

## Rocky Mountain News

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### Rocky Flats whistle-blower dies at 82

James Stone recently lost bid for \$1 million

By Laura Frank And Ann Imse, Rocky Mountain News

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James Stone was an engineer to the core. And that made it impossible for him to leave a problem until it was solved.

His hardscrabble life in a Depression-era orphanage and his hard-won engineering degree led to his career-defining challenge: being the chief whistle-blower on environmental crimes at the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons site near Denver.

"He would work on a problem round the clock," son Bob said. "That's what got him in trouble at Rocky Flats. He wanted to solve the problems, not ignore them."

Stone, who suffered from Alzheimer's, died Wednesday at the Julia Temple Center in Englewood. He was 82.

Stone, who worked at Rocky Flats from 1980 to 1986, was the first Flats insider to go to the FBI with details of the radioactive pollution released by the site contractor, Rockwell International.

Rockwell pleaded guilty to 10 environmental crimes and paid \$18.5 million in fines.

Stone filed a whistle-blower fraud case against Rockwell and won \$4.2 million in damages for the federal government. Just two weeks ago, after an 18-year fight, the U.S. Supreme Court denied him a \$1 million share in those damages.

"He died with nothing more than the clothes on his back and the love of his family and friends," Bob Stone said. "I know if he had it to do all over again, even knowing how it turned out, he would have done it just the same."

Stone was born in 1924. His parents couldn't afford to keep him during the Depression, his son said, so he went to a Catholic orphanage in St. Louis. As a young teen, a family with a coal business took him in.

Barred from World War II because of a hearing problem, he worked on engineering jobs in Alaska, on the Air Force Academy chapel and on the Brown Palace heating system. He worked on missile silos in Idaho and Wyoming, and surveyed a pipeline across Greenland. He also invented a sewage treatment system for rural mountain homes and a municipal trash incinerator.

Stone helped design Rocky Flats before it opened in 1952, and he warned against the location "because Denver was downwind a few miles away," said his longtime attorney and friend Hartley Alley.

Jon Lipsky, the FBI agent who led the 1989 raid on Rocky Flats, said Stone "was the first one who worked at the plant to talk to me."

Stone's job was to identify problems at the plant and recommend solutions. So he was able to give the FBI a road map, Alley said.

Alley said Stone was the source of a key allegation in the FBI search warrant - that Rockwell was incinerating radioactive waste in secret at night. That charge was dropped when Rockwell settled the criminal case, and prosecutors said it wasn't true. But Alley says he had two other clients who witnessed it.



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Stone's motivation for filing the whistle-blower lawsuit in 1989 was patriotic, Alley said. "He felt the people who operated Rocky Flats in the 1980s were guilty of treason" by building nuclear weapons that wouldn't explode, Alley said.

In the fraud suit, Stone alleged that Rockwell was defrauding the government by taking money for building faulty weapons while polluting the environment. Proving faulty production was impossible because the evidence was classified, Alley said.

Jim Stone "wasn't afraid of jumping into anything," his son said. "The world is a better place with people like him."

Stone is survived by his wife Virginia, sons Bob, of Lakewood, and Randy, of Wheat Ridge, five grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his eldest son, James Stone Jr.

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