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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Ken Crawford

Date Interviewed: 8/17/1999 Date Transcribed: 11/23/1999 Tape: 71

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Tape FLHP0164

01:01:00

A:
I guess.

Q:
Okay!

A:
Did you get him something to drink?

Q:
Great!

(Off-camera: Yea, I got him something. Do you want something Joyce?)

01:01:08

Q:
Actually, I'm fine. I'll let you know. I might be between interviews (laughter). Well the first question is always the hardest. If you could just give us your name and spell it. Just to make sure we have it right.

A:
Oh, my name is Ken Crawford. C-R-A-W-F-O-R-D.

01:01:22

Q:
Great! And if you could give us some background. I know that you've lived in the area for a long time, you've been here all your life, and you have quite a lot of family members that were here. If you could give us some background about your family and about the area, and about growing up in the area.

01:01:34

A:
Well, now I live on Crosby Road and I grew up on Crosby Road, um, um, at least fourth generation, I know my grandfather was born in ah, 1877 in this area, so um, so our son's a fifth generation. So it goes back away.

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01:01:57

A:

So, I don't know, when I grew up out here um, it seems like, you knew everybody and they were either your friends or your relatives. And uh, and Crosby Road was just a little private road, I remember as a little kid playing out in the yard and my mom would be by the kitchen sink washing dishes or something, and a car would go down, and I remember it just like it was last week. She'd say uh, "hey, who was that? Was that so and so," and I'd say yea, "that's who it was."

01:02:24

A:

And it was like, you know, maybe an hour or so later before you ever saw a car and then. But when the Fernald plant came in it's like uh, it seemed like 7:00 o'clock in the morning or say 4:00 in the afternoon or something like that it was like (moves hands back and forth), it was like the expressway down through there. It totally changed everything.

01:02:43

Q:

Do you remember when they started building the Fernald plant?

A:

Uh, not really. Uh, I'm not too familiar with the plant – at that age.

01:02:58

Q:

Do you remember, at all, um, some of the media attention, I know that we have ah, an article, and your grandparents are in that article. Did your grandparents talk about what it would be like to live next to this plant at all when they first started building?

01:03:12

A:

No, I was pretty young. I never, nobody, I don't think people really paid much attention to what was going on back there. Uh, we, we called; everybody called it the atomic plant. I know it was, nobody really knew what they did.

01:03:24

A:

I know that people that worked there weren't allowed to tell their spouses what they did. I remember, uh, uh, a young girl, just a few years older than me, right up the road, wanted to get a job back there. And they came to my mother, ah, the girl recommended by mother for uh, character reference and I know my mother was interviewed over that.

01:03:46

A:

And then, it seems to me I heard it took maybe three months for the clearance to get a job back there. But other than that, I mean, I don't think people, I, you know, when I grew up we always recited the uh, um, Pledge of Allegiance in school, before you started school and everything and it's like you know, you would never question the government.

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01:04:08

A:

So we had no reason to suspect anything bad was gonna happen to us, because of the plant being in the community.

01:04:16

Q:

So for the last, for the most part, while you were growing up in this area, there was a lot of Cold War years. What was the typical American's mindset during the Cold War? And how did you feel about the cold war at the time?

01:04:33

A:

I remember it, it, when I was in grade school um, I remember we used to do drills every so often, you had to get under your, your desk in case there was ah, an attacked by Russians or, and, other than that we didn't, we didn't really think too much about it.

01:04:54

A:

I know at the fair, the Hamilton County Fair, I remember, I used to take um, hogs to the fair and I remember um, they had a bomb shelter there on display. You could go in it and that; and you had a, put your name in there you could, had a chance to win one. But other than that I don't think people really cared, or thought too much about it. At least I didn't, you know uh, being, being a kid.

Q:

Was it ever brought to your attention at all that ah, Fernald maybe be a target for the Russians?

01:05:25

A:

Uh, I think after this all came out, when we really found out what was going on back there in the early, or say '84 or '85, I heard that, heard it was, other than that I never did hear anything like that.

Q:

I just mention that because I've heard in a number of interviews people were like oh yeah, that was, you know, something that was foremost on our minds, you know as in school and stuff, that they would mention that. That and GE was so close, you know, a lot of people would say that. So umm.

01:05:54

A:

I remember, as a kid, people would say um, only thing, they would say if those ah, smoke stacks over there or stacks, and they'd see that uh, orange looking releases, they'd sa-, people would say that birds would fly through there and drop dead. I mean I heard that, I don't know if it's true or not, if it's a myth or what.

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01:06:14

A:

And then I remember when I got to be, out of high school, uh, I remember somebody telling me about, about laboratory rats, they tested in the laboratory back there, and if they died somebody would take 'em out there and throw'em in the, in a pond on the property and they said there was just like world record uh, size fish in there – would come up and just, just swallow a rat whole.

01:06:40

A:

So, I mean, I don't know if that true or not, that's two rumors that I've heard.

Q:

What did you and your friends and family think the plant was there for?

A:

I don't, I don't know. I didn't ah, think about it really – pay much attention to it.

01:07:00

Q:

And you mentioned that it changed the surrounding community quite a bit. Uh, other than traffic what other things ah, how did it change the surrounding community?

A:

I don't know. It seems like, uh, I didn't see a whole lot of change really as a, as a kid growing up. Maybe as a kid you wouldn't pay attention to something a mile down the road.

01:07:29

Q:

How about when you were ah, a little older, how did you start feeling about the plant? I mean maybe before you and Lisa were really married, but while you were still in the area ah, once you were more aware of what was going on. Um, what was your reaction to the plant then?

01:07:45

A:

I tell you what, I was like seven years old when they started construction of this plant and, and still, up until we found we were drinking contaminated water I still didn't know what they did. I mean, uh, you know, like I say people that worked there weren't allowed to tell their spouses.

01:08:04

A:

So I didn't pay any attention to what happened down the road, I mean, anymore than I would uh, somebody living just a couple doors down from me. You know, it's like, you know, you didn't really care what they did.

Q:

So, when did you find out that you and your family were drinking contaminated water? Tell me a little bit about that.

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01:08:24

A:

Uh, in, well it seems like it was like ah, in the fall of '84, we heard on the news and in the papers that ah, there was ah, 300 pounds of uranium dust was released from the Fernald plant. And uh, and uh, that's the first thing we ever heard, heard of anything.

01:08:45

A:

Now I remember January 7, 1985 ah, we were renting a farmhouse from Knollman's on Willey Road. And uh, Brian Knollman called me and ah, told me that uh, I just want you to know that ah, of the three off-site wells they've been talking about the last three months, yours is one of 'em.

01:09:07

A:

And I said, he said, I know they're gonna bring this, make this public in the next, in the near future and I thought you should hear it from me before you heard it from the news media. And uh, at the time I told him I really couldn't talk to him, I had a doctors appointment I was gonna be running late for a doctor's appointment.

01:09:26

A:

So uh, when he hung up I immediately called Lisa at work and told her. I said something's up, I said uh, I said Mr. Knollman just called me and told me about ours is one of the wells. And I said, from this point forward when you get home don't drink this water.

01:09:42

A:

I said don't drink this water or cook with it. So we didn't know how serious it was, but ah, 2 days later there was a meeting over Crosby school and ah, and our congressman, Tom Luken, was ah, the speaker over there and he was gonna, I guess dis-, disclose to the public where these three off-site wells were. And ah, this was January 9, 1985.

01:10:04

A:

And uh, so, there must have been 300 people over there – had TV people over there and newspaper people and all that. And when uh, when Congressman Luken uh, told the location of these 3 wells, well there was a big sigh of relief through the whole room. You know, for everybody in the room, oh wow, not me, ya know.

01:10:28

A:

And uh, but it wasn't for us 'cause we knew it was us, and we were just, just in shock. And uh, so I remember uh, there was a newspaper reporter and a TV reporter uh, wanted to talk to us. And so, we got one off to the side and told 'em that, you know, that we live, that's where we live, we don't want people, nobody in this room ya know, to know that we're the ones.

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01:10:55

A:

My parents are in bad health; I don't want to alarm them. So I just, you know, you can write your stories but please don't use our names and they, they acknowledged our wishes and didn't do that. So, but uh, right away we knew they were trying to hide something from us.

01:11:14

A:

This was really serious because we found out they were gonna dig another well at that farmhouse. And I, and I, and I told; well let's, let me back up. When Mr. Knollman told me they were going to dig another well that's when I told Lisa, I said, "something's up – they're not gonna spend any money unless something's really serious."

01:11:28

A:

This is, I mean, they can downplay all they want too but uh, this is serious. So, uh, unfortunately, we were building this house here. We bought this land in, in May of '77 right before we got married and I started, I was the general contractor on this house, I started building this house in uh, in March '84, so this was January '85.

01:11:54

A:

So, then these people wantin' to know if we're, you know, thinkin' that something wrong with us. We're like hypocrites. You know, if you think there's such a problem why are you building a house in this area? The reason is, it's because we were renting that farmhouse over there, we had this house under construction, had a construction loan that I had, I had to pay.

01:12:11

A:

And I'm not, you know, and I can't just walk away and, and leave this place vacant. We wanted to get the heck out of that house and move here. And as far as moving from the community, I shouldn't have to move from the community, as I said earlier I'm fourth generation, at least, in this neighborhood.

01:12:28

A:

And we've already been exposed to; to the uranium and our well water it's 190 times normal background. And running away is not gonna reverse what that has done to our, our bodies. So this is, that's why we're here. We're not gonna run, we shouldn't have to run.

Q:

And how, what were your emotions at the time, when you did find out that your well was contaminated? Um, did you have children at the time? And how did that make you feel and?

01:12:59

A:

Uh, our son was, when we moved in that house, our son turned two years old the very month we moved in there, we moved in there in December of '77, or '79 rather. And his birthday is ah,

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December 5 of, '77's when he was born. So, I remember we were gonna go, we went out to eat the next day. It seems like that was on a Friday or Saturday, whenever that meeting was.

01:13:25

A:

And we went out to eat the next day, I remember, I remember exactly where we went to eat. And it was something that we really liked, and we both just sat there picking at our food. Neither one of us could eat. We couldn't eat. I'd go to work and uh, I worked for General Motors in, in Hamilton, and I didn't want co-workers to know that was me, uh, and, at the time I was, I was selling vitamins, I mean I was really into nutrition and all that.

01:13:52

A:

And for several years and, when our son, when he sat down to a meal we said okay we want, you know, you got a choice. You've got water to drink, milk; you've got pure orange juice or pure grape juice or pure apple juice, something like that. All four times he said he wanted water. And we said are you sure you want water?

01:14:10

A:

And, and here he was drinking this contaminated water over there, we thought we were doing, doing the right thing and here all, everything I did for my health, and my families health was all undermined by our government.

Q:

If you could go back about 30 or 40 years and tell the Atomic Energy Commission anything, what would you tell them?

01:14:30

A:

I really don't know what I could tell them. That - I don't know what, I don't know really what I could tell them 30 or 40 years ago. But uh, it seems to me like they were gonna run this place and produce whatever they wanted to and we're gonna kill everybody in the neighborhood and the workers in the process if we have to produce this enriched uranium.

01:15:05

A:

So it's like, you know, the whole time the place was, was over there it did, the only thing they ever used the stuff on was, was their own people. They've never used a bit of that on anybody else.

Q:

How did you feel as far as being powerless against changing anything? Is that the way you felt when that first happened?

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01:15:31

A:

Oh yeah, Lisa would call over there and uh, want them to supply us with, with water. 'Cause we still had to stay over there and take a bath and cook with this water for, you know, three more months until we got this house built, 'cause I was in here paintin' and things like that when we found out about it.

01:15:51

A:

And uh, nah, they absolutely refused to do anything like that. We felt real power, powerless and helpless and at work I'd go off ah, where nobody could see me and I'd cry uh, and I just felt, I went to the library and got books about, I remember the first book I got was about how to hire an attorney.

01:16:10

A:

I knew those people were gonna keep on lying to us and downplaying us, and the only way we could fight 'em is get a good attorney. So I went and got, started reading about attorneys and that. I called bar association and different people like that and, but uh, just luckily, ah, a woman working with Lisa ah, went to school with Stan Chesley.

01:16:32

A:

And realized Lisa, something was bothering Lisa, so Lisa told her, you know, what happened to us. She says I know the man to see, call Stan Chesley. And ah, this was maybe 2 weeks after we found out our well was contaminated, and uh, Lisa called him, and uh, see he didn't call us, everybody, the first thing every report wanted to ask us was did he approach us.

01:16:53

A:

'Cause that's unethical. No, absolutely not. We called him. Lisa called him. So he said I want you, I want you in here at 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning and we were down there. And that's when he said, you know, you're gonna be really swamped with news media and all that ah, it's gonna completely disrupt your life from now, now on.

01:17:13

A:

He says, it's gonna be a lot of heat, but he said don't worry about it he said I, he said I'm used to heat, I, I can take it. So you go, you guys go and get you a good meal and everything before you go home. So sure enough we went home and news, TV and everybody was, when we filed a lawsuit and it was public knowledge and the news media was waiting on us.

01:17:33

A:

So it just totally disrupted our lives. We bought this five acres of wooded, this wooded five-acre lot here 'cause we wanted privacy, I don't, you know, and that, and it just totally screwed up our lives before we could ever move in here. And, and in the last uh, 14 years we found out that people we thought were our friends, aren't our friends at all.

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01:18:04

A:

They're our enemies. They would point their fingers and we know people would tell us about people talking about us behind our backs. Talking about, you know that Crawford lady's sure got a big mouth and everything. It's like, it's like a rapist, you know, reporting in a crime.

01:18:19

A:

Then they blame, I mean, somebody being raped and then they blame that person for reporting it instead of the rapist. That's the way we were, we got raped by our own government, people want to blame us. Oh be quiet, you know, you shouldn't say anything, you're gonna hurt our property values and all that. That's all people cared about.

01:18:34

A:

I mean, I'm real, real disappointed in about 99 percent of the people around this community. Uh, the, really the only good thing that's come out of this is, are the people that you can really depend on, are the people, the FRESH members, that are now our, our closest friends.

01:18:59

A:

Uh, if it wasn't for this happening to us we would never know a lot of these people. Most of them we wouldn't know. But we know who you can depend on. Examples, when a tornado came through here in 1990 we lost 100, I've got an estimate, a written estimate of almost \$116,000 trees destroyed here. The people that came out here to help me were FRESH members.

01:19:24

Q:

Tell me a little bit about what it was like to be the epicenter of all this national media attention. How long did that last and, and just exactly how did it disrupt your lives?

01:19:40

A:

Well I know at first when it, when it first few time, first few times when they came out here our son was ah, pretty small ah, about seven. He was all excited about being on TV and all that you know. But just, (snaps fingers) I'll bet, about a week of that he'd go off in his room and stayed, didn't want nothing to do it with it.

01:19:59

A:

And it really disrupted our lives and um, for years, we ah, Lisa, she would take all her vacation time or paid absent times and all that, maybe take, maybe take a couple hours here, or an hour there, half a day here, a week there to spend all her, all her spare time and a lot of money out of her own pocket to go around and talk to schools and organizations around the Cincinnati area, to other states.

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01:20:33

A:

Uh, she would go to other people who had situations similar to this, they would call her up and ask her to help them and she'd spend all her spare time, we never ever went on a vacation for years. And uh, it just totally disrupted our lives. And ah, it's really ruined it really, 'cause like I say, I mean, there's a lot of people don't like us but if it wasn't for us, I mean ah, they wouldn't have any property violation compensation or emotional stress money.

01:21:10

A:

They wouldn't have medical monitoring, they wouldn't, I mean, I'd say my wife, my wife was born three hundred and some miles from here but she's done more for the people of Crosby Township than any ten people in my life-time. And it's like a thankless job that she's; people act like she's money, we were money hungry and it really makes me bitter and resentful to, like I say most of the people in this community.

01:21:38

A:

That um, they've never gotten involved with, with anything, with Fernald. Maybe a hundred families out of as many as 17,000 people that's been helped, I mean, there's maybe a hundred people. The rest of 'em as far as I'm concerned are just um, they're just um, mostly parasites, leeches.

01:22:09

Q:

Tell us a little bit about putting the whole legal action into um, into action really, how did, how did you guys do that? That's an incredible job. To get that whole ball rolling.

01:22:19

A:

Well, I'll tell you what, when we, we just felt totally helpless, I think, un-, until we found Stan Chesley and we did that. To me that was one heck of a relief and then, so I think the first thing we did before we came home after we ate, I think we went and told my parents. Because we didn't want them to hear that it was us, we told them, you know, we're okay and not to worry about us and all that, and um.

01:22:48

A:

Um, but even to this day there's people, they don't mean anything by it but it's a big joke to a lot of people. They say, hey does sparks fly when you kiss or do you glow in the dark; they think it's real cute. I just kind of, when people would ah, do that I would just never reply, I would just kind of look at 'em and never say anything.

01:23:17

A:

And they, I th-; I've had two people that had enough breeding to realize they said something that was, wasn't right and they apologized to me, two people. And those two people I think more of them now before I ever did before that happened because, because they had enough guts to admit they made a

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mistake. And, I think, you know, most really; people they don't mean anything about it that's why I never got real defensive about it or anything.

01:23:44

A:

Or, you know, I just kind of let 'em know by not saying anything they know they said something they shouldn't have said.

01:23:50

Q:

How long was the legal battle, and how hard was the legal battle?

01:23:53

A:

Seems like it was about, seems like it was about eight years, before we finally won out of court. I think it was at least that long.

01:24:10

Q:

And how, how do you feel when you heard that the government was gonna settle out of court?

01:24:16

A:

Well, it seems to me like if we would have lost this thing there was a lot of people, um, I don't know. I've heard people say behind our back and we'd hear, I mean, people don't realize it, there's a lot of people here don't know that we know who talked about us behind our backs and that. And people acted like, well these people are um, they're gonna be like laughed out o' town and all that and we kind of felt we would be if we lost this thing.

01:24:38

A:

But, um, we felt vindicated that we won this thing out of court. And they were really, um, we had a mock trial and uh, and it didn't go too good for the Department of Energy and um, so they were real anxious to settle out of court.

01:25:02

Q:

Give us a few details about that mock trial, where was it held, and who was involved and.

01:25:06

A:

Well, it was in Cincinnati and they had a jury and um, um, see we sued for th-, like 300 million dollars and this mock trial they awarded us I'm thinking, I think they came up with 130 some million I think. But um, Stan Chesley agreed to settle for I think like 79 million total then and there.

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01:25:34

A:

Because if you really went to trial uh, you would probably really get more money but there would be appeal upon appeal and it would still be going on. So the best thing to do is go ahead and settle it and get medical monitoring started and uh, you know, rather than wait another seven more years and a lot of people since died, my parents have both died.

01:26:03

A:

Um, that's another thing um, my grandparents lived over on Willey Road and um, they both died of cancer, my Dad's sister died of cancer, my Dad didn't die of cancer but he had cancer. Um, you know, maybe my family's predisposed to it, I don't know but that's just that much reason to fear um. They all had cancer and they didn't drink contaminated water like I did.

01:26:29

A:

So that's just another fear; and every time we all, we get sick our son, my wife or I we always kind of, I mean I've gone to the doctor for test of some extensive test and then just, I remember a year ago at this time I was terrified. Um, because I was afraid they were going to find cancer and they didn't, but um, its like.

01:26:56

A:

I think, well another thing I started getting, we started getting every book at the libraries, and everything about uranium and all that and um, we knew we couldn't afford, we couldn't absolutely take the chance on having another child. We were, we definitely talked about it, we wanted another child and um, but one book said uranium exposure could be fatal to unborn infants.

01:27:21

A:

And we thought there's no way we could take that chance because if, if we had a child it would maybe be you know, born dead or if were to survive, it would be deformed or something like that. So that's why our son. I remember he came home from school as a little kid with six or seven books and that, and he was all excited showing me these little books he'd got and that, and he showed me this one little Care Bear book, and said this is in case I get a little sister.

01:27:46

A:

And um, I felt so guilty, and um, we, we didn't, um, another thing, the Department of Energy, all their lawyers were the biggest bunch of crooks I ever saw. I remember they hire their own psychiatrist, and all that to interview me, and I remember telling that psychiatrist that story and I broke down crying.

01:28:17

A:

But I said something to one of our lawyers and that, he never mentioned that, that I'd start crying because of that incident and so there was like. And people think well, we just used taxpayers money to, for this lawsuit, we didn't. We filed purposely NLO, National Lead of Ohio uh, so as not to be

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suing ourselves. But the Department of Injury (Energy) in my opinion had something very seriously to hide because they were in bed with NLO.

01:28:49

A:

They took over and so it made it like we were, they were using our money to fight us, and for every dollar Stan Chesley used they used five. And uh, and so, of course, they're all paid to hide the truth and our attorneys are, are hired to expose the truth. So I understand uh, Chesley took this on and spent over a million bucks out of his own pocket.

01:29:23

A:

And the government, in the infinite wisdom, used five million dollars of, of our money to.

(Tape went blank and began again, battery failure)

2:01:07

Q:

In your opinion, um during this whole ordeal what was the worst moment?

02:01:14

A:

The very worst moment – I don't know if it's the worst moment, but a real, real bad moment was when Tom Luken was over at Crosby and there was 300 people in there. And there was all a great big sigh of relief for everybody, everybody in that room except us. I mean we were just amongst all these people, and he told about how you know, the amounts of uranium in the water, and we were amongst all these people, yet we were like by ourselves.

02:01:50

A:

And, I mean, we are definitely the worst known affected family within five miles of this place. I mean, I'm sure there's lots of people who have died because of Fernald, or gonna die of Fernald. But they, a 100 years after I'm dead they'll, they'll never be able to prove that's what caused it. We definitely know that we were exposed because we drank contaminated water for five years.

02:02:20

A:

We, we're the only family that'll ever have proof that we were exposed to Fernald's mismanaged botchery and um, it was deliberate. Um, there was a FRESH member that moved away that really summed it all up, that Chernobyl thing happened about a year after this; and um, and she said that Chernobyl was an accident; this was deliberate, and it definitely was deliberate.

02:02:50

A:

Our own government's using us for guinea pigs just to see what would happen to us. And I think when our son drank this contaminated water uh, they probably think hey, well this is really a good study right here, you know. We're gonna really be able to see. And I think really the people, the people that do

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all this have done it over the years all this testing and that, are absolutely the biggest idiots, educated fools I've ever seen in my life.

02:03:16

A:

When an architect designs a home, builds a building or something, they don't, they don't, they build scaled down model. They don't build it full scale or 10 or 20 times the size you need, all these, all these idiots with these underground nuclear bombs, all they're doing is just dropping bombs on our own country out in Nevada, uh, wherever they did it.

02:03:44

A:

Why couldn't they do it on a small scale, I think they're all just uh, little boys that didn't grow up and they just wanted to see a big boom. I remember something else, um; a neighbor of ours was in the military and observed one of those testing. And um, I remember he's been dead for several years and they cut him open once just sewed him up and said more or less every organ in your body is just eaten up with radiation.

02:04:16

A:

I know he's one of the military people that they deliberately exposed.

02:04:23

Q:

If you could have 10 years ago gone to the government, or let's see 15 years ago gone to the government and told them anything at that moment, that you found out your well was contaminated what would you have said to somebody from Fernald, from the DOE.

02:04:39

A:

I think a good ole fashion uh, taken behind the wood shed would have been appropriate, I'd just get back there with a two-handle club and just work 'em over. You got one idiot over there was some kind of health effects guy. He'd come to these meetings and say the stupid stuff like, ah, they tested all the fish in the river and all the fish upstream had less radia-, or uh, more radiation than ones downstream or.

02:05:10

A:

It's like I guess he's wanting us to think there's a fence out there where they couldn't get upstream or downstream. It didn't matter where they were tested at; they were in the same, in that river. And I remember people having, when this all came about, people were getting their produce tested and garden tested and that but they absolutely refused to tell 'em the results of anything, you had to fight them for everything.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

02:05:39

Q:

What other types of walls did you just run into, dealing with the government, and dealing with the Department of Energy, and with NLO at the time?

02:05:51

A:

Well, it seemed like no matter what it was they; they'd downplay it or deny it. And until you, like the Freedom of Information Act or something you'd come across it and then they, well then they were forced to own up to it and then they'd go to the next little thing and deny it. Um, so I mean the first thing they you know, I guess admitted there was 300 million pounds of uranium dust and now I don't know what the figure is, it's like tons and tons of it.

02:06:24

A:

And um, and they always want to act like that's all, one friend of ours, professor at U.C., said it was like all well-behaved dust. They always acted like the dust always, never went past the fence-line and we know it's gone farther than that.

02:06:47

A:

We had a Earth Day celebration over in front of Plant 1 one time and we were going to blow up all these balloons and kind of release them out there. Well there was somebody that acted like, "you do that you're polluting the environment". What they were really terrified of was for people to find out how far these balloons went. I think we still ought to do it.

02:07:05

A:

Or you know, put bottles in river, where all that waste goes down the river right now and just see how far it goes.

02:17:07

Q:

And in dealing with your, um, in dealing with Fernald in those years and since then, has anything changed?

02:07:26

A:

Well there's another thing that changed, um, I know when our son little, he had a couple of school friends, and both of them their fathers worked at Fernald. Well the one, uh, one kid spent several nights here you know, for a few years and our son would spend nights over at his house. But our son came home and said that he wasn't allowed to go to this other kid's house or the other kid wasn't allowed to come to our house because his Dad worked at the Fernald plant.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

02:08:00

A:

I mean that was his Dad's idea. So because of this, you know, our, us being victim, a victim of this our son lost at least one friend because of that, and I don't think that's fair at all.

02:08:18

Q:

What other ways did it affect Kenny since then and before then and?

02:08:26

A:

I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not, but he used to be really outgoing and all that. And after that happened, I mean he's got friends in school and that. But he got way more quieter and he'd go off in room and close the door and that, and he absolutely, if he knew the news media was coming here he didn't want anything to do with them.

02:08:46

A:

So, I don't know if people were picking at him at school like they did me at work or what, I mean I don't know what caused it but he definitely changed.

02:08:55

Q:

Tell us about what happened to you at work?

02:08:57

A:

Well at work you know, over the years there, somebody would say something if it was on the news about it they'd, come up to me. I mean, I had some people that were passionate about, compassionate, or whatever, knew that your health wasn't anything to laugh about. But there was always people, there was always somebody saying, "you got the Alpo glow" or "you glow at night," or "do sparks fly when you kiss?" and all that stuff like that.

02:09:23

A:

And I knew they didn't mean anything by it but, but whenever they did it I just never commented, I just kind of give them a stare and never say anything. And, and they'd get, I guess they'd get the message. I had two people apologize ever, only two people ever apologized to me for what they said they. Came back and said, "Hey, I'm sorry I realize I said something that really is pretty serious."

02:09:48

A:

And I said I really appreciate you apologizing and those people today I just the world of them, I think more of them now than I ever did.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

02:10:01

Q:

So let's talk a little bit about FRESH members um, since FRESH was formed um, you have obviously been a very close-knit group. Um, can tell you me about some of the people in FRESH that you've had uh, contact with, and, and um what it was like to be part of a "grass roots" effort to you know, fight the government.

02:10:21

A:

Well, earlier I mentioned we had this tornado came through in 1990. Well, it was, it was devastating, the very next day when the sun came up there was somebody knocking on the door? And it was a FRESH member's husband that I only met once, before that date. He was a Cincinnati policeman; it was his first day of vacation.

02:10:49

A:

He came out here and said, "I want to see, I want to see how you're doing out here." We didn't have electric or phones for about three days, I guess. He said, "this is the biggest, this is a huge mess." He kept sayin', "I don't see, I don't believe how your house is standing here, I cannot believe how your house is standing; well there's destruction around here." He said, "I'll be back, I'm going home to get my chain saw."

02:11:06

A:

So he came back and he stayed here all day with that chain saw on his first day of vacation. I mean if it wasn't for, you know, that's what I say, the people that, the people that are, have got enough guts to stand up and fight for, for their own you know, for themselves is the only people you can depend on. Because these people around here that won't, they sit around and wait for my wife do their fightin' for 'em.

02:11:25

A:

They're not gonna fight for themselves, they're sure not gonna, they're not, much good to me, you know, they're not gonna help me if they can't even fight for themselves. Uh, and I've seen people that got pretty good money from emotional distress and all that. And then they buy more land in the area, or they live farther away and move closer.

02:11:56

A:

So I mean I know there's a lot of people who will lie about their emotional distress. So that lawsuit's pretty much abused, a lot of it.

02:12:01

Q:

What's it like to be married to the lady who does all the fighting?

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

02:12:08

A:

I tell you what, that's the most incredible person I've ever met in my life. And I found out she's my very best friend. And if you got Lisa Crawford for a friend you've got a real gem. Um, after this lawsuit, after we got Stan Chesley, that was a tremendous relief and after about two years, I think it was about two years anniversary of her fighting this and just getting more people, behind her back.

02:12:44

A:

Um, talk about her and all of thing, sayin' she's just in it for money and everything. She, she said she's not gonna let that person stop me, I mean that's not gonna be the person to stop me. I'm gonna go ahead. And I told her, I said, after about two years, I said, "Lisa," I said, "I want to tell you something we got a lawyer working on this." I said, "you just ought to forget it."

02:12:58

A:

You cannot keep on sacrificing all your time and your money out of your own pocket, uh for this." And she says, "nope, I've already started it and we're too, we got start, we're too far along with this to stop." And somehow I already knew that's the an-, what the answer was gonna be, and I would probably be disappointed if she would have said she was gonna stop.

02:13:22

A:

But uh, because I know she's the kind of person that she's in it until it's over. And, she, and all these other people can condemn her all they want to, but I tell you what she's the one that's got all the civic leadership awards from, for over the years. And one of the two greater Cincinnatians, she's carried the Olympic torch representing our community.

02:13:50

A:

We've met the Clintons and Gores four times. We've had lunch in the White House with the Clintons and Gores. Now all the people can sit around and be jealous of that because they didn't, didn't get involved. But I, I can't believe that, you just can't believe how proud I am of Lisa Crawford. I mean there's all kinds of, (sighs) its unreal the abuse she's taken over the years.

02:14:22

A:

And by golly she's not going to let that little, little pea-brained person be the one to stop her. And she definitely is my very best friend.

02:14:39

Q:

What was your reaction to the news, you as a family more than anything, what was your reaction to the news that they were closing the plant?

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

02:14:47

A:

Well, um, I think it's great, you know, and a lot, I think at the beginning a lot of the workers that didn't know any better, kind of wanted to blame Lisa for that, but um, there's more people working there now than there ever was. And if it wasn't, wasn't for Lisa Crawford those people wouldn't be working back there. They wanted to put a fence around it, and use it for, they thought about using it for national sacrifice zone, but she wouldn't allow it.

02:15:17

A:

So they can thank Lisa Crawford for having a job there.

02:15:26

Q:

And once the plant was closed um, it took quite long time before they were finally gonna even talk about cleanup. What was the role of FRESH, and your family, in getting them to agree that they were gonna clean up Fernald?

02:15:44

A:

I think you might have to ask Lisa that question, she's the one that's really, I mean I kind of, I, I'm not destroying my health for the rest of my life like she is, to fight for the people of this community. Um, but she's, she applied pressure to them. She's got, there's, I don't know, there's some kind of a, she's got this innate ability to know what to do, and what not to do, and who to contact and who not to contact.

02:16:19

A:

It's just unbelievable the leadership ability she has to know who to contact to get things done. And I've seen her I don't know how many times over the years, she, people don't realize they call here wanting to speak to Lisa Crawford, I said she's at work. I mean she, she's got a full time paying job and then comes home. And over the years I've seen her on the computer at 11 or 12 o'clock at night or talking to people across this country at, at night like that.

02:16:49

A:

And have to get up and go to work the next day, and just do this day in day, out year after year. So, I mean she's the one that, her and several choice I mean, special FRESH people have kept the pressure on 'em. I mean, it's un-, you know, they just, um; of all the families in the community to drink the contaminated water they picked on the wrong family I tell you that.

02:17:22

Q:

How do you feel about the cleanup that's going on at Fernald now, the work that's going on now?

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02:17:24

A:

I think right now it's like; Fluor Daniels over there is the only contractor that I personally trust. There seems like it's the only outfit that's don't have PR people paid to lie to you or downplay seriousness of something. I think, I think they really want to clean it up. John Bradburne to me is one of the finest gentlemen I've ever met in my life.

02:18:04

A:

I know he's sincere, he wants it cleaned up. Um, managers from other outfits before this I know were all phony, come in here with their little PR people. But I think there's really some genuine serious cleanup going on right now. I hope Fluor Daniels is allowed to stay here until it's cleaned up.

02:18:26

Q:

And since they're tearing all the buildings down and everything, what would you personally, especially as a community leader, like to see done with the land once it's done?

02:18:36

A:

I'd like to see the land, uh, I'd like to see a federal, since it's federal property I would very seriously like to see a federal prison put over there, to house all, all these environmental polluters and people like that these white collar crimes. That's what I'd love to see happen.

02:19:02

Q:

Is there anything we didn't cover that you wanted to cover? Anything else you wanna say? Any question I didn't quite ask?

02:19:08

A:

I don't think so.

02:19:15

Good, (To cameraman: You wanna roll off nat sound?) We're gonna do something called natural sound. We just have to get the room tone for just about 30 second, so if we could have quiet on the set for 30 seconds. This is natural sound.