

03110017 Interviewer: Tell us what your name is, what your affiliation with the site was, and what the years were that you were here.

03110800 Bill: Well, let's see, well, first my name is Bill Britton. I came here with the Westinghouse team that was going to take over the site in the fall of 1985 as Manager of Production Operations. At that time, the site was being run by the National Lead Company. They had declined to further participate in the site, and Westinghouse won a competitive competition to manage the site for the Department of Energy. We took over the site January 1st, I believe, of 1986. And I was here for the next 6 and a quarter years, I guess, leaving in March of 1992. For the first few years I ran the production operations group, and then I was executive VP. And, for the last year and a half I was here, I was president of the Westinghouse subsidiary here.

03115922 Interviewer: If you wouldn't mind backing up just a little bit, what sort of prior experience in the nuclear business did you have before coming to Fernald?

03120804 Bill: I went with Westinghouse in 1955 at the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory which at that time was charged with General Electric with the principal responsibilities for the design and construction of the nuclear propulsion systems for the US Navy. I was there for about 23 years, leaving there in 1978, and went to Columbia, South Carolina with the commercial Westinghouse Nuclear Fuel Division, was there for 6 years, finally ending up as plant manager, moved back to Pittsburgh for a short time as manager of new product development for the division, and then the opportunity here in Cincinnati came, and I graciously accepted the offer from Westinghouse to join the team here.

03125227 Interviewer: You mentioned in your speech that, you had a brief allusion to Admiral Rickover. Did you work with him?

03125821 Bill: Well, the 23 years I was with Westinghouse at the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory, that unit reported directly to Rickover. So, I got frequent personal exposures to Admiral Rickover. I think the principal lesson you learn from a Rickover operation was that of very, very strict discipline of operations. You always knew what you were going to do, when you were going to do it, and you thoroughly reviewed how you did it before you ever did it, so that you minimize the chances of some mishap during the operation. And, Rickover was very keen on rolling with the tide, not to make a Navy expression, but he saw the coming of new needs in the environmental area and tried to stay a step ahead of those with all of his units. And, so when I came here, I felt confident that with adequate direction from the Department of Energy, we at Westinghouse had the right kind of expertise to manage the change, if you will, in this operation. However, none of us anticipated what really happened in the intervening 6 years. So therefore, I think we all learned a great deal about how to run this business and how to deal with the community.

03142123 Interviewer: When you came at the beginning in 1985, what were some of the challenges that were put on the table that the Department of Energy said, "This is things you're

confronted with as a new contractor and hope you're up to the task, but here are some of the things we'd like you to do"?"

03143729 Bill: Well, of course the fact, the mere fact that we were new was a challenge in itself. The same contractor had run the site for about 35 years, and these were people that were comfortable with their company. And, now they were faced with a bunch of rank outsiders, new kids on the block. And, there was a lot of distrust and uncertainty in their eyes. After all, they'd been the king of the hill here for a long time. They had recently discovered that they were suddenly in disfavor with the community, which was a problem that the Department of Energy wanted us to address. They suddenly realized that they no longer had National Lead, you know, the comfortable father/son relationship that most of us had in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. And, now they had a bunch of new kids who were telling them what to do. And, then, shortly after we got here, of course, the mission ended. Now here were a bunch of people who had been doing the same job for 35 years, and doing it extraordinarily well, by all the rules and regulations that governed them. But, now they couldn't do that job anymore. They had to do something new. And of course, we hoped that we'd be able to help that change. As it turned out the people were ready. The people who worked here, if you heard what I said earlier, were incredibly resilient. They were ready for new things to do, ready for new challenges. The union was particularly helpful. When we came here, I think largely we had an adversarial relationship. I think due largely to the hard work of people like Bob Schwab and Gene Branham that developed in to a working relationship where we seemed to be able to find common goals and start to get things done. I mentioned earlier the educational courses we ran at the University of Findlay. I think went a long way toward convincing both we and the union that we had common goals and could in fact work together to make this a better site.

03163801 Interviewer: What sort of approach to public affairs or public relations did Westinghouse bring to ...?

03164605 Bill: Well, and this is an area that I might want to reflect on after I've said it, but one of the Westinghouse's problems I think through the ages has been almost a sense of arrogance about what they did. They were first in the nuclear business; they did it very well. They thought, and perhaps knew, that they did it better than anybody else, and, were very reluctant to accept advice and criticism from anybody outside the family who pretended to know better or to want something different than Westinghouse saw as the obvious goals. So, I think, initially, we didn't have a very good handle on public relations. We worked very hard at it under the direction of a few key people who I think, inside the Westinghouse family, who made us understand what we had to do. We had to get out and sit down across the table, see eye-to-eye, exchange thoughts, exchange concerns. And, but, unfortunately, it took much longer than it should have for us to develop a working relationship with people like FRESH, for example. That's unfortunate. I remember a boss that I worked for before Rickover, many, many years earlier, saying to me after I'd gotten in to the commercial end of the business, he said, "Bill, the biggest problem you people in Westinghouse have," at this time he had left Westinghouse, "is your arrogance." And, I carried that with me when I came here, and I saw it come to pass, that, in fact, we weren't nearly as smart as we thought we were. I always remember a, and perhaps I'm digressing, but I always remember, I always kept it in my office, there was a, for you people who are quite young,

you probably don't remember Walt Kelly and Pogo. But, Pogo once had a cartoon; he was standing in the middle of the forest, and there were beer cans and wrappers and all kinds of debris standing around him, and the caption to the cartoon was, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." And, I always kept that in my office as a reminder that when things went bad, the first place I had to look was in the mirror to make sure that I wasn't the problem. And, I think in the early days, perhaps, Westinghouse was part of the problem here.

03185625 Interviewer: Do you remember the day that the order came from either Oak Ridge or Washington or wherever it was to stop production?

03190529 Bill: I don't think it happened on a particular day. I think we all saw it coming over a long period of time. It tended to cushion the blow. I think there must have been a period of, oh, perhaps a year when we thought, you know, "it's going to start back up, it's just a matter of getting through a few of these environmental hurdles, and it's gonna start back up." So, when the blow finally came that the mission was over, I think it was somewhat cushioned. Although, it must have taken the people who had worked here for a long, long time a long time to get over that blow. But, there was no specific day when all of a sudden the axe fell and we were all stunned. But, it was difficult.

03194725 Interviewer: Just a couple of reflections about today, then we'll be done. Why do you think it's important within the DOE and for America in general to take time out when these various sites around the complex celebrate 40-, 50-year anniversaries and sort of reflect on their role in American history?

03200714 Bill: Well, you know, I don't know who the person was that first said it, it must have been centuries ago, that said, you know, "we all have to recall and remember history, for if we don't, we'll certainly relive it." So, I think it's important for us to not only stop and reflect on what's happened, but to celebrate the gains we've made, even though they are small. I think the human animal needs, at least this one does, needs the occasional pat on the back. You can only take so many kicks in the gut before you start to expect that and decide, "I'm not going to get back up because he's only going to kick me again." So, I think it's important to do things like this, to celebrate our accomplishments, and, at the same time, make sure we understand where it is we're going, and it ain't time to quit. I remember saying to a group of people here at Fernald, in fact, somebody reminded me today. I think it was like 1989 or 1990, I said, "You know, I sit out in front of the guard station every once in a while early in the morning because I used to get here at 4:30 in the morning because I'm a morning person; I'm not a night person." And, I would sit on the bench outside and I'd say, "You know, I think if I close my eyes, I can see it. I can see a small building off in the distance, which is a museum to the history of Fernald. I can look to my left, and I can see some baseball fields where there are kids playing. And, I can look to my right and see some sports equipment where small children, a playground perhaps, are playing." And that's the Fernald that I would like to walk away from years down the road. And, hopefully, that's going to happen. It'll be a superb monument to the people who have worked here down through the years. It really will.

03215605 Interviewer: That's all I've have.

03221107 Bill: I, Bill Britton, gave you permission to interview me. And, anything that I've said in this interview is okay by me, and you can use it for whatever purpose you wish. Except, I would ask you not to cut and piece and make me out to be someone who is about to overthrow the government by putting certain words together.