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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Jim Miller

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Tape 11

Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0020

20:01:05:13

Q:

Alrighty. First question's really hard.

A:

What's my name?

Q:

It's actually easy. Yeah. Uh, if you could give us your name and spell it for us, just so we have it on tape.

A:

Jim Miller. Actually, James Miller.

20:01:25:04

Q:

Great. OK. Uh, first of all we're going to start with a little background. Uh, you've lived here all your life?

A:

Yes, Ma'am.

Q:

Tell me about your childhood, did you live on a farm, or . . . ?

A:

Uh, I was born right here in New Baltimore Ohio. And, uh, when I was five years old just as I was starting to school, my parents separated, got a divorce. I went to live with my grandparents, right down near Paddys Run Road; I could look over and see my other grandparents house. I was right across the creek on Paddys Run Road at Willey Road. I was raised 'til I was probably well, I would have been when the second World War started, 1940, things started getting tough and my uncle went in the army and my grandfather didn't have the help to farm. We moved off of the farm; we moved to New Haven and I lived in New Haven from probably 1940-1945 'til the war was over. 1945 I moved back in with my mother who lived over here who ran a garage and was an electrician and general repairman in the community. I finished what schooling I did living with him.

20:02:45:27

Q:

So what was the community like when you were a child?

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A:

Well, the community was, was primarily agricultural, uh, uh, everything around it was farmland. It was a lot of, we were more or less the sugar corn capital of the, of the country right in this area here. And they raised a lot of vegetable type stuff, uh, and a lot of field stuff, you know, for feeding animals and they weren't really too much in the soy bean and wheat thing that we are on now on most of the farms around here. But it was, the little town here, where I spent most of my life was uh, kind of a community center.

20:03:36:25

One time we had three saloons here and two grocery stores and then my uncle owned the feed mill, hardware store, lumbermill, whatever you want to call it. Walter H. Corsons was down in Fernald. The little town of Fernald. And uh, that was more or less the community center for right here. Everything hinged from there.

20:04:05:26

Q:

What did you guys do for fun?

A:

What was it now?

Q:

What did you do for fun? When you were a kid?

A:

What did we do for fun? Played in the river. And, oh, we had ball teams, they had the Fort Scott when I was up to oh, 14-15 years old Fort Scott camp was just right, right up the road from here. And uh, they had kids out there all summer. We had ball teams, and we'd play them in ball games and so forth and we, we had enough boys and girls around New Baltimore that we had an activity of, of a different, just different games and so forth that they played. And back in those days you could go to the saloon because it wasn't a saloon as we know it today or a café. You know, they had ice cream parlors in them and they patronized for the kids.

20:05:10:22

Q:

And uh...

A:

Can you pause?

Q:

Uh, huh, sure. Tell us about your grandfather? Uh, he owned the house near Paddys Run? Is that right?

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A:

My grandfather on my father's side was Albert Miller. He owned land up where uh, well the intersection from Paddys Run Road and Willey Road north and he owned across Willey Road. He built the house that's right on top of the hill as you come up the hill on Willey Road from Paddy Run and uh, he had a dairy farm more so than a agricultural farm and uh, he farmed there until I guess probably in the late 20's sometime and at that time he went into, my grandmother passed away, and he went into barn building.

20:06:21:14

He was a carpenter by trade, but he farmed out there. And uh, he sold out to the Knollman, to Henry Knollman, the Knollman family uh at that time, then he left here and went up to Camden Ohio, up in that area. Lived up there until he was 90 something years old. Then went to Florida. Lived down there till he was almost 100.

20:06:46:20

Q:

Wow. Long lived family.

A:

Huh?

Q:

(Laughter) Long lived family

A:

Yeah, he uh, he was quite a guy.

20:06:55:17

Q:

So they moved the barn when they came...?

A:

Yeah, the dairy barn that used to be across the road from the house, when the government bought the land; well, they moved the dairy barn across the road by the, up by the house.

20:07:11:19

Q:

Do you remember, um, when the government was first scoping out the land...

A:

Yeah.

Q:

...to build Fernald? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

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A:

Yeah, I can remember them coming in. They was uh, the first that we really knew that anything was going on; why, people came in and said don't sell your, your land to prospectors you know that are coming in because the government is looking to build a site here. They didn't say what, when or how or but, that was the first that we really knew that it was going on. Now my uncle ran the ah, saloon, grocery store, ah, haberdashery, whatever you wanted he sold it, uh, he was one of the first ones they came and talked to, to tell him to tell the people, you know, not to let people come in and buy their ground in case it was something that they wanted, were going to buy, because they were going to buy it anyhow.

20:08:11:20

So there was no use in you getting involved. And that was probably in the way early 50's sometime, '49-'50 somewhere. That was the first that we really knew they were going to do it and then, I think, the first farm that they bought up here which was Pat Fuch's which was real close to our family.

20:08:33:26

Q:

So you know the Fuch's?

A:

Oh yeah, very well.

Q:

We interviewed Marion.

A:

Huh?

Q:

We interviewed Marion.

A:

Oh, did ya. Me and Marion's about the same age.

Q:

Yeah, he's a good guy. Can you tell us a little bit about the whole idea of eminent domain? Can you tell us about when farmers started losing their land, what was that like?

A:

Well, at the very first, it was sort of a catastrophe because a lot of them, their families had them from generation after generation and it was kind of a disaster to them, but when it started really happening to when they knew that they were going to buy it and then seen that they were going to get enough money out of it that they could relocate, why it wasn't quite the disaster that it started out, you know, that

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everybody thought it was going to be.

20:09:22:20

Most of them relocated and uh, I would say that 90% of them were happier where they relocated than they were when they were here.

20:09:34:05

Q:

What kind of procedure did the government use to uh, gain the land from people, do you know?

A:

All that I seen, I didn't see any pressuring or anything like that. They would come in and make you an offer and inform you that they could buy it, you know, they'd use the eminent domain or whatever it took to buy the land because they couldn't have any islands in it, they called it. They had to buy it all and they informed everybody that they were going to do that. And uh, I told you before they didn't move any houses, but they did. Up on Paddys Run Road now, they went into those people, they moved two houses I know that are still there.

20:10:18:25

They went in and bought the land across the street. They did, I mean they actually did the process. They bought the land from someone else and moved their house from where it was over onto the other land and deeded it to them, and they were, I think the Bader family was one of them and uh, can't remember what the other one's name was the first, second house on the, right by Best Panel Homes there, that house was moved across the road from, from over on the reservation.

20:10:57:21

Q:

Wow, I didn't know that.

A:

Yeah.

Q:

I mean...

A:

But I don't think there was ever really any high pressure. I don't think anyone was ever, a lot of them didn't want to sell their home you know, or their place, but I think when they got done explaining it to them and telling them what you know, what they were going, you know they needed so many acres to do what they wanted to do. I think most of them understood it and I don't, I don't know that, I don't think the Knollmans were ever unhappy. Of course, they stayed in the general area right close and uh, the other people up on Paddys Run Road that owned property still stayed in the general area you know, they moved maybe 300 feet, but they, they still lived in that general area the rest of their lives.

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20:11:45:02

Q:

And uh, once they, once they bought all of the land up, did they tear the buildings down right away, the farm buildings that were there?

A:

No, not, they weren't, not no immediate thing. They gave the people the option. I can remember Fuch's, Pat Fuch's farm. He was one of the major farms that got taken down. Uh, because he was right, right up if you went 128 and turned left on Willey Road, he was right at the top of the hill on the right hand side. And uh, I know I went up there with my dad who, him and Pat Fuch were raised together as kids because the Fuch's lived there and the Miller's lived right down the street.

20:12:31:03

And uh, he uh, he had the option to get anything that he wanted. You know, he could take down a barn or whatever he wanted to do and they let, gave him oh, I don't know 2 or 3 months to get anything that he wanted out of it. The house, he could have had the house if he wanted to tear it down and move it or whatever he wanted to do with it. And he optioned to move to Indiana and they went up there and they took a lot of stuff out of it and then after they were done they tore it down immediately then. And the Wilpers family, there's still part of their buildings I think standing yet today, isn't there? Back there, that they never did tear down.

Q:

Yeah I think that's true.

20:13:15:21

A:

That was our first offices. They had them in the chicken houses, because I used to take the bills up to the gravel pit and they had a chicken house up there, up off of Louis Lane up in there you had to go, that was their main office. That they had it all fixed up.

Q:

Do you know Helen Underwood? (Who? Helen Clark, yeah).

20:13:42:10

A:

She used to head us off at the Chicken House.

Q:

Yeah, we interviewed her about that. She said, yeah, we had to do a lot of cleaning out before we could go in there. That's kind of interesting. Um, they used some of the other buildings too. What did they use some of the other buildings for?

20:13:57:27

A:

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Well, they used the barns and stuff that were back up in that particular area for repair shops and there was contractors in them. I never knew them to use them. I didn't know that much about what they were doing. But I did some welding and stuff for different contractors that came in there and they used some of the buildings and when they got done they tore them down. Uh, I don't think there was any buildings actually up on the site, you know, right on up around the compound where they've got it fenced in. I don't remember any buildings ever being there in that area.

20:14:40:06

But they used some of the out buildings, the outlying buildings for some of the contractors that came in to use them.

Q:

And what did the government tell everybody when they started tearing things down and clearing the land?

20:14:58:03

A:

Nothing, nothing, uh, the, everybody had a general consensus of what it was going to be because they more or less thought it was going to be something like the Madison proving ground or something. And then, when, after they got the buildings up and got some stuff up, it got so secretive that nobody actually knew and most of the people that lived around here said they had a big sign that said Materials Feed Plant.

20:15:31:14

It had checkerboard squares on the water towers and everything and lots and lots and lots of people that didn't live right here that thought it was a Purina Plant or something. And they didn't do anything to discourage it. I don't think they changed that name for several years, I know it was on the sign out there. And they didn't have no gates, you could drive in the front driveway up there so most people didn't even think that it was a government installation that it was.

Q:

The people that did live in the area and watched all of the building go on that watched the buildings go up on that site, did they know what was happening?

20:16:19:25

A:

Not totally. They had a good idea because of people working there and most of them were sworn to secrecy that would reveal only that they were doing this or doing that. But most of them, I don't think really knew what was totally going on. They knew what they were doing or what was happening right around them but I don't think they really had any realization.

20:16:44:10

We had a few people who that were in fairly higher up jobs. Mr. Burton who lived back here was the head of the electrical, the whole electrical thing for many years and he was pretty knowledgeable about

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what they were doing. And there was another man by the name of Bill Palmer that lived down here, he started out there probably around the early 50's with them and Bill was knowledgeable about what was going on. I don't think the average people that even worked there were totally knowledgeable of what they were producing.

Q:

How many of the workers did you know? Did you have a lot of contact with the workers?

20:17:27:19

A:

Oh yeah, yeah we, uh, would, a lot of the construction people more so than the actual workers. You see National Lead was the first, I believe the first contractor there and that was actually what it was called then. I mean it was National Lead, whatever they had nailed on it for a name, The Dutch Boy Paint sign and so forth. It was National Lead's logo and uh, just about everybody worked there worked for National Lead.

20:18:00:10

I, of course, the DOE was in there, but the people didn't realize that they were in there, it was though more or less that National Lead was running the whole show and actually they were just a contractor to the thing for many, many years. There was a lot of people that moved here that got a job there and ended up living here. That moved into the area. In fact, people came into our fire department that came here from ..., I don't remember off hand where they came from. A lot of them came from out of state, you know, most of them from the southwest.

20:18:48:03

I don't know what the attraction was, but I guess the Nevada stuff, they had knowledgeable enough to want to work at this.

Q:

Tell us about the construction years: what was it like in the area when all the construction was going on?

20:19:04:23

A:

Well, the construction area was probably for this area the most prosperous part of it for very good for the saloon business, I mean they would come in, in the morning at 5:00 in the morning and buy breakfast and drinks and this and that and another and then at noon they would come back and eat. The Les Flicks down here at that time was New Baltimore Gardens at that time. I don't know if they were serving too much food at that time but they would be back down there drinking a noon beer and eating sandwiches and such.

20:19:45:12

And over here they served plate lunches and there was another little saloon back over there called Smitty's, but they came into there and into the grocery stores and then a gang of them went into Ross,

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too. Uh, not for the first couple of years they didn't because they didn't have a road finished out to 126. It's further into Ross than it is into here.

20:20:09:19

Uh, and most of them were coming out of Cincinnati. All the trade council, you know trade workers were coming from Cincinnati area, south and east of here most of them and they came all through here, some of them came from the Colerain Avenue area, but I think the greatest majority of them came through here and you had a crowd every morning, every afternoon.

20:20:45:26

And then later on when they started on really pushing, they had second shift and third shift people building and you had people all hours.

Q:

How long did it take them to build Fernald?

20:20:59:22

A:

Not very long, about, I don't know when they started, early in the 50's because that was when I was knowledgeable about it and I was working on gravel trucks and stuff that were hauling to there and were digging gravel and some it processed and some of it non-processed that they used to build roadways, build up the, get them out of the mud around the buildings and so forth. And I don't know, I imagined it was done by or a major part of it was done by '55, '56 somewhere in there, I'd say. Three or four years they were, they had the major part of it up, I don't know, truthfully.

20:21:50:17

But as near as I can remember, the building part started going down in the later part of the 50's; there wasn't a demand for what there was prior to that.

Q:

Wow. And uh, what purpose did you and your friends think the plant served at that time?

20:22:10:22

A:

Well, a place to work. That was the major thing that we seen out of it, we didn't, uh, really know what purpose the plant, uh, the overall purpose, this cold war business, I mean, you knew it had something to do with the government security because of the security that they had there and um, I don't think the general area around here really paid much attention to it.

20:22:48:29

To really get involved in it. There was a few people that did. I mean, I was knowledgeable of it because of some of the people that I knew what they were trying to develop, were developing, they weren't trying they were doing it.

Q:

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Was it at that time that you helped to form the fire department here?

20:23:12:01

A:

We formed the fire department, my brother and two other people started it in 1953, I think and by 1954 we had got it incorporated and bought one truck, a pumper and in 1955, why I was in the fire department. I wasn't living right here then and then 1958, I bought this house over here and, of course, I was the closest one to the fire house. And when we built this building, I was still the closest one. It was right across the street from me and uh, we, uh when the fire department started there was about four or five people that put their name on the line for the trucks.

20:24:03:00

From then we built everything we had after that, our water trucks, then we bought um, well we've had several trucks over the years. But uh, we were a non-profit corporation, still exist. We still own this building and we've turned the fire department the operation over to Crosby Township. I was the trustee at that time in Crosby Township, and we still buy, we still buy, through the, if we've got something for the people. We don't buy any equipment anymore.

20:24:51:28

But we started out as all volunteers, it was volunteers up until you couldn't get them anymore. Up into probably mid-80's and then the volunteer business went caput there just wasn't enough people that had the interest the roots that made them want to be part of it.

20:25:21:05

But they're getting some younger people now that are interested; the next generation, you see, they get interested.

Q:

And in the beginning, what was this fire department's relationship to Fernald?

20:25:35:16

A:

In the beginning we had uh after about 1958, I'd say we had several people. Herb Myers for one, who was a, he had a pretty good job out there. He was the head of the tool-and-die department in the machine shop out there and another guy of Bob something, I can't remember his name anymore. He was a pipefitter and he was a personal friend of the fire chief at that time out there and we had about after 1958 we had a real good relationship with them. I mean, they would loan us anything or help us do anything and if we needed help during the day they'd come, or night or whatever they had send us they would and we'd mutually help them.

20:26:35:16

Because we were the closest thing to them. We did all of there uh, life squad stuff for several years because they didn't have enough, at that time, technicians just medical technicians, because we were all Red Cross trained at that time. That was before your EMT and all the things that they have today were

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in existence and we did most all of that for them. We hauled, if somebody got hurt or anything out there, we hauled, I'd say 95% of them we hauled in for them which made them help us and then there were several people that were on the fire department that were local people here.

20:27:22:26

And one of the guys, the guy that was a pipefitter out there, he eventually became the fire chief here for a few years which made the relationship a lot better because Bob was out there, I just can't remember what his last name was. But he at this time we covered parts of Colerain Township and within a 5 to 7 mile area that's the way they used to do it, they didn't pay attention to lines of any kind. If we had a fire department here we covered most of the stuff that we could get to the easiest and be the first to render any aid to them.

20:28:03:09

And when the political division started getting powerful in the later 80's why all of the townships started realizing they could get tax money, why that kind of broke that up and the lines broke off at county and township lines and so forth.

Q:

And how is your relationship, this fire department's relationships with Fernald changed through the years, I mean is it better now?

20:28:36:05

A:

Oh yeah, it's stayed very good and I, we've since the next generation took over, why I'd say they've had a lot better relationship than we did but the secretive part of up there kind of leveled out a little bit it wasn't as bad as it was over the first few years they were actually in production up there. And that kind of leveled out a little bit and the fire department got to know the people and they helped us do a lot of stuff like he was talking about to help us make some training movies and we used a lot of our stuff and they would send their people down here, when we had instructors, and take the instructor courses with us.

20:29:39:17

I think it's probably now than it was because it's more open. Jimmy can get on the phone right now and call up there and go up if they invite him up. You know, they used to do that, they'd come to see you or meet you, we never got past the parking lot.

Q:

Um, let's see what have we not covered. Um, have you ever heard any myths or legends about the plant?

21:01:29:16

A:

Not other than the guy that was supposed to have fell in the heat vat or whatever it was, never found nothing of him, about the only thing I've ever heard of it.

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Q:

Tell us about the process years when the plant was actually in operation, um, did you ever hear anything from any of the workers then, did they ever talk about their jobs at all.

21:01:56:12

A:

Very few of 'em, very few of 'em. You um, the a few of them that I was primarily in the electrical business and my father was the electric contractor. And some of them that were involved in that I talked to and they'd tell me different processes they were doing up there with all of the money they were spending to do the same thing that I'd do for \$1 would cost them \$10,000. And uh, because of the process, the procedures they had to go through it to do it but as far as the manufacturing we never ever, I never see the truckers and most of them didn't come through here.

21:02:44:19

Because most of them didn't come through here because there was no access road for 'em to get out, the bridge kind of stopped most of them. Most of them ran on state roads, they ran 128 or else go out and come out to New Haven Road to Harrison to go west or however they went and uh, you never heard much about it, the railroaders would come up here to eat or buy gas. I'd talk to some of them and they had very little to ever any of them to say about the processing that they done.

Q:

Wow. And um, during those process years were, did the Fernald Fire Department do joint response.

21:03:50:00

A:

Partially. Partially, they would, when they would, they trained with us people and during the operation they had people that did other jobs they weren't just fireman they were, worked at another job and why if a fire went off why then they respond with it. They would come out quite, pretty close locally but they didn't, they always furnished with water, they always had a big tanker of water, they'd always send that regardless. But as far as bringing out a pumper and there was few people, one or two with the pumper for manpower and uh, they, we never had any problem with that if we had them on a joint response, the Hamilton County response department.

21:04:50:07

You see, we were one of the first fire departments that was radio dispatched in this part of the country. We put that system in immediately, that's what the boxes are on the wall. They can set our siren off yet, we haven't blown it in 20 years, but they can still do it and as soon as we got the in home radios why we quit using the siren. But they were always very helpful to us.

Q:

Can you tell us about the tanker wreck that happened in Ross?

21:05:25:29

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A:

What the fire when the truck upset? That didn't have nothing to do with them that was the gasoline truck. That was, we had, uh we weren't into here yet we were still over in the other old building and we came in from the south end of it on State Route 128 and uh was trying to wash the fire off of the road. The fire was running on top of the water from there they were squirting it up above and coming down the road and we were washing it over into the field. We just kept a fire hose on it. We had probably, oh, I don't know, seven or eight people in there.

21:06:09:27

The houses that burned across the intersection, the fire was actually in front of the pavilion, that's where the truck upset, it was laying on its side right there in that intersection. Was going north and the car pulled out or whatever he done, I don't know, but anyway he tried to miss him, he still hit him, killed everybody. So the truck upset and was laying in the intersection over there but we never could get, there was so much gasoline on top of the water running down through there burning that about the only thing we could do we hooked into the wells there that Schomaker had, but now belongs to a man by the name of George Schwing.

21:06:48:21

He started those big wells up and pumped water to us to wash the fire across the road, there weren't no houses over there and we kept most of the fire over there in that ditch as it would run down the street but otherwise it was just scattering over all the water and setting everything on fire. It, uh, I think it burned two houses there right up there near the point of the road where 126 goes back and a gas station. It burned it up. But, uh we participated in it from I would say 15 minutes after it started we were probably there as quick as they could dispatch us. And, uh I think Fernald came in from 126 on it, they never were around us. Because we had our pumper sitting all there by itself and we were sitting down on this way out of the edge of town but where the water would run down we kept washing it over into the field over there and letting it burn out.

Q:

Why was the Fernald pumper especially valuable to the towns around here.

21:08:06:12

A:

To us? We really never got much use out of their pumper, now their tanker, their water tanker was very valuable to us because we had no water, see, I mean, any water we got has to be hauled in tankers. We still have, we still got a couple of tankers, I think we're still running one because there are still areas, you take New Baltimore the only place there's water is still down the main street.

21:08:31:18

They've never ran water back on the back streets, or back in the subdivision back there or anywhere. And we've only had water here only for about two or three years now. And we had to haul all the water we could get. If we had a fire water was a, because if you take a fire back in those days, we had 500 gallon pumpers and a 1000 gallon tanker and so that's two minutes, you know, if you turned it all on which we couldn't do, we didn't do.

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21:09:05:21

You had to preserve enough and then later on they started with the tank business they put portable tanks. We had folding portable tanks and we would set them up and the tanker'd just come in and dump and run and get another load. And you would be surprise, Fernald could come in with that big tank, you know with 5000 or 6000 gallons, we always kept them kind of in reserve. When we started to run low then they'd run water in and we'd set one pumper up from the portable tanks and he would supply, it would be like the water supply.

21:09:38:23

It was coming in to all the rest of the fire departments and the pumpers and so forth that was out of major fire. We've had a couple major fires. One of them was right down there in Fernald, was a major fire. And I think we had everything in the surrounding area in there. There was an outfit in there at that time making aerosol cans and they were using propane as the propellant. That's what you get in hair spray. A lot of people don't realize, you take a can of hair spray and light it up, it's like a torch.

21:10:14:08

But they, we had a major fire there. There was 50 gallon drums going 500 feet in the air and blowing up. We had milk truck -----, people hauled milk with their tankers was hauling water. We had Ross, and Harrison and Miamitown which is Whitewater Township now, we had Ross and Morgan township, I think had a pumper at that time. They were all down there. I think it took about a bigger part of 8 or 9 hours to get it to slow down any. Because everything that fed into it was more fuel. It was something that was highly explosive.

21:11:03:20

Q:

What year was that?

A:

Let's see, in the late '70's sometime, I think would be pretty close. I'd have to relate it to what I was doing at the time so I know where I was. I say it was in the '70's sometime, in the late '70's. That was where my uncle had the old feed mill there which is right there by the railroad tracks. That was the thing where this, I can't remember what the name of the outfit was that was in there. But they were filling aerosol cans, I remember that and uh they had a propane tank in there that was about a 10,000 gallon sitting back there and a major concern to everybody was to keep that thing cooled off and that was what we was trying to fight the rest of it. It burnt down probably 25 buildings in the process. All the old lumber buildings that he had there. They were using them for little shops to do this or that or the other in. And it, that was probably one of the major fires that everybody came and participated in that we had as big as what Ross was, everybody helped them.

21:12:22:22

Q:

Wow. I hadn't heard about that one. (Laughter)

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Miamitown a couple years later had a tanker of molasses. You wouldn't think molasses would burn, it does. The upset in the main intersection of 128 and Harrison Avenue. That burned down several buildings down there. Oh, man. (Cough) (Excuse me)

21:12:48:15

Q:

Now were you guys ever, um, the outlying fire departments, were they ever allowed on the Fernald site?

A:

Yeah, we've had to come in on, with the life squad especially. We've to come in, back in the times when I was still running on it, why they would meet us at the gate, somebody would go with us, you know the guard or somebody would get in with you and take you wherever they were at. Ninety percent of the time they had them ready for transportation. Sometimes it wasn't, sometimes it was stuff we had to do. Yeah, we came on the site.

21:13:30:07

Q:

How about during the coal bunker fire? Were you, were you on site then?

A:

That was when the bin caught on fire?

Yeah.

Yeah, I think they were, that was a little bit after I was pretty well not doing anything and I think they were there I'm sure of that. I remember them talking about it, but I wasn't there.

21:13:55:24

Q:

I thought so yeah. I thought you guys...

Huh.

That was shortly after I came on so I just remember the video.

Yeah. That was later on and I ran for 30 years with it then I slacked off. I still belong to the fire department, they need me, I'll go. I don't take any of the EMT training or anything. I'm not into that but I can still help and if they need help, I'll go cause I'm generally around someplace.

21:14:24:10

Q:

That's great.

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And we're associated because I have a wrecker business. You know the towing business and I'm generally associated with anything that they're doing that the county or state will have me in there towing the cars so I still help in whatever I have to do.

21:14:44:22

Q:

Great. And uh, how has the Fernald plant affected you and your family's life?

A:

I don't really know. I had cancer. I can't say I got it there or they caused it. My father died with cancer, my mother did. They lived right here in this area their whole lives but I can't, I really and truthfully don't think it had any affect on any of them or me. If it did I'd be suing them but I just I think it's more or less what I got was hereditary. It truthfully hasn't affected me very much at all. The only way it affected me was property values.

21:15:40:10

It kind of made our property values go up for a while when there were a lot of house demand and nobody would sell. If there was one for sale why it kind of made the demand for them be a lot higher. They brought more money. They were making more money probably than the average people were except for the trade unions. Kinda raised the property values but other than that why now they want to say they lowered them but I can't see how they lowered them when it ain't got no cheaper in my lifetime.

21:16:18:11

Q:

Now around 1989 there was a lot of media attention on the happenings going on out at Fernald and of course there was a dust collector leak out at Plant 9. Um, how did you react to that whole thing?

A:

About the same as I did the rest of them. A lot of people that were not totally knowledgeable what was actually going on that were getting excited that it was giving them cancer and they lived 60 miles from here or it was affecting their life. And I guess it was if they were worrying about it but I wasn't worried about it. It, we had people that came here from, one woman's still screaming that her kid got cancer cause he ate some, they had a garden 2 miles over here that they rented from somebody and raised vegetables in it and they ate it, he ate it and he got cancer because of them and she firmly believes this.

21:17:25:17

And I said well, why didn't you get it? You know it was always to me that the, when you see the national records unless they're adjusting them and I don't know it I don't think the cancer rate for the general whole area is much different than it is anywhere else in the state of Ohio or anything in the general area. I don't believe, at one time we were here, but I don't believe it is anymore.

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21:17:54:01

Q:

And uh, can you uh, just knowing um, just looking to see, one of my pre-interviews said that you mentioned, can you comment on the settlements for health effects and those kinds of things that are happening?

A:

Yeah, I'm not satisfied with that. It uh bothers me to the point that nobody can figure out why or how it was arrived at. I've lived here all my life and I've got basically nothing out of it. I've got a daughter lives out in Indiana and she got 100 thousand times as much as I did. And I got people that lived, that were just with this last settlement, that I think they paid. They average about 108 or 9 dollars and then you see one over here that got \$2500 and the other one got \$1500 and another one got \$40,000 and another one got \$60,000.

21:19:04:03

I don't understand how we arrived at these figures. Why, unless we like cattle and must be little bit better bred and they're worth more money I don't understand how they arrived at the cost that somebody else is worth more than anybody else. My opinion of the whole thing: they should have never given anybody any money, they should have come in here and put water in our whole area. The water that they contaminated. If they would have put potable water in every home in this whole area and said that was all they was going to do.

21:19:40:05

I'd have been the first guy that went to bat for them. That's what they should have done. When they put water in here, I had to pay for it. Some areas didn't have to pay for it and we don't understand that and nobody wants to explain to ya why. But the division of the settlement is totally bizarre to me. I don't understand how they can arrive at the figures they do. I can understand if somebody was involved and actually they thought he was affected by it more so mentally or physically or whatever I could understand that but that ain't what happened.

21:20:25:24

Q:

How about the medical monitoring program, are you part of that?

A:

No. No I didn't get involved in it.

Q:

I know a lot of people are, did they approach you about it?

A:

Yeah. I was sent the questionnaires. First question was they wanted to know how much money I made that year. That ain't none of their damn business. What's that got to do with me being sick or needing, and that was what 90%, and I think they figured it would too. The first few questions they

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had were such personal questions and nobody was going to answer them. You're into a bunch of Dutchmen out here and they ain't going to tell you nothing anyhow.

21:21:07:17

And I think that's why they had so many people that wouldn't participate in it. They ended up with the participation was in a further scope from the plant than 90% of them that did this was people that lived out in the 2 or 3 mile range. See this is in a 1 mile range of it here. And I think you'll find that the majority of the people who participated in it were out in the further ranges of it. And I guess they thought this was a handout that they could cap on I don't know. I'd rather go to my own doctor.

21:21:49:15

Q:

What do you think they'll hope to accomplish with the medical monitoring program?

A:

Oh, my opinion was they wanted to see what the effects of it was. Normally that's what it all boils down to anyway. I don't think they cured anybody. To set up a pattern to see if there was anything to it. I don't think that it had any other motive than that to find out if there was a pattern to it, so that if they gave you money so there must of been. Maybe there was a pattern to it. I guess he who hollered the loudest got the most.

21:22:38:05

Q:

Um, what are your impressions of the work that's going on right now at Fernald?

A:

What do I think of it? I personally think that they would be better off if they left it where it is. Secured it. And I think they have done, when I was still a trustee, what I could see with the cells and the stuff that they were building, that they were doing that. I think they'd be better off if they left it there rather than scatter it all over the United States. I don't care what you do or how you do it, it don't work good. There's bound to be an accident, there's bound to be something that would cause, and if, one of these days they'll find a way to, to process it away and I don't think they're that knowledgeable yet.

21:23:35:28

Q:

And how about the future land use, what do you see in mind for that land once it is, you know.

A:

They ought to take a bulldozer to it and re-woods it. Let the trees grow back. It ain't gonna be no good for nothing else. Would you feel comfortable on it? I wouldn't. Cause you don't, if they don't know what they buried, I'm sure that I wouldn't want to have to find out. Because when they are digging up stuff that they don't know that they buried, ah, and they did. Ah I'm sure that ah, I wouldn't want to be involved in it.

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21:24:11:22

A:

And their gonna be, I would bet cha for the next hundred years, trying to clean up the water, which I don't think they will ever accomplish. They may, that it will be very doubtful if they do. That what they've spent millions of dollars on now, I ain't seen no big trainloads of uranium go out of there yet.

21:24:33:08

A:

I bet I could've hauled it out in a pick-up truck. What they've got out of the water so far.

Q:

When did you, when were you first aware that there were problems with the water?

A:

Oh, about a year after they got into production. Fernald, down in the little town of Fernald was the first place that it was really ah, noticeable because they had real good drinking water down there and ah, I would go down to my Uncle's down there, I did a lot of work for him on the side as a, he was always building houses, or doing something to make a buck one way or another.

21:25:17:18

A:

And ah, I'd either be wiring a house for him or plumbing it or going down there to get something and, and the water down there got horrible. I mean, course I don't think the chemical companies helped it any down there, but ah, I'd say in the oh, '52, '53 sometime in there, the, the water became unuseable. In, at that area. Now, not in the rest of the area. But that was right in the aquifer of Paddys Run creek, and that was all the run-off from up there and the chemical companies that were on Paddys Run road there, they also emptied into that aquifer.

21:26:02:04

Q:

Did it just taste bad, did it look funny? What was wrong with it?

A:

You didn't have to, you couldn't taste it. You didn't have enough nerve to get it to your mouth. You'd get it up to just take a , they use to have a, one of those spigot on the outside down there and, and grab a cup or a paper cup, or whatever was around, you know, you could grab in the feed mill there and go out and get a drink of water. Well you wouldn't get up over (demonstrates with hand close to mouth) about that far, and the smell and the, the, the, it would be green foam, was the worst thing that rose up in the aquifer, I don't know.

21:26:36:08

A:

That was the thing that I noticed there. You could turn the thing on and let it run and it would actually have a, when the water puddle it would have a, a foam like on it. Like a soap ah, suds on top of it, and

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course that ended it. Nobody, they closed the wells all down and used them for flushing toilets and so forth and that was about it.

Q:
Wow,

21:27:06:28

A:
Well they've taken care of, they started, that was probably the earliest point that they started furnishing all them people bottled water down there, right, right after that. I mean ah, everybody that lived in that little town, and then they came in, I think within the next two years and built them all cisterns. And bought 'em water.

21:27:27:09

A:
They would buy them water and put it in the cisterns and use it. And ah, cause I don't think there's a well, there ain't a well in that area anymore that isn't capped yet. Just about all of them, I think maybe the two fire wells over at, at ah Webb Garden Street Iron Metal or whatever you want to call 'em, use to be Webb's Flea Market, that big building, that's what he built it for. And they run him off on account of the water.

21:27:53:29

A:
But I think those two fire wells are still open, but that's about the only thing that, they may not be, now they've got fire plugs down there. But they had two great big 50 horse power fire wells cause they used to work on wood pallets there. They had millions of 'em there.

Q:
Wow. Yeah, I've always wondered about the water. Um, since it was during the Cold War, for the most part, that they were doing most of the manufacturing up there, just from your point of view, how did the plant contribute to America's mission?

21:28:39:09

A:
Oh, I think, I think they contributed to it with threat of, of the atomic bomb or the hydrogen bomb that they actually were making components to it I guess. I think they, they contributed to the threat to, to ah make Russia realize that we had it, or that we were ahead of 'em, that, that there wouldn't be no Russia if they started anything. And ah, I think they're, they contributed to the, to the factor to help.

Tape FLHP0022

22:01:03:11

Q:
Um, we were sort of talking about national defense, living so close to the plant, um, how did you feel

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about being so close to something that was so integral to the national defense?

A:

Oh, at first it kind of bothered ya a little bit, if they, if we would be attacked or anything, that, that you know they didn't have to miss only 10 seconds and they'd have us. But ah, as it went on over the years, I think that all dwindled down and ah through the Cold War years, I think everybody's that had any sense realized that Russia didn't have enough gas to get over here and we were using it all for, for ah, _____ and that's what it was.

22:01:51:23

A:

They used that for everything they could think of. Oh, you can't mess with Russia, well Russia didn't even have enough fuel to put it an airplane to get over here let alone fight with us. They were living off of the German people and everybody that they occupied for years and I think people that were like me that were into the business to know that if Russia had anything that they would be trying to get into a world market and they weren't, you know.

22:02:20:22

A:

And all of the other countries in Europe were trying, hitting in the world market and selling stuff and I had several people that, that I built different stuff for over the United States that would come back and say that they'd, you know that they'd went to Europe and say you don't have to worry about Russia, they, they can't even make it over here unless they walk. Because they, they just don't have the, the, the money.

22:02:45:01

A:

Well, Hitler just about took all their money I guess, or any natural resources they had, because they lived off the natural resources of every, of every country that they ever occupied they, they never made a friend that I ever knew of, you know with an, with an occupation. But that didn't, after several years into it, it never bothered me a whole lot, that, that I was living that close to it.

Q:

And you were, you were how old during the second World War?

A:

I was born in 1930. (Response: Ok) So in 1940 I was 10, 1945 I was 15.

Q:

So when they first started using the atomic bomb, what was your reaction to that?

22:03:31:23

A:

Glad to see 'em use it. Got the war over. Ah, nobody wants to see anybody maimed or killed or anything, but ah, we wanted to see the war over. When you had to live here with rationing stamps and,

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and so forth, you couldn't have an automobile, you couldn't buy nothing, you, it ah, you wanted to see it over.

22:04:03:22

A:

And I, I had no qualms with it. I wish they could ended it another way, but they didn't so, ah, you weren't gonna teach the Japanese any other way. We have to listen to the Holocaust, but they don't want to talk about what the Japs did and that's a shame. They weren't nice people, and they were the aggressors.

22:04:31:23

Q:

There's a lot, I'm surprised to see that some of our interviewees, two of them so far, we've only done 11 interviews, two of our interviewers ah, were ah, actually in the invasion of Normandy. Just from this area.

A:

Have you interviewed Tom Pottinger yet?

Q:

No. I'm writing that name down right now. (Laugh). He does, he live in the area?

A:

Tom was in the south pacific, but ah, Joe Corson's another one you ought to put down.

22:05:02:03

Q:

I think he's on my list. I think he's on my list its C-O-U-R-I-S-I-N or C-O-U-R-S-I-N (Response: Pottinger) Corson?

A:

C-O-R-S-O-N. Response (C-O-R-S-O-N) He's my uncle.

Q:

Yeah, I know that, that name is someplace in...

A:

He went in the Army in 1939. That's the reason we got off the farm. All our free help left.

22:05:29:09

Q:

Ok. Um, generally, and this is just sort of recapping, how do you feel about having lived in such close proximity to Fernald all these year?

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A:

(Shaking head negatively) Doesn't bother me a whole lot. I, I have no qualms with it, I'd just assume they wasn't there, but they're there, so what're you gonna do about it, live with it and. It hasn't ah, it hasn't never really bothered me, to, to be here. They've never done anything to offend me. All the years I was president of the fire department, they, they tried to help me.

22:06:07:19

A:

Ah, I can never remember 'em ever doin' anything that, that was detrimental to us. Ah, that you know in the whole process, I don't ah, I just don't remember anything that was out of it. That, that, you didn't like it, you know, you ah, you ah, hate to see the, the land gone and that's what happened to it. When they moved in it was gone.

22:06:35:18

A:

To, you know to any useful use for us, or any useful purpose I'd say for us. Ah, I still think that they've got parts of, of, of the , some parts of the land up there that could be useful to the public. I don't know what, when, where, or how, but there, there's bound to be over the years, that there'll be some of it that'll, that'll become useful. If they'll just quit, they don't quit. Their doing more up there now than they did when they were in production.

22:07:09:19

A:

(Laughing) You see more, more ah monitoring I imagine what 90 percent of it is, but ah, they don't quit building. The land that they hadn't touched any on, now they're all over it. That was down along Paddy Run creek, all up through there, they've got stuff built all over it.

22:07:30:05

A:

Ah, I think one of these days, there'll be parts of it that, that'll be useful to somebody. It isn't as bad as like Jefferson Proving Grounds, you know you can't go anywhere, we used to go hunting down there, and now they, it's typical people, they've ruined it. You can't do nothing.

22:07:51:08

Q:

Is there anything you'd like to add?

A:

No. I'd like to see , I'd like to see a list of how they divided up the money. I'd like to talk to the guy that did it. I'd like to understand how he did it. I'd like to understand how they did it. If they want somebody to scream, I'll go up there and scream all day for 50,000 dollars. If that's what, that's what it takes. I ain't gonna go lie to nobody or say that it mentally bothered me or this that and the other, if that's how they did it. I don't know that, that's how they did it. But I'm just sayin', I can't figure it out, I've been here for a while. Ah.

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Q:
Good.