

3002524 Interviewer: Actually, can I get first of all before you start that you know that you're being video-taped and that you've given us permission. Can you just say that?

03003422 Jim: Yep, no that's fine. I'm very supportive of this. It's a great idea. OK, I'm Jim Fiore. I'm the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Site Closure within the Department of Energy. My responsibilities include the clean-up and final remediation of the closure sites. Those are the sites that we're trying to clean-up by 2006 or as close to 2006 as possible. It's a huge task, but it's a challenging task.

03010020 Interviewer: Why don't you tell us just a little bit about how you got involved with the Department of Energy and how long you spent there, you said you spent most of your career at headquarters, but how did you get involved in working with the Department of Energy to start with?

03011126 Jim: I went to the Department of Energy in 1976. I was interested in nuclear fuel reprocessing and the economics associated with that. And, I began my career working on reprocessing of fuel and recycling fuel and commercial reactors. Then, I've moved through a number of different jobs within the department associated with nuclear power. In 1980, I started to work on the high-level waste repository program for the ultimate disposition of high-level waste, commercial high-level waste in the country. And, then in 1987, I made the career change that has proved the most rewarding, which is to get involved in the Environmental Management Program. And, it was at that point that I started working with sites on getting the clean-up done, and the ultimate final remediation of over a hundred sites within the country. And, it's just been an exciting career, but the last 13, 14 years have been certainly the most exciting of all.

03021026 Interviewer: The Department of Energy is a very complex agency with multiple missions and tasks. Where do you see the EM, or Environmental Management Program, sort of within the constellation of the overall federal mission of the Department of Energy?

03022500 Jim: Within the department, there are two programs that just dwarf all the others: the Defense Programs and the Environmental Management Program. Those two programs together must take up 80% of the budget within the department. So we are clearly one of the two key parts of the Department, and we'll continue to be that for the foreseeable future. We get both the funding and secretarial attention of a program that size, and we'll continue to just be very, very important within the department.

03025808 Interviewer: You mentioned in your speech today that you got to spend a little bit of time here in 1992 and 93 time period. Tell us just a little bit about what led you to come to Fernald and some of your experiences.

03031207 Jim: I was involved back at headquarters watching the program out here; it was in one of the programs within my purview back there, and, we had just gone through the transition to the new contractor. And, at that time, we were making a change in the site manager's position. One manager had left, and we were searching to find who would be the next full-time manager. And they needed folks to come out on a 90-day or 120-day basis and keep things

going at the site. And, it served two things: one is it gave the site someone in charge, someone who could continue to drive things to closure; but, what it also did for me, is it give me great experience out in the field where the work's actually being done. So, my boss asked me to come out for 90 days, and it was, as I mentioned in my speech, the most rewarding 90 days of my career.

03040129 Interviewer: You mentioned in the speech that one of the aspects of that experience that you take with you is the role that community members and stakeholders play in clean-up activities and just various aspects of the site. So, could you reflect a little bit about what you saw here in the early 1990s as you were here?

03042118 Jim: Right. What I saw here was an intense amount of energy and interest in the site. As folks have said, the trust level that we enjoy today was not there. People weren't sure what was going on. They didn't believe many of the things the government was saying. And, it was a very difficult time. But, what I sensed was an intense amount of energy by the local stakeholders, but a commitment to not just criticize, but to learn and to help us do the job better. And I attended a number of public meetings. At that time, we would have 2 or 3 meetings with members of the public every week. And, these people with families would show up night after night to learn about different parts of the project so they could help us choose the correct actions. And, it just struck me that these people are not only there to watch over us, but they're there to help us. And together, over the years, over the last 8 or 9 years they've become such a part of the team. And many of the people like Lisa and Edwa know more about the site than most of the people that work here because of their dedication and their involvement. So, I saw that energy, and ultimately that energy turned in to trust and mutual cooperation.

03053126 Interviewer: You mentioned today, in your speech, that it's important to honor the efforts of the workers at sites like Fernald, at events such as the 50th Anniversary, and you actually said you wanted to thank them as a father and as an American. Could you just reflect a little bit on what you meant by that?

03055303 Jim: As many of the speakers had said, I believe we won the Cold War through the strong defense that this country built up. And it was built up by people working at sites like this that produced the nuclear materials we needed to have the nuclear deterrents. And, without those things, we would have been far less safe and much, much weaker position in the world. And, I think these people did their share as Congressman Portman said to help win that war. They were behind the scenes workers, but because they did it well, provided us nuclear materials we need to stay strong, we are a safer country today. And deep down I believe every one of these people are owed a sense of gratitude from the rest of the Americans for the job they did.

03064105 Interviewer: I just have one more question, just tell us a little more about this site closure program, accelerated closure program within the Department of Energy. What was the rationale behind identifying certain sites as sites that have potential for accelerated path, how DOE is attempting to facilitate the success stories within the complex?

03070311 Jim: When the department in Congress looked at the scope of the environmental legacy and the environmental clean-ups around the county, we're talking about hundreds of billions of dollars and 70, 80 decades at some of the sites. And, Congress recognized and we recognized that's just too long to sit around waiting for progress to happen, and they said, "Pick out some sites where you can achieve closure and final clean-up quickly." People want to see progress. It's a demonstration of taxpayer dollars, large amounts of taxpayer dollars are spent well. So, working with Congress, we identified a number of closure sites. Rocky Flats is one, Fernald is another, the Weldon Spring site in Missouri, the Mound site, where clean-up was achievable near to, at 2006 or shortly thereafter. And, Congress has put the resources and the budget commitment and the budget priority on those sites. And, it's our job to handle that responsibility and to bring those sites to closure. So, it's a high priority within administration. It's a high priority in Congress and enjoyed bi-partisan support. Everyone wants sites cleaned up, and Fernald is doing their part to be one of those sites completed on time and within cost.

03082007 Interviewer: What sort of relationship do you see between this program and the need to maintain a political will for those longer term, bigger challenges of a Hanford or some of the larger sites of the future?

03083116 Jim: Well, I think again, when people look at programs that stretch out over seventy years, they're hesitant to make commitments to those programs unless there's some confidence they'll succeed. And, what we need to do is be able to point to two, three, four examples of major clean-up where we took the dollars we were given, we achieved something, we finished, it was done completely, it was done correctly. So, if we can show that technology and the clean-ups can be done, I think it will make the job immensely easier for the Hanfords and Savannah Rivers. But, conversely, if we fail at these sites, Congress and the American taxpayer will not have confidence that those other jobs can be carried out. So, it's critical to the nation's clean-up, not just the Fernald's clean-up.

03092426 Interviewer: I got a small grant from the Ohio Environmental Educational Fund to develop some educational program, environmental history of the site for high school and junior high school age science and history teachers and students. Why, for the education of our children in this generation is it important to recognize the mark of things like a 50th Anniversary?

03094709 Jim: Well, I think events like this force all of us to kind of bridge the gap between what's happening now in the current generation of dot-coms and everything else. It forces us to go back and look at what has happened at the site. The pictures that we have of the old photographs of what was done here, the videotapes that are being made of the accomplishments of the site, those are things that help educate our sons and daughters as to what happened here. And, without events like this, often the attention is not focused on these things. And, when they see the people, the commitment, the people are everyday folks that were sitting in our audience and what they've done, it's a great history lesson. And, I think more and more with the things that distract our children today, we need to have events that focus on some of these things. As the congressman said, some children have no idea what the Cold War is, that it even happened, and yet it was such an interval part of our lives for four decades. So, these kinds of events help

us all to educate our children and make them see that something very, very important happened here.

031055 Interviewer: Thank you.