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The Commentors Name:
---> Matthew C. O'Brien

The Commentors Address:
--->
--->Las Vegas, 89109

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---> fax number :
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Comment Text :
-->My name is Matt O'Brien. I'm news editor of Las Vegas CityLife. I, however, am not speaking on behalf of the paper today. I've put my notepad in my back pocket and my tape recorder in my front. My pen has been capped. I'm simply speaking as a nine-year resident of Las Vegas (my God, has it really been that long!) -- as someone who works here, pays taxes here, drives here, breathes the air here, and drinks the water here.

Other than that, I have no real credentials when it comes to Yucca Mountain. I've never worked for the government. I'm not a member of Citizen Alert. I'm not a geologist. I'm not married. I don't have kids.

But I do have a conscience and I do have a few comments about the proposed nuclear-waste dump. Thanks for letting me share them.

First, I should say that I probably would not have known about this meeting if I wasn't a journalist and a hawk-eyed reader of the morning paper. The only notice I saw appeared in the paper -- more than two weeks ago, inside the B section and less than 600 words long. This meeting, I can safely say, was not

well-publicized. Why wasn't it? The most obvious answer is the Department of Energy wants as few people as possible to know about Yucca Mountain.

Of course, 70,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste is a mean -- and very hard -- thing to sneak by Nevadans.

I should also say that I find the format of this meeting somewhat strange. The two of us hunched in a corner, whispering, shadows looming -- it seems so confessional. Again, I must question the DOE's motives. Is it trying to control information? Will anyone in the government actually read my comments? They ignored science ... why would they pay attention to me? Why would they start listening now? Wouldn't an open forum, where comments and questions can be voiced aloud, better benefit the department and the public?

I realize this meeting focuses on design and transportation issues. The heavy-stock handouts, shiny poster boards and programmed help staff make that abundantly clear. However, I only have one comment concerning those issues: I'm against them!

The rest of my comments are more general in terms.

And don't worry. I haven't crunched any numbers, prepared any color-coded charts or tried to blow a hole in one of the transportation canisters. I just have a few things I want to say.

Frankly, I have very little faith in the Department of Energy. Judging by everything I've seen, read and heard, the DOE could mess up a wet dream. And Yucca Mountain, we can all agree, is much more complicated than that.

Currently, the department's Yucca Mountain program is in flux. Its staff seems to have more turnover than the average El Pollo Loco. It's redesigning the dump site facilities. It's changing the transportation routes. It's ignoring environmental protections. It's rushing to submit the license application before President Bush -- an ally of the nuclear industry and a proponent of the dump -- leaves office.

It's a recipe for disaster.

Even if the DOE was trustworthy and competent, I wouldn't support the Yucca Mountain nuclear-waste dump. The site itself remains inappropriate. It's prone to earthquakes, carved with aquifers and within 100 miles of three of the fastest-growing cities in the country.

Additionally, Nevada didn't produce any of the nuke waste. It was produced in states like Texas, Florida, California, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Let them figure out what to do with it.

In closing, I would like to say that Nevada is not a wasteland. It's not the nation's junkyard. It's no longer a place to test nuclear weapons, conduct alien autopsies or store nuke waste. Yucca Mountain is not our Fort Knox or another Comstock Lode. It's fool's gold. The desert is sacred. The Joshua trees stand guard.

Nevada is home. Home means Nevada.
