there, I'll tell you...

BUCKLIN: Yeah, I'm sure.

PAULSEN: And that's how it started but when they first came out they started locating the sites, and there were some problems. The farmers and ranchers all being good citizens, of course, they thought the program was a great thing for our national defense, but there were cases where they felt that they would have to have the site moved just a little bit and that was quite difficult to have that done and I could understand that with the Air Force and all the configurations but uh...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] what was one of the problems with the site location?

PAULSEN: Well I think when they plotted it, when they plotted the missiles and in each group, you have a launch control facility serving ten of the launch facilities or missile sites around those were programmed out over this West River area and it was done probably, you know in Washington or wherever they would do that and they hated to see a lot, once you start changing for this location, then somebody else said well he has it, I would like to have you do this and once we have a full plan, they would move it maybe across the road or something aside the launch site., but that was about it.

BUCKLIN: So there was a sense the plan was done the Pentagon didn't want to have to negotiate with each individual...

PAULSEN: No It's a high tech thing, I think at time they felt it was a critical thing to complete, based on national defense and our relationship with the Soviet Union at that time and so that was the reason for that but when they put in their hardened system but what we did, we provided a buried cable which we plowed, in which was allowed, we plowed it in close to about forty-two inch as we could.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Right on top of the hardened?...

PAULSEN: Negative, we had plowed that on a in a separate easement that we obtained from the land owner...

BUCKLIN: So it wasn't necessarily parallel to the hardened...

PAULSEN: That is correct, yeah in fact we crossed them at times and we crossed it, that was an engineering situation that was done according to their specifications. So much separation, down like say probably sixty inches we plowed them about forty-two.

BUCKLIN: I wanna make sure I understand something Don, there was a no competitive bid for your service because the PUC had designated your company...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Right.

BUCKLIN: Serving this area...

PAULSEN: That's correct.

BUCKLIN: So you assumed to get the job...they at first came to you and...

PAULSEN: That is correct and we worked with the Bell system hand and glove and over the years that I was manager we had excellent relationships and still guys that are retired in Arizona calling me and everything, so but in the earlier days just to just to touch on that, the early days when the USDA started the rural telephone program there was some opposition by AT&T who owned the Bell companies. It didn't last that long because eventually found out that by developing the rural areas and increases the total volumes they made more money. And it was a good deal for them and they recognized it, so that's how. But we plowed in all the buried cables.

BUCKLIN: And now that cable is going to be providing what service to the...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] It would go to the launch control facility and it provided at least three circuits, they had multiple circuits in their large cable back to do their operations, but we provided three circuit to each LCF, one down in the capsule and then one up by the day center and then the third one probably in their business office there, and those went direct back to Ellsworth and of course, that was the only communications we provided them at that time that was a one party service, and for each site it was maintained at twenty-four hours a day, if anything happened that had to be up to. But really it was support type of thing to the personnel is what we were doing for them, so that was about the size of it on the Minuteman as far as we concerned.

BUCKLIN: So who negotiated with the land owners, would it be Golden West, was it the Air Force?

PAULSEN: The hard cable was negotiated with the Air Force along with the site with the land owners. And that went on for some times and they had there was controversy and even some attorneys got involved in it you know and tried to help their clients, the land owners in our particular system we always got our own right away, and we had run into some and in one instance of going from this Wicksville central office where we went north to Enning up into the north area.

We came to one land owner that was up there and the gravel road was running north and south, his house was on just across on one side of this

gravel probably back from the center of the road, fifty, hundred yards maybe more. But on the other side over here was a launch facility, a missile and they had the blast perimeter out and I'm not certain of that but I think the blast perimeter come out at least fifteen hundred feet. He had to move his house. [Laughs]

Well that wasn't about to happen. And I knew this young fella quite well too, for other reasons, and I went out to get an easement for our cable that was going north to all the other complexes, and he said well I ask the Boeing company that was out there doing some work and the military, but the representative of Boeing went out and he thought they will not you know pay for a new house you can't do that, he's gotta move it. He said well you're not getting any easement from me, nothing. So that was it, so I went up to see him, I went in, happened to be there about lunch time, and they said come in and sit down, and I talked to the gentleman and he sat there, he had to get back to the hay field and I could see things weren't going well and so finally while we sat there, I was talking to his wife a little bit, he got up, I thought he just went out doors and he didn't come back in. and so he was out in the hay fields, so I went up and he was working on the hay baler, and I talked to him again, well Don, he said if you want to go to the Boeing office in Rapid City and get this thing straightened out for me, he said I'll sign your easement. Well, I told him, if it doesn't work we will plow in the road ditch, which we don't like to do, and then we will go to Meade County and we will get an easement to do that. And he says well you have no right to do that. Anyhow I said well that's the way it, so I said I will go up there and I will talk to the Boeing company and I did. And they said no, this is the way it going to be, we can not do that with one person. So I then went to Meade and we were paying incidentally a dollar a rod for right away on this all this cable we were putting in to support the missile program, and I told him that it would be two miles which come out to about six hundred and some dollars. I told him, you know a young person is struggling in Ag could use it, but uh...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] yeah back in '61, '62...

PAULSEN: Yes.

BUCKLIN: That's a lot of money.

PAULSEN: It was dry and they didn't have much hay and the situation, he had a couple of little kids, I thought maybe they could use the money. But anyhow then I got a hold of Meade county road superintendent and it was staked out and then about just before the plow came, why the land owner come back and said I think probably its alright. I was glad to see that. But that was just one of the instances but basically...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] and that was one of the Minuteman or

that was Titan?

PAULSEN: Minuteman.

BUCKLIN: Minuteman, ok. Wanted to make sure of that.

PAULSEN: Yeah yeah, basically all the land owners were cooperative. They understand missile defense and so...

BUCKLIN: So the back blast we're talking about was for that concrete cover that comes off the silo is it that the issue was gonna head at his house or?

PAULSEN: No the issue was the missile would be sitting over here, and if they fired that missile the blast would go out fifteen hundred feet...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Were talking about the actual blast of the rocket?

PAULSEN: the actual blast yeah, and it, of course if it went off, we got you know...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] [Laughs] All sorts of problems

PAULSEN: [Laughs] but anyhow he used that and that ok I, I admired him for and enjoyed working for him but that was it. So we said you gotta just take this house, Boeing says, and you set it over about another, I think sixteenth of a mile or something like that and he says no I am not moving this house.

BUCKLIN: And he never did move the house.

PAULSEN: Never moved the house but eventually he did sell out, and then he went another direction, but anyhow that was the only thing that I could of think of where we had any problems we had a lot of calls when the operations were going there after all of the installations were done, we were up and alive. Some of the missile sites which sat just in a person pasture and it had just about block or less of gravel road coming off of the county road in, and they had a gate here, and of course this thing is isolated out here...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Sort of like how D-nine is set up.

PAULSEN: Yeah if this gate is left open their cattle would get out we've got a lot of heat on that because were involved someone actually it was the Air Force and the guys come in they're from all over the country young fellows, never been around a ranch or a farm. They left it out [Laughs] and the cattle get out and you know how these ranchers feel about that...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] There not happy. [Laughs.]

PAULSEN: No, not happy [Laughs.]

PAULSEN: But anyhow that in fact I have my youngest brother lives out here north of Quinn and I think his site was D-ten or something like that and...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] So you had a family member directly affected...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Yeah, and he said that happened so many times in cattle he's go talk to the guys and he said they be patrolling or something out there and he said their carrying there carbines you know. They got this mad rancher, you know [Laughs.]. But anyhow over all 99% successful, what a program it was and...

BUCKLIN: How many miles of cable would you have laid...

PAULSEN: I think...

BUCKLIN: You suppose...

PAULSEN: The support cable from for the Minuteman runs right probably just under three hundred miles ...

BUCKLIN: This was an expensive project.

PAULSEN: Oh yes, ran into a lot of money but of course the whole effort cost a lot of money but it paid off too...

BUCKLIN: You wanna elaborate on that a little bit?

PAULSEN: Well, I think at that time with our national defense and looking at who we may have a problem, the Soviet Union or whoever it was and I guess they were the principle ones at the time. I think in the attitude of all the people that had sites on their land or anything to do with it, or cable just crossing their land cause when they trenched across your property to go over a neighbors or at the missile site. And there coming from the launch facility they back hoed, they had maybe calves or something falls into ... this thing is deep you know it's that wide and they laid that down in there...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] By that wide you're indicating three feet, two and half feet...

PAULSEN: It could, I would say the bucket that thing probably a two, two and half, and they laid splices down there, they had large splices everything had to lay out levelly and all everything but over all the people supported it. And really you

know in our area but most generally they supported it, they talked about it when it was all done they were interested in it. And of course now the National Park Service had done a wonderful thing in on D-one. Down there, but now I think West River people went along with it...

BUCKLIN: Patriotism comes...

PAULSEN: I think that's it and you know a lot of them had been in the service, understood the situation, and it's a national defense and the information being fed the missile program that was in a fact Russia had Sputnik up in the air were ahead of us. If you look back into history and even going on the website and reading a lot of it here that was one of the things that really energized us...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Sputnik.

PAULSEN: Yes.

BUCKLIN: Absolutely.

PAULSEN: I can remember when we were living in Wall here and when they first got the Sputnik up you'd go out at night, you lay there and you'd see that thing going over ...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] I can remember that to.

PAULSEN: Technology is amazing and it was a wonderful experience. The Titan program was, of course, phased out the Titan I that were actually and that was an interesting the two guys we had working there just loved to go there, they a wonderful big kitchen they got to know the cooks well, made wonderful chocolate cake up there. [Laughs] they have there own deep well but there's there was three locations and then they had tunnels running out and then the three missiles and of course they had to raise 'em up. But anyhow...

BUCKLIN: Very vulnerable system from another....

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Vulnerable...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Perspective step...

PAULSEN: Step in the right direction and of course then the Titan II came at different locations and Titan III, I think they had, just like the Minuteman now I and those had been modernized and of course they are still installed in certain areas and...

BUCKLIN: Minuteman IIIs are yes still active.

PAULSEN: Yeah.

BUCKLIN: I wanna ask a couple of questions back on cables, when your maintenance teams had to go out were they accompanied by security police by the cops from the Air Force or?

PAULSEN: No what we did as soon as we had a call or something like that, we just called the control center if you'd call it at Ellsworth and advise them were sending out a maintenance vehicle to D-one. Approximate arrival time is such and such and the guys at the gate knew that there was a service truck at that time. But you just didn't drive up to that place, no way. Yeah and then, the one circuit which went down into the capsule and we've had one of our service guys whose retired here Pete Blom has told me once and I guess it happened a couple times he would be down in the capsule to work on that particular circuit and then if they got a call you might say and then an alert that actually could be the real thing you know or just a test or a run, practice run, you didn't know. So if he was working he went to the wall and stood there and faced the wall until that emergency was over.

BUCKLIN: Really?

PAULSEN: Yeah.

BUCKLIN: I gotta check our tape here make sure were still going, yep good.

PAULSEN: But with this cooperation all around I think when it comes to the defense of the country you really see people come together. And sure they had their differences but I think the West River ranchers and then the small town's people and everything really supported it.

BUCKLIN: So well let's follow up on that a little bit, you're aware of the Minuteman Area Land Owners Association?

PAULSEN: Yes.

BUCKLIN: What was the purpose of MALA, what did they seek to accomplish?

PAULSEN: I think in most cases the first thing they had attorneys, one of things when they first came out you know if you have some land there gonna put this on it there's always the dollar sign a little bit there and not that they wanted to get rich or anything on it now, because they had on their land, would that effect the future sale, if they wanna sell it and so forth, so all those things come and they had attorneys working on it who brought all these things up, possibilities. So they formed the association to address it and I think that it probably was not a bad idea because a lot of things clarifications came out of that and there was a couple of cases where they moved a missile site, maybe across the road.

In fact one out here I think south and west of Wall was moved and I one of the others I don't know but that association served a purpose and then the amount of money that the Air Force would pay I think if I'm correct it was about six hundred dollars per location to have that in your pasture or something.

BUCKLIN: Was there a sense among your rancher friends, maybe your brother in particular that this there was something more than just the issue of them putting them in but were they aware that some day they would have to take them out. [Laughs.]

PAULSEN: I would I think, I had never attended one of those meetings. I didn't want to get involved in it. I think that is the point to probably was discussed because my land is worth you know out here fifty, sixty dollars a acre at that time and if I sell it or got this missile site on it, gee you know scared all this, its got a missile on it. Maybe could not sell and it would be decrease of value on it. I don't know. But that's about all I knew about that.

BUCKLIN: Now your brothers a launch facility on his property.

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Yeah...

BUCKLIN: Is that correct.

PAULSEN: It was a missile.

BUCKLIN: What's happened to that now? Did he buy it back from the Air Force.

PAULSEN: Yes, I think he bought it back and I don't know the price of it, there was no gain or anything or really in it if I remember right they had this site and they offered six hundred dollars or something for it and I think that was increased you know later and the final amount that they did pay for it was not really exorbitant cause there was a lot of cooperation between the land owner and defense department.

BUCKLIN: Now I know you may not know the answer to this but in the case of your brother did the Air Force take off the fence that the surrounded the launch facility and did it clear up all the concrete work and can he use the land now.

PAULSEN: I think that when they left that they took the, did what they had to with the missile and they did some work there had is a lot of gravel around and everything, ok and then they had the chain link fence there, as far as I know and I believe it and I have never been over there, but I believe they had left the chain link fence. And they could do what they want to with it that had value they felt. And there's a rise in there which came up off of the surface of the underground where the missile was, was that gravel and the farmers can use

that but that's where but I think the fence is there yet and if they left it...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] So the farmer just forgot to take it down, if he wants to plow the field or were [inaudible speech]...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] I think he could, I don't know if for cultivation, if that would be a good idea and it maybe be a little more difficult. And I don't know if they even imploded the whole capsule itself.

BUCKLIN: So may just more range land than anything else if he wanted to...

PAULSEN: That's probably what, and I think those that have em, I don't think there is any controversy over anything...

BUCKLIN: Yeah there under an acre in terms of, in total depth.

PAULSEN: Oh yeah, I don't know exact in total inches but it wasn't that big...

BUCKLIN: So now your cable that you laid went only to the launch control facilities, that's correct?

PAULSEN: That's right.

BUCKLIN: Ok, what you do with the cable went they deactivated the missiles, is it just underground...its not worth recovering?

PAULSEN: There was situations like if we were going from say connecting at Wicksville which is a through route here with Northwestern Bell and we would plow off from that. They would take the circuits these are private lines here cause here's Ellsworth, They would have it down and going through the other connect point, we would take it from here and go all the way up in it, and then we may impose use that high frequency carrier system on some of that to expand the circuits, in other words you would take two or four wire you could expand it maybe into ten or fifteen or twenty seconds ok, and then we got ending we went off to all these other sites and just came down. Most of that was physical from the central office to the Enning Switchboard. And all the other high frequency equipment off of that we used physicals out cause we'd take a six pair into each one, we only used three pair if we had three circuits required but we had spares. That cable had outer polyethylene certain had all specifications as required and inside that was a metal corrugated copper sheath, just surrounded the inside, inside that plastic and then the individual circuits are in there the color coded circuits. So we took out at least six pair to each particular one.

BUCKLIN: So you only required three...

PAULSEN: Three.

BUCKLIN: But this is a good sense of redundancy is that why...

PAULSEN: You take it out, actually until you get up to six pair you would have buried wire engineering spec. But after you got the sixth pair then you had the sheath and it was more reliable. So then you had an emergency you could switch pairs.

BUCKLIN: That's what I was getting at...

PAULSEN: That's what it is, its maintenance and that was a requirement on it too. But when it was it done they just turned it over we could use it for farm service or anything like that. Generally it didn't benefit us that much but it was paid for...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] And its still there.

PAULSEN: Its still there, you know, and probably good shape yet. [Laughs.]

BUCKLIN: Well I'm assuming that those would be the circuits and lines that delta one is using.

PAULSEN: That's right.

BUCKLIN: Yes.

BUCKLIN: Yep. and your company would still maintain those...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Yep.

BUCKLIN: Not the National Park Service or anything like that.

PAULSEN: Oh yes, if they are there they can use it for what they want. Take it back to the switchboard and you'll have a private line all the way back where they could use it for toll. You can hook it to the switch; we never went through a switchboard except to junction because we that was a private line back to Ellsworth. And the same with the Titan site that was a large cable. And Western Electric was part of the old Bell system. But Western Electric installed the cable to the Titan sites and the splices were amazing things they had splice cases that long and that big around, and they were all sealed you know cast iron and...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Those are still out there to.

PAULSEN: they're there...

BUCKLIN: yep.

PAULSEN: They're there in the ground

BUCKLIN: Some archeologists hundreds of years from now is gonna dig this up...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] And say what do we have here. The prior civilizations you know back when people didn't get along!!

BUCKLIN: [Laughs.] yeah.

PAULSEN: and then there was... [Laughs.]

BUCKLIN: I'm kind of curious, you grow up out here and lived here all your life spent thirty odd years having a hundred and fifty missiles in your back yard so to speak, and then you have the second part of the triad with Ellsworth, you know you got the B-52s with the nuclear weapons, did you think you were targeted out here?

PAULSEN: [Pause.] Not really you know I, think there was era of confidence in all the people in our national defense and I still do. And the world has changed. It was always nice to know who your enemy was at that time and we did you know.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] You know there is a lot to be said for that its better to know who it is in the case of the Soviet Union and we don't know really...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] And its just like over there at that time they had the missile program, very advanced, like we did and its like the two fighters scared to come to the middle of the ring because of in this case there could have been mutual destruction. I think the town of Wall did very well [in supporting the contractor]. American Bridge was here, American Bridge Company built all the silos, that were large, very capable people.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] So they were sub contracted by Peter Kiewitt of...

PAULSEN: They at that time I'm not sure of who they contracted with uh probably was...

BUCKLIN: Yeah I think Kiewett was the general contractor.

PAULSEN: Yeah I think so, the general contractor, I'm sure it was but they had iron workers and they had some really tough guys. I'll tell you they were they were good and they it was kind of some of the stories we had, Badlands bar did

very well at nights you know the guys come in and work, and their getting triple over time you know they did very well...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] So they had some money to spend.

PAULSEN: They had money to spend, they had some good times and funny things happened, we lived over towards the airport. And one Sunday they had apparently got a small goat and hung it up [and preparing it for a barbecue]. And my wife, she says I'm gonna get a city council man over here and stop this. But it was a bunch of guys doing something like that you know and so she called one of the council men, oh golly, he said, I just don't think [Laughs.] we wanna do anything [Laughs.] so.

BUCKLIN: [Laughs.] To jeopardize.

PAULSEN: No don't jeopardize but they treated him well they were just super people. Everybody I worked with, amazing, and that's just like our country is you know when they have to get something done they get together and do it...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] And do it.

PAULSEN: Yeah.

BUCKLIN: Yeah I wanna just peruse this targeting business a little bit to, so you didn't really have the sense that you were targeted or that there was a risk that the boom can up and...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] There could be but in the arguments where like the ranchers or the town, they felt, I think seeing the bigger picture, that we had to have a missile defense in fact I think some of the conversations I had with some people said I'd rather have the missiles right here when they fire them then be out some other place in a large industrial complex or something.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] did you build a bomb shelter at all?

PAULSEN: No. You know I don't know of any but I think there was one built out in the country.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Here in the Wall area.

PAULSEN: I think it was north of here, but that wasn't...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Wasn't a primary concern.

PAULSEN: No, no primary concern about that [Laughs.]

BUCKLIN: Do you have children?

PAULSEN: Yes I have two girls.

BUCKLIN: Ok were they concerned about it growing, did they express

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Well...

BUCKLIN: Or ask questions?

PAULSEN: Well I think they were more worried about who's going to win the basketball game or something like that, I don't think it ever came about.

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] So would it be fair that people accepted the missiles just became part of the norm?

PAULSEN: I think so. We had a lot of veterans you know from World War II. And strong VFW and legion organizations and I think they know what defense means and I think that most of the people understood that. A lot of them were old enough [to have served in World War II and Korea and they understood the necessity of a strong defense system].

BUCKLIN: We were talking before the interview begin about contemporary issues with the BRAC, examinations of Ellsworth, have an opinion about that?

PAULSEN: I think it's a mistake to take it out, I'm not looking at the financial end of it, some do we live in Rapid City and talked to a lot of guys that are retired or were in business and of course we'd like to see it stay. Rapid City is probably some what dependant upon Ellsworth. But there's other people that talk and say if they did phase it out that something always good comes out of it other things could be done but Ellsworth has been a really a good citizen to Rapid City. And consequently they're gonna fight to keep Ellsworth open. I really think that from a defense stand point, closing it might be a mistake. Not that we would probably reconfigure the Minuteman program or anything like that but [Ellsworth is strategically located in our entire defense system.]

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Sure.

PAULSEN: The FG of the thing was such that was advantageous to be here, I still think that is true, in world affairs right now it seems like the danger has spread more so across the globe, but yeah I think we still we have to watch our former opponents...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Adversary.

PAULSEN: Adversary, and I think that something the guys they think about.

BUCKLIN: Was there any movement you were aware of or any sense of, we should keep the missiles back in '93 or '92 when they were being negotiated?

PAULSEN: We were sorry to see them leave, we had the Minuteman I and it was converted to a II, which was a minor thing, now of course a number Minuteman III is a superior type of a missile. But yeah we were we thought Ellsworth was critical to the whole complex. Now I know that Grand Forks over here to the eastern part of North Dakota I didn't think that was that critical. Minot yes there up there right at the... I think you almost look over the hill and see Russia from there. [Laughs.] But anyhow and Warren Air Force base in Wyoming probably is a good location too. I'm sure a lot of thought went into [these missile locations by our military experts].

In missile defense of a country, there's a lot of things going on that we never know about, now obviously. And I'm sure that's happening right now with BRAC but I think we hated to see it leave. It was a good deal for the communication companies and the rural electric power coops who provided three phase power to the sites. Also we provided communication service to the Wicksville site and we had two men there the seven days a week and one person on seven days a week at least. And anyhow it was kind of a feather in our cap, being a small company working and with bell and over the years we have expanded. Golden West now is the largest company, we started with little of nothing, it's the largest cooperative independent in the State of South Dakota now...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] You know Norman Fauske I interviewed yesterday and...

PAULSEN: Oh, yes.

BUCKLIN: Norman pointed something out and that was the mutually beneficial relationship between the rancher, the community and the Air Force and the business interests in this area, and it made sense to me he said you know we got state of the art electric infrastructure that we wouldn't of had without the missiles.

PAULSEN: Very much so, it contributed to that there is no doubt, in telephony especially. You know advances there and of course one of the great advances in telephony was work through the FCC and our national organizations and when they broke up the system, the Bell system, they started an organization that was a had people from each various sector of the company and like the US West would have one person, maybe Bell South and so forth and then they had the mid sized company's back, Continental was one of them and there was a lot of the others and they had smaller ones. I had the opportunity one

of them on the first board of directors of it and we meet in New Jersey area and that, it formulated all the revision of how's tolls settlements are made and everything like that, and of course that still in operation so that was interesting thing but that point that Norman brought out is an excellent one and it did, well I think when you bring it, your bringing in money and in a way there's a satisfaction to a farmer/rancher if he has a missile site on his place that he's contributing to national defense, its just you just have to have a good feeling about that and really its safe if that missile goes off we're glad that he furnished that site cause its being used for the defense of our country, so that probably is satisfaction.

BUCKLIN: So I'm curious in 1989, you know Ronald Reagan gave the speech, Mr. Gorbachav tear down this wall, and in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed, did you have any special feelings you personally regarding the missiles that you and your company had helped established, did they play a role in that victory in the cold war.

PAULSEN: Well I would think Ronald Regan probably was carrying a big club...that's what he was doing and he had everything there and he wouldn't wanna you know really agitate those people into some kind of a military action and.

[End of side one, tape one]

[Beginning of side two, tape one]

BUCKLIN: This is side two of the 25 of August of 2005 interview with Don Paulsen. We had just been talking about the end of the cold war in 1989, 1991. Don was talking about the affect of the missiles in the victory of the cold war. Don did you want to finish your...

PAULSEN: Yes, I think about that time with President Reagan who I admire greatly, he stood up, he had great abilities I think to work with people with advisories. I think the program and I've no doubt Russia new what we had and where it was and so he had a strong backing, and I thought that I never really related that to what we had, or did, but that on our entire complex of our defense across the nation would have made new, Gorbachav think twice. And I think that's just what happened and I think we had a messenger that went and talked to him... [Laughter.] that was a really good one.

BUCKLIN: Oh, he was known as the great communicator for a reason.

PAULSEN: He was and then he had Gorbachav came to his place that was in California. And of course you never know entirely where you stand, but you take care of your business at home and I guess were probably in some of the same situation now, except that we may have more adversaries. It always reminds me that in the way people react, sometime even in the rural areas, one very successful rancher, and the others maybe not doing as well. But it's easy to

criticize and do things. And think that's normal probably for people, and I think a lot of the people, and I think a lot of the countries today we know or some of them, how would you say jealous attitudes. But in other words they love our way of life and maybe theirs isn't as great, and maybe they have some problems. But we have a lot of immigration to the country so that tells us one thing.

BUCKLIN: That certainly sends a message. More people want to come in than want to leave.

PAULSEN: That's right... [Laughter.] That's true, but it's been a grand trip all the years that I had, and a lot of the years that I was manager of Golden West I guess turned out to be a good many, but one of the most satisfying things was some of our defense projects and of course you can't take away from bringing all one party, dependable underground system with expandable circuits that can bring out the highest technology to your members. Now with the Internet and all the other things that are happening, it does put the average operator out there, rural operator, on a level with his city cousin. So it's been a good one, and I'll tell you from a stand point of future defense and organizations now like Golden West that Inglebert had the foresight to get going in the early years has come out, and I would say that his forethought and hard work made a major contribution to the communications in South Dakota, rural South Dakota them small towns there included. Plus the fact that we played a strong hand in the defense of our country with the missile sites that we had in our area, and maintained by capable technicians [administrative staff and commercial employees all devoted to their jobs. So it's been a career satisfaction to all of our Board of Directors, staff and employees to serve our members and our country.

BUCKLIN: Alright! Don is there anything I haven't asked you this morning that you would like to address?

PAULSEN: Well, probably not really, I'm proud of the people that worked for Golden West, and now working for Golden West expanded. We worked through our state associations very strongly. South Dakota Association Telephone Cooperatives and the privately owned companies... [Inaudible speech.] and, in joint meetings, national organizations that were created for lobbying. We'd always go to Washington to talk to our representatives every April and work with them, so they knew what was going on. I started way back when McGovern was in there, we worked all the way through his successors. Met a lot of people, served on a national board of the association established to handle all the toll communications and other commercial through the FCC. And, so it's just been a grand trip a lot of trips to Pierre during legislative sessions. [Laughter.]

BUCKLIN: February, January...

PAULSEN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Oh, yes, so always a good time, great buddies, some good golfers, some not so good... [Laughter.] Oh, we had a great time, great guys, yeah. So I appreciate the opportunity to do what we did here and...

BUCKLIN: [Begins to speak over previous speaker.] Well Don on behalf of the National Park Service then I want to thank you for your time, your memories, your perspectives. This has been a most pleasurable interview, thank you.

PAULSEN: Thank you.

[End of Interview.]

[End of side two, tape one.]