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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

Name: Stan Strimple

Date Interviewed: 4/20/99

Date Transcribed: 5/11/99

Tape 6

Project Number 20012

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**Tape FLHP0006**

10:01:02:22

Q:

Alright, if you could give us your name first of all and spell it for us that would be great.

My name is Stanley Strimple.

10:01:16:16

Q:

Great, and uh, where do you live right now?

A:

9454 Dry Fork Road, Harrison Ohio

10:01:25:02

Q:

OK, and how long have you lived in the area?

A:

Uh, well, we moved back to this area in 1940, so it's been a good many years. I had grandparents and family members that lived near here, but then my parents come back in 1940.

10:01:49:21

Q:

Great. And um, where did you go to school here in the area?

In Indiana?

Uh huh.

A:

I went to Lawrenceburg High School, I graduated from Lawrenceburg High School.

10:02:03:19

Q:

Great. And uh, I understand you worked at Fernald for awhile?

A:

Yeah, I worked there in the early days of construction in 1951. I was a, I was a tenant farmer and there's not too much future for tenant farmers so I needed extra income so I went over to Fernald when they started construction and I wanted to, I hoped to continue with my farming so I wanted a second shift job. So I went to Fernald and went to the motor pool. I had license for driving, and I went to motor pool and, uh, they said, uh, there are day drivers jobs. But then at night why they had a second shift of, uh, well we were grease monkeys or we, uh, serviced the vehicles or, uh, we washed the mud off of the bigger shots cars. Because when they constructed, that place was an awful mud hole for awhile back there. With oh

## FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

### Transcript

we, they brought in vehicles, uh, from some of them come in from Oak Ridge. Some of them from other government installations around and that, the only new vehicles we got over there were big real trucks, uh, the other vehicles were no longer necessary at other government installations we, the fire company and the ambulance and all those that way. Now, I don't know whether you want me just to go ahead and tell.

10:04:16:27

Q:

I don't know your story, so we'll get there in a second. (Laughter)

OK.

But uh how did you get your job at Fernald when you first began? How did you, did you just go over there and interview or?

10:04:25:10

A:

Yeah, I went over and asked if they had a job on second shift and there at the motor pool, and they told me, yeah. They could use someone to out grease vehicles, reservice them and wash them, clean them up at the end of the day shift that way, and so that's how I got the job with.

10:04:53:05

Q:

And at that point the plant wasn't built yet? Is that correct?

A:

No, it was, uh, just under construction. Uh, general contractors out in New York was George A. Fuller Company and that, uh, he had general construction contract.

10:05:15:13

Q:

So what was it like when the plant was first being built? Uh, was it just really really really busy or what kind of a?

A:

Yeah, uh, day shift was pretty busy. Uh they, uh, did not they only run the one shift because of labor unions was hoping for overtime and they only run a day shift, and so it was pretty much swarming with employees back.

10:05:55:12

Q:

Did you know what they were planning on doing there when you started your job.

A:

Yeah, I, I knew that it would because of it with connection with Oak Ridge and everything, that it was in the atomic field so.

10:06:14:28

Q:

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

And did you have to get Q clearance to work there or?

Ma-am?

Did you have to get uh special clearance to work there?

A:

Well I don't know whether they did any kind of clearance checks or not on me I really don't know, so.

10:06:36:06

Q:

Great, great. And uh, how long did you work there?

A:

Well, I uh worked there until they uh the motor pool began to go in under National Lead and then it was going to become day jobs and I didn't want a day job and so that's when I left and stayed with farming.

10:07:08:00

Q:

And where was the garage that you worked in? Where was it housed then?

A:

It was on the north side of the plant. We had an entrance coming down from what was it 126 that runs across there an entrance come down to the north side of the plant, and the motor pool was set up on the outside just the base of that grade like coming down from where that original north entrance had been. That's where the motor pool had been set up at that time, and uh, we I wasn't in the main plant part of it, uh, it was uh I usually during the day why I'd come in from 126, and then, uh, I would go out and hit Willey Road. I'd go out the south entrance, I'd leave the plant at the end of my shift. The only difference was coming in, why no security guard, but when I'd go leave security would come and check the car and everything then, leaving at night especially after coming through the plant that way.

10:08:34:03

We uh, we got there was quite a few vehicles there at the pool and they, they finally during, uh, they got the labor union to agree for one month to let them run a second shift, and on the second shift why then they did need a driver. They needed somebody, a driver and that was to drive the ambulance or the life squad whatever you want to describe it as, and so the hospital was set up in a farm house, uh, down, it was a brick farm house. I think maybe a story or a story and a half house, but, uh, down on east of where the motor pool was, and there was the nurse and I on the night shift down there at the hospital.

10:10:00:02

This was the easiest job for making money that I ever had in my life. Cause I set down there in the hospital and played canasta with the nurse for practically a whole shift, uh, she once in a while would get a mashed thumb or finger or something that way but then never much though interfered with us playing canasta down there. So, uh, that was really a soft job, and while there for the month I only was made one life squad or ambulance run.

10:10:51:02

One night when the day shift was leaving off, and uh, second shift was coming in why I was, uh, down at the hospital, and the call came for the ambulance to go down to parking lot. So I went to the parking lot

## FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

### Transcript

and here there's a one of the day employees was rushing and hurrying to get to his car to go home and had a heart attack there in the parking lot, and, uh, there was help there and loaded him and took the man to the hospital on the grounds there and the nurse says he's dead you take him to the morgue.

10:11:42:15

So, I uh didn't know what the situation would be at the morgue so I went back up to the motor pool and uh there was a truck driver still from the day shift there and I asked him if he wouldn't go along with me down to the morgue down Cincinnati. So we took the man down there to the morgue and he, uh as we were bringing him out of the stretcher out of the ambulance, evidently we didn't have his arms strapped too well, why one arm fell down alongside the stretcher and hit this fellow I had with me. Hit him on the leg and he turned loose right now and back in the vehicle he went. He was afraid he had been gotten.

10:12:40:18

So, I had to take the man in the to the elevator, on the I guess it was the upper floor of the morgue and took him down to the basement, and then I had to, he wouldn't ride the elevator go down with me or anything, he stayed in the ambulance up there. I had to go down and wait while they, uh, emptied his pockets and took all identification and everything, and they had to bring a big manilla envelope which they put all of his possessions in and I had to witness to everything in which they had found on this individual and that was the only experience that I have in driving the life squad. The ambulance is for one month over there and I went back to my grease monkey job then until I left the employment over there.

10:13:51:13

Q:

What year did you leave employment at Fernald?

A:

Uh, I, I can't say for sure that it was, I did anything in, I looked up some of my tax records and back I only showed income in '51 of working there. I don't whether I worked a short time in '52 or not I don't know.

10:14:21:17

Q:

So that was at the very, very beginning of the plant?

A:

Yeah. Was there at the very beginning.

That's really kind of neat. (Laughter)

10:14:31:08

Q:

Um, how did you think the uh the plant changed the area?

A:

Well it, uh, we were agricultural area and it did uh bring a lot of jobs, a lot of people, my uh buddy that went with me over at the time to get a job at National Lead that motor pool. Well, he went on and worked at National Lead and it made a lot of jobs for the young people of the community, and a lot of them spread into here from, well a young lady that I graduated with at Lawrenceburg High School, why she

## FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

### Transcript

traveled up here and had a job over in the office over here at Fernald. So it brought, made a lot of employment for cause those early days back there jobs weren't too plentiful to find so.

10:15:42:11

Q:

So it helped the community?

A:

Yeah, it helped the community economy wise and it uh of course there's been some scare tactics because of it and all. I don't know whether there has been any really bad adverse conditions brought on or anything.

10:16:16:22

Q:

Do you remember in the probably in the mid '80's when a lot of the media was a telling the story of there was a dust collector out in Plant 9 and it started to um put uranium out into the environment, do you remember those years?

A:

Yeah, yeah I remember of seeing the media liked to uh enlarge upon those stories. Of course there was certain National Lead admit that there was escaping of some radium that way and but back in the area where I lived and everything, we're on southeastern side of it, southwestern I'm sorry, prevailing winds travel to the northeast so they got more of it in the other direction than we got back here or anything.

10:17:25:08

Q:

Good. How did it make you feel when you found out that specific happening, were you and your family worried or?

A:

Not particularly, no we uh as I said on just beyond the five mile limit that Fernald had here and where I lived, of course I farmed around with them and the near radius of it, but as far as living, why we weren't concerned about any adverse conditions of it?

10:18:07:11

Q:

How about the aquifer?

A:

The aquifer comes again it mostly goes towards Whitewater River, it doesn't come I mean goes toward the Miami River. Now I think the aquifer that we're under uh goes towards, right now goes towards the Whitewater River this and where I live, why that aquifer travels that directions, but uh the Fernald plant primarily I think the water all goes towards the Whitewater River. Miami, I'm sorry I, between the two rivers, it's I say one thing and my mouth runs faster than my brain. (Laughter)

10:19:13:17

Q:

Um, generally how did you feel about having worked at Fernald, those early years?

## FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

### Transcript

A:

Well, it was good for my economy and I felt that it was something the country needed and I had no bitterness about it at all.

10:19:41:15

Q:

What do you think of the, a lot of the neighbors, that uh have a problem with Fernald and that have had a problem with Fernald for a number of years?

A:

Well, um, there's I know of some people that's had have problems and maybe some of them were associated, I don't know and it uh, I hope that it hasn't affected too many lives as far as losing lives that way from working there. It, uh, I my wife told me this morning, she knew I was coming up, she's says that the only story that she recalled about over here was there was a family lived in the farm which was right on the east side of your entrance over there now to the plant.

10:21:05:09

There was a Fuchs family that lived there, and she sat in the kitchen with Mrs. Fuchs when they first said that they were going to come here and purchase the ground and she said that she sat in the kitchen and Mrs. Fuchs cried tears run down her cheek because she was going to have to leave the community, all her friends and relatives and they went up to near Richmond, Ohio, Richmond, Indiana of course on a farm so they established new roots up there over the years, but then at the time she hated to leave this area, so.

10:21:58:14

Q:

That's interesting because we interviewed Marion.

Oh did you?

Her son, yes, yes.

I didn't know whether Marion was still living or not I've lost contact with him and uh well he just lost his dad, just this last year, Pat, and well this year I guess since the first of the year. But.

I didn't know that, I didn't realize that his father was still living.

Yeah. Marion's father died just uh since the first of January I think, so.

Wow.

10:22:44:19

Q:

Were you friends with their sons or?

A:

Yes, I knew Marion pretty well. My father also at one time had John Deere Farm Equipment business and they were customers, the Fuch's were for farm implements and things that way and I saw him due to contacts that way with the farm implement business.

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

10:23:19:11

Q:

Do you remember when they were asked to leave their farm? Did you have any contact with the sons? Did they tell you about that story at all?

A:

No, they didn't uh I, I, didn't know too much about that except my wife was set and talked to Mrs. Fuchs like I said she sat in the kitchen with Mrs. Fuchs at the time and she was pretty sad about having to leave the territory, so.

Well, that's a connection I didn't know about. But that's really neat that you told me that. (Laughter)

10:24:00:14

Q:

Um, how do you personally feel about the way the government handled the procurement of the land?

A:

Uh, well I, I don't recall and I don't know of any uh foreclosures or the government took it or anything. I think they were able to bargain and buy where the people and the government were both satisfied. I know some of them didn't like to be uprooted and have to move away but I, I don't know of government taking ????? or anything, I don't know, really, so.

10:24:47:20

Q:

Good. Good. Let's see, how much do you know about what's going on over at Fernald now?

A:

(Laughter) Um, not a great deal. Uh, it's, I know they're cleaning up I've been in there on one tour a year or so back when they were demolishing some of the buildings and they were moving some of the barrels and material from one concrete site to another and so forth, but then, and I was in with the Soil Conservation people when they was setting up and putting a big pit to around their, water waste off drainage from around there to try and catch basins they put in, I was in Soils, other than that I don't know too much about it.

10:26:04:02

That's a lot you know about it. (Laughter)

Well, I was involved in Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation, here, spent 30 no I spent 40 years on the board of the Soil Conservation District here so I knew a little bit about it that way.

10:26:30:17

Q:

How did Fernald impact your work with the Soil Conservation District?

A:

We uh didn't uh we had our technicians, uh, they were consulted on some of these clean up problems but otherwise we didn't have much doings or much association with Fernald things because they handled our renting of the farmland and everything and I don't think that they asked for any assistance or anything until they got into this cleanup business and then they did consult with us more.



**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

10:27:23:14

Q:

Great. Great. And I understand you're a member of the School Board?

A:

Yeah, I was, I served 10 years on the Southwest Local School Board here which comprises three townships here, Crosby, Whitewater, and Harrison Townships and uh after 10 years I thought it was, we had a lot of problems financially mostly because of supporting the school district and when you begin to worry about those things, why it's time to step away and let somebody else have those worries and that's what it was with me on the school board.

10:28:15:12

I and the biggest problem was finances of the board and they and of maintaining a good school district here. Of course, they're a little better off today than they were then. They've got other industries that have come in three townships has helped bring up the tax duplicates and things.

10:28:52:00

Q:

OK, um, did the site have any influence, in your opinion, since you were part of the School District um did the site have any influence on the School District?

A:

No, I don't, unless it would, it's a government property, park properties are nontaxable and it did cut back in some of their revenue of the School District, that, that is the only thing that I could see or affect that it had on the School District was our revenue. Of course, we now have the County Parks that come in since even Fernald and taken more property away from the School District, so.

10:29:50:20

Q:

Wow. Is there anything you'd like to add?

No, (Laughter) I think my wife is it won't take long cause in 5 minutes you can tell all you know (Laughter) so, my knowledge isn't that great.

?????? because we talked with you for half an hour. (Laughter) And you didn't even know it. (Laughter) Great. I think that'd do it. That's a terrific story.