

National Nuclear Security Administration

Gayle Fisher retires from the Department of Energy with legacy of adventure and service

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Gayle Fisher, a public affairs officer at the Kansas City Field Office, is retiring after working on behalf of the Department of Energy (DOE) for more than 30 years. She plans to move back home to Las Vegas.

Gayle received a journalism degree from the University of Nevada at Reno and went on to work for the *Associated Press* in Reno and San Francisco. While in California, she heard about a group backpacking across the United States and joined them in Tonopah, Nevada. The group, called HikaNation, helped carve out a coast-to-coast trail called the American Discovery Trail. Her 3,000-mile adventure included hiking through canyons in Utah, traversing mountains in Colorado, crossing the Mississippi River, walking on the Appalachian Trail, meeting dignitaries in Washington D.C. and jumping into the Atlantic Ocean.

"That was one of the best years of my life," said Gayle. "I still remember hiking across Kansas in the cold weather. My friends and I would knock on farmhouses and ask for coffee. The local grapevine informed everyone we were coming."

After the hike, she wrote feature stories at the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and later became press secretary for Nevada Governor Bob List's re-election. From there, she moved to Washington, D.C. to work at the Republican National Committee and later at the White House for Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush.

"The first day on the job for Vice President Bush I went to China. I had not even stepped foot in my new office and instead went to Andrews Air Force Base to board a plane with people I had never met. It was the advance trip to set up logistics and make decisions about places for the Vice President to visit. A few weeks later I returned to China with the Vice President."

After a few years at the White House, she applied for and was hired to a position working as a public information officer at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. As a United Nations employee, she visited several African countries to write about an assistance program between Indonesian farmers and those in Africa. After three years in Italy, she returned to Las Vegas and began her career at DOE.

"I was asked to speak to a group of students at UNLV about public relations. A student told me I should apply for a job at DOE, so I did," said Gayle. "I sometimes felt like an outsider in my hometown because of the controversial nature of the Yucca Mountain Project, but I still believe that permanently disposing of commercial nuclear waste in a single, secure, geologically feasible location is the right thing to do."

She worked at the Yucca Mountain Project twice, the first time for about three years and then several years later. In between she worked as a contractor for IT Corporation at the Nevada Test Site and later at Roy F. Weston in Carlsbad, New Mexico, for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. After three years in New Mexico, she returned to Las Vegas to work at the Yucca Mountain Project again.

"I was content to stay in Las Vegas that time around, but it was not meant to be," said Gayle. "The Yucca Mountain Project was shut down in 2010 and we had to look for work elsewhere. Fortunately, I landed at the Kansas City Field Office. I have enjoyed working with some great people on an important mission and have really liked Kansas City except for the cold weather. My daughter graduated from high school here and will soon graduate from college."

Longtime friend and colleague Toni Chiri who worked with Gayle at WIPP, Yucca Mountain and in NNSA Public Affairs, called Gayle the ultimate public affairs professional.

"Gayle has done it all. Her background and experience are enviable. She's been an asset to all the organizations for which she worked and a role model to her many peers. She will be missed."

Gayle said she is proud of what she helped accomplish during her years with DOE/NNSA and will miss all the friends and colleagues she has met. But she hopes to visit some of them and knows that people like to visit Las Vegas. Her tongue-in-cheek promise to them? What happens in Vegas will stay in Vegas, within reason.



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 Gayle Fisher's career in Washington, D.C. included working at the White House with VP George H.W. Bush.

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