

Oral History Collection

Ms. Alana Irby

Interviewer: Mr. Kyle Killion

Date: Fall 2015

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Mr. Killian: My name is Kyle Killion, and I'm sitting here with Alana Irby, who is a geography major at the University of North Texas. So, as a geography major, you feel strongly about environmental issues. Tell me about why you voted in favor of the ban.

Ms. Irby: Personally, I'm just not a big fan of like, big oil companies, or anything like that. They never really have the best interests of the people that are around these fracking sites, and the gas wells, and there's a lot of pollution that's related to them. So um, I know that they don't really have the best interests. So I have always voted against them. [Break]

Ms. Irby: You can see that a lot of the fracking sites are visible from some housing developments and some businesses in Denton. There's actually been one site that caught on fire in Krum. Nearby surrounding towns, there's been a couple in Denton that have like, you know given off, I guess, flaring events or something like that. Some of them have caught on fire. Just crazy accidents, you know, you don't really know what's going out in the air. It's not really reported. There's not really reported pollution emissions on these things. So like, we really don't know what's going on around us. We don't know what we're being exposed to, what we're breathing. People that have kids, there's like a lot of incidences of asthma in these areas. There's not a lot of significant studies on what it's doing to us. [Break]

Irby: They've been known to potentially cause earthquakes. We don't really know what's going around. There's been earthquakes in Irving. When else has there been earthquakes in Irving, Texas?

Killian: Exactly.

Irby: These are new things that are coming up, that we haven't heard of, like 3.0 on the Richter scale.

This is extremely weird, and uncommon. So, you know I just have a feeling that it's got something to do with it. [Break].

Killian: Do you think it's inevitable that these chemicals get into the water systems of these homeowners?

Irby: Yeah, they actually do, because whenever they're using this fracking water, or whatever, to inject in the water, it's staying down there. It's not really being completely all pumped back out, you know. There's going to be residue left behind. Whenever it rains, you know, all those chemicals are filtrating down into the water table. So anyone who has wells in these surrounding areas, they're being exposed to the chemicals and there's not reported releases of this. It's kind of happening, you know, behind our back. We're not really seeing what's happening. The more studies that we do on this, testing the water and proving that this, you know, this has a direct impact to the people around us [Break].

Killian: Were you surprised to see that so many voted in favor of this ban?

Irby: Yeah, I was actually really surprised. I'm pretty sure the percentage of all the votes came out to

59% of all the voters. Granted, a lot of people in Denton didn't vote, but 59% of the vote in a city is pretty big. You know, you don't really see turnouts that are that high in, like, standard polls unless it's a really, really hot topic. And this was one for Denton.

Killian: So, although the ban was repealed, what do you think this little feat in Denton says for future laws pertaining to environmental protection?

Irby: Well, I personally think, and I brought a couple articles about it, that Denton was an inspiration for other small towns that this is happening to. For them to kind of rise up against it and say, "Hey, you know what, like we are voting against this. We have the power to say something about it. We're not going to be repressed." [Break].

Killian: Denton voted seven to one to repeal the anti-fracking initiative because of fear of the repercussions of HB40. Do you think this means that any hope for a future ban is completely out the window?

Irby: Short term yes, long term no. I think there's a lot of things that can still be done. I think the fact that there's a lot of looming lawsuits over the

whole passing of the fracking ban, it was really what kind of, you know, steered them away from being, "We voted for this but there's going to be a lot of repercussions." All these oil and gas companies already have prior contracts, so, you know, if those aren't being fulfilled and carried out, that's a lawsuit waiting to happen, and they will win. So there was just a kind of an understanding that right now this is probably not feasible. But for the long run, maybe there might be a better solution. But maybe not just right now.

[End of interview]