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Name: Rhonda Gilliam-Smith

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Tape: 67

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Tape FLHP 0153

13:01:00

Q:

All right. First thing, if you could just give us your name and spell it so we know we have it right.

A:

Rhonda, R-H-O-N-D-A. Gilliam, G-I-L-L-I-A-M. Smith, S-M-I-T-H.

13:01:16

Q:

Great. And uh, if you could just give us a little background, uh, where you were born, where you were educated, a little bit about your family.

A:

Well I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio till I was about 19 and I came to Cincinnati to attend the University of Cincinnati. There I met my husband, I stayed and got married and had two kids. Completed about three years of college.

13:01:39

A:

I didn't finish my last year, so after raising kids for a couple of years I went into a skill of pipefitting. And became a pipefitter about 14 years and took a job here on my fifteenth year of pipefitting and Fluor Daniel, I was working here, I finished my last year of college here. So uh, that kind of sums up my career and college here.

13:02:04

A:

I've got a BA in Communication Arts from the University, from the uh, not the University of Cincinnati, but uh, the College of Mt. Saint Joseph. And uh, Communication Arts, so.

Q:

Great! And uh, how, tell us a little bit about your training as a pipefitter. What did that involve?

13:02:24

A:

That involved four years of apprenticeship school. They have a pipefitter school in Cincinnati and you finish four years of uh, it's on the job training as well as school, as well as school. So it's technical training, you learn how to read blue prints, welding, safety issues uh, the application of piping systems, installing all types of pipes for boilers, and uh power plants, nuclear power plants and so forth.

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13:02:56

A:

You know how to put those pipes in, in the boilers.

Q:

Great, and uh, you worked mostly with Pipefitters Union 392.

A:

Yes.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about your work as a union worker.

13:03:10

A:

As a union worker I felt uh, I enjoyed being a union worker because uh, although you do pay your union dues you have many benefits to the union. Number one is equal pay for equal work. Women as well as men got paid the same, and that was refreshing.

13:03:28

A:

Uh, you worked 8 hours for 8 hours pay they say, but it was refreshing in the climate in which you're getting paid as well as men get paid, the same dollar for dollar. Also, they had many benefits as far as health care and uh, and I guess eyeglasses and also retirement fund. Most pipefitters that have uh 30 or 25 years of pipefitting actually get three checks when they retire.

13:03:54

A:

One of course is Social Security, one is a local pension check and one is an international check. A international pension check. So when skilled craftsmen retire they generally are paid very well from their retirement fund. And being in the union affords you that benefit.

Q:

Great, great! And did you do quite a lot of work at Fernald while you were with the pipefitters union?

13:04:21

A:

Yes. I worked with an outside contractor. At that time I believe it was Danis-Fluor, or Danis-Daniel, Danis and Daniel. It was just Daniel at that time and they had a joint venture with Danis. We worked on the A Watt building and actually put in the piping systems and the tanks out there. To prepare for what we're doing now.

13:04:42

A:

So I wasn't affiliated with Fernald at that time. I was outside contractor. Now from a outside contractors point of view the head safety would come on the job everyday make sure that, it was hot at

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this time, in '94, same summer of '94, very hot, but Daniel and Danis made sure that their workers were cool.

13:05:03

A:

So they had water stations, they actually had a nurse that would come out during the heat of the day and take our pulse to make sure that we didn't get heat exhaustion. And they were saying that safety was first and they cared about their workers. So I thought that was a great thing that they did. To make sure that we didn't get overheated on a construction site.

13:05:23

A:

Some jobs you don't have a nurse there. Or have someone to actually sit you down and cool off. Because you might know at most construction sites you can't sit, you might see people standing, but you won't see people sitting because you're not allowed to sit, there's no chairs there. So they did allow us to sit and to cool off and I always thought that that was really nice for a company to think about their employees like that.

13:05:47

A:

And if ever I were to leave the union, per se, 392, I would like to work for a company that cared about the people. So in '96 I applied for a job here and waited quite a few months because I was told that they had to ensure that all of their workers inside here, there were pipefitters that wanted to be pipefitters that they would get the choice, the first choice.

13:06:08

A:

And after everything was exhausted for the internal employees then they allowed the outside people to come. So I came in February of '97 as a pipefitter.

Q:

Great! And uh, gosh, I had a question on my mind, and now I forgot what it was (laughter). Umm, what was your first impression of the site, when you first, the very first time you came here?

13:06:41

A:

The very first time. That including, I was working for an outside contractor, the first time as an employee before I even stepped on here I had a week of Rad training. So I could not even go past, in the back without being trained. And having a dosimeter.

13:06:57

A:

So I saw so many movies, and videos about radiological concerns, how to dress, how to be, so when I first walked out there the training was so massive you kind of get a little scared. Because they was saying about how we have to, you know, frisk in, frisk out, and have to dress, I had to dress or uh, this particular site, they told us the history of it, and why it was built, and the particular buildings, there was many things about it.

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13:07:28

A:

And but it did allow me to ask questions at that time. So I was very watchful when I first set foot in the back. Because they said be careful and watch. But yet I felt well trained because I went through 40 hours of training even before I started the job. So I felt secure in the fact that at least I'm well trained to go back here. And that there was people available to ask any questions that I had.

13:07:53

A:

And many of it was just kind of like hype that I had heard from the outside about the back. It wasn't reality it was just hype. So I was kind of stuck on the hype for awhile until I realized that was just hype ya know.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about that hype. What exactly did that involve? What are some of the things that you had heard before you worked here?

13:08:12

A:

Way before I even thought about working here. I always thought about some kind of chemical or nuclear plant, it's hot, you're gonna glow when you get home, take the stuff home with you, it ruins your genetics. You know you got freak kids coming out.

13:08:26

A:

So, these are things you hear. And uh, as a matter of fact that was a concern of my husband when I told him that I wanted to apply here. Uh, he said one day, I don't know if I want you to work out there, I've heard this and I've heard that.

13:08:40

A:

And we had a mutual friend who worked here as an electrician, came over to our house and he said I don't know if I want Rhonda to work, my husband said. And then this electrician said I worked out there I'm actually back there, I haven't had any situation with, there's training out there. Safety comes first, if you see something you can stop.

13:08:56

A:

You never have to work and do anything that you unsure about. That was a wonderful safety clause as a worker, because you don't always have the opportunity outside in construction. They come to tell you to do it, you do it. Here you can actually stop work and say I feel unsafe, I feel unsure.

13:09:13

A:

And that's nice to know. So with his assurance, of the electrician, who actually worked out here, I went on his word and completed my application and applied for the job.

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Q:
Generally, how do you find uh, safety here on site?

13:09:29

A:
Safety uh, works right now, safety in both positions. As a worker I see safety, I hate to say it's too safe. Yes they say you can never be too safe, but coming from construction where you have to meet these deadlines, get so many feet of pipe in, these are private companies out there with private dollars and they want to get a lot of work in. So you have to do a lot of work, sometimes you do things unsafe.

13:09:55

A:
But because of your experience you do it out there to get the job done. Here they're more interested in, in safety than I would say than anything else. So I had to realize, okay this is safety first, I cannot have one foot on the ladder and one foot on the pipe. I have both feet on the ladder, it takes, I have to re-train myself because I was trained get the job done – safety comes second. Where here, safety is first.

13:10:23

A:
So if you're gonna have to move that ladder twenty times, instead of reaching and extending yourself, do it. So uh, that was well trained in me. Rhonda, safety first. You can't do that, you can't do that. You've got to attend to these particular, all these procedures for safety. So that was kind of difficult to deal with in the beginning.

13:10:46

A:
Is to realize it, these people aren't just talking safety, I mean you really have to do the safety stuff. And from a worker, that has to do, you know, used to doing a lot of things you have to curtail uh, a lot of work. But it does save lives and keep people from falling. So I guess it's good in the long run.

13:11:06

A:
But that's, I think the number one thing of craft, when they come out here from other construction companies is that what would normally take them you know, 2 hours, this might take you 4, 6. Because you are actually working by a procedure and a safety plan, you're not just going and doing it. And that takes people a while to adjust to that.

Q:
Great! And uh, tell us a little bit about what a pipefitter on site doing, you're working in safe shutdown? (Comment – yeah) Tell us that type of process, what is there, what entails?

13:11:48

A:
Well safe shutdown kind of describes what it did – a safe shut down. When you have to isolate piping systems, of course you've got all kinds of fluids going through these pipes, could be from acids to even water, contaminated water, to some thorium, some other types of chemicals and hot material out there

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that actually go through the pipe.

13:12:11

A:

Now if we're never gonna have to shut down these buildings, you don't just go in there and rip 'em out. They have to be safely shutdown so that when they are imploded that there's nothing in the dust, nothing in the water, that can actually contaminate the ground water or the air.

13:12:27

A:

So that you have to go through specific procedures, first of all is isolate the pipe, you know pipe, close off the valves, cut open and leave a gap so that, so that there's a gap between any of the flow. Drain them in the appropriate canisters. So it's a draining process.

13:12:44

A:

Then the closing off of valves and putting on the bolts so that when the construction company that actually does the heavy demolition, that they can safely take the pipes that have been drained and isolated to a uh, you know, wherever they take the pipes. So that's what involve. We would dress out, go in there, close off valve, drain systems, isolate the system.

13:13:07

A:

So it probably you would do some air gapping and isolation of systems that have long gone been turned off. But sometimes you still might have residue in the pipes. And that insured, not just goin' in there because some contractors that might not have that skill outside would go in there, cut the pipe, take the pipe out, no. Has to be drained, isolated. Has to go through a mirage of, of procedures to do that.

13:13:33

A:

So that's what I did. And it was uh, interesting at times to say the least. It was very hot and we had to wear the suits. Uh, we worked very carefully uh, to do that job. So uh, any time you can ask questions about what you doin', so I feel pretty safe, doin' my work out there. And I had to wear the respirators and work in the heat, but you're timed, it was very hot.

13:13:59

A:

Sometimes you even stay dressed out a half an hour, 45 minutes. You not dressed out all day in that. You come in, you shower, you drink your water, you rest, you go back in the afternoon.

13:14:10

Q:

Describe the protective gear that you had to wear for that job.

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A:

The most jobs, every job has it's own PPE, Personal Protective Equipment. Based upon what the radiological experts say, they know what the job entails. Now they attach what the PPE's require. Some jobs you might just put on a lab coat, some rubber shoes and gloves. That was a very, very safe type of work. Then there was some where you really had to dress out.

13:14:37

A:

So d-, dependin' on the work, it had this level of PPE. And before you wore the PPE, you were sat down with the Rad Tech and describe, "This is why you wearin' the PPE," and "Do you have any questions?" And then you sign it, and say, "Yeah, I understand why I'm wearin' this." So therefore, you're not just puttin' it on, you don't know why you're wearin' it.

13:14:57

A:

And you also understand the concerns and the cautions, and the precautions about the job that you're doin'. "This job entails some contaminated water. We believe it might be a hundred gallons in here. You're gonna wear this to that, so that you can protect yourself against this." So uh, PPE's very, very important. And also how you put it on.

13:15:20

A:

So you kind o' buddy system, you see how each other put their, but their, their clothes on, you puttin' on your respirator, you know, you might have somethin' tucked wrong, but somebody's there to help you tuck your clothes in, you tape it. And then you go on out. What was nice, they had some large trailers.

13:15:34

A:

One side was for the male, you had a hallway, or a, uh, uh, buffer zone, then you had the women's side, so you were able to dress, and shower, and safe you know, secure area, separate the men from the women.

13:15:52

Q:

What's it like to put on a full-face respirator?

A:

Well, uh, for me it was all right because I scuba dive. But for some, they don't like it, because you really have to have good lungs. Because if it's a negative pressure, you're like your lungs actually pulling in the air, because you're not havin' any type of air line to it.

13:16:13

A:

And walkin' up steps and wearin' those clothes, you're really usin' your lungs. I've often wondered about those who smoked, and used those negative pressure, because you're usin' all your lung capacity to get that air in there. So you have to be in the best type of health. And that's why some, you might

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find, or are not prescribed, or cannot wear respirators because they have some type of, of breathing problem.

13:16:37

A:

You have to be healthy, I would say. Because of the sweat, you're breathin' heavy. You're walkin' up and down the steps. Air's not, you know, you're covered up from plastic from head to foot, doubly taped. So you gonna have to be healthy, for that job. And if you can't do it, they don't pressure you to do it. You might be a day when you're just not feelin' well, and all of us go through that.

13:17:00

A:

Even those who are healthy. Just tell your supervisor, "I just don't feel well today, my stomach or my head." He say, "Why, just sit out." Or then do a job that don't require you to wear that. So you won't fall out with all that stuff on. So you never like uh, feel threatened that, "Oh, I've got to wear this today, and I just don't feel good." No, you don't have to wear it today. We'll find somethin' very, else for you to do.

13:17:23

Q:

Great. And tell us how uh, you um, moved into bein' a planner then.

A:

Oh yes. Well, I always knew about 5 or 10 years ago when I was workin' with the contractors, I didn't necessarily wanna be a pipefitter all of my life. I saw in construction that there's different avenues people can take. Some men take oh, foreman, or they wanna go to project manager. I wanted to do different things in the construction company, and let's just say always work in the field.

13:17:49

A:

When there was a job opening in the planner, that showed me, uh, that this would show me the other side of what jobs is. I always received the work package. "I want you to put this in. You need to install that." As a planner, I would be the one actually writing the plans, and estimating the jobs. So when that opportunity came, I applied, and then uh, received the job, was accepted for the job, so I was happy.

13:18:13

A:

And that showed me other side of construction. Now I saw what it took for the work was actually to do the job. We would receive the prints. We would receive the work packages. But I never realized the time, and the effort, and the expertise, and all the individuals that it takes to do this one job. I thought that, "Oh, I've gotta do this job." But it takes a lot of administration to do a particular job.

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13:18:36

A:

And uh, I can appreciate the other side of things now. The office part, where before, I thought just the workers are doin' the bulk of the work. But a lot o' work is done at the computer and, on the desk that I didn't realize. Interfacing between Fire Protection, Radiological, uh, I.H., all o' these people work together for one job.

13:18:59

A:

So even though pipefitters, electricians are don' it, you got the Safety people watchin', who have put their expertise to the work package. You, if you just devolve, if it involves fire, you've got the fire experts to make sure that everything is covered as far as Fire Protection is concerned. So everybody is involved when you see one person to do a particular work order, so a lot o' people are involved.

13:19:21

A:

And I didn't know that, just bein' a pipefitter. I didn't realize all o' these people it takes just to do one job. And that was interesting.

13:19:31

Q:

So how does the process of planning a job, how does that work?

A:

Process goes by, anyone. Let's say you're workin' in a office, and your air conditioner is, is broke. And you say, "Well, this air conditioner is broke." That's the first thing. Somebody out there has to, 'cause see I work in the maintenance department. So that somewhat different, because after safe shutdown, now we have to maintain buildings. So if the people can work in them.

13:19:54

A:

And Maintenance is uh, very important because if your, if you can't maintain your building, it break down, your other people can't do their other jobs. So let's say perhaps there's an accountant, in an office, and his air condition is down. So he will let his supervisor know which will call their facility owner, that particular overlooks the buildings.

13:20:14

A:

The owner now will put in a work order sayin', "One of my buildings do not have air conditioning at all." And that go through a wonderful software system. It will type it in, goes through the system, goes to the planning maintenance depar-, department where my supervisor sees the work request that someone has to, it has to go through Engineering.

13:20:33

A:

And everybody approves it, has to go through approval, approval. "They need air conditioning." Somebody's already really realized that they do need it. Goes through the planning department, where

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my supervisor picks and choose the planner for the job. They have a p-, uh, planner this who is electrician. And most o' the electrical work will go of course, to the planner that is a electrician by craft.

13:20:55

A:

I received a lot of planning that involves HHVC, air conditioning, underground piping and overhead piping. So if it involves that it would be in my view. I go to work, oh, I've got a new job. It's to involve planning, this particular air conditioning for Building 1. So I print that, take that and go to Building 1 to the person who says that they're the originator, Jim Smith.

13:21:21

A:

Jim Smith says yes my air conditioner is broke, so now I take the craft people who are involved in helping air conditioners, putting in air conditioners, this is the problem. How do we work it and they tell me. Now I've got to go Safety because we have to go to the roof and Safety has to assure that if these guys working on this roof, the roofs are stable enough. They're, you know all the safety issues for the roof.

13:21:45

A:

So in each level, each expert brings their list of concerns and the issues that they have to make, we have to make sure this work is done in a safe manner. So, um once that job is completed it has to be cost approved. Nothing is done unless by cost of administrator, manager, CAM, and he or she approves the price of that job because he has a budget he must meet.

13:22:15

A:

And he might say is this really going to say this, is this really going to cost this much, so I just can't go out and buy anything, everything has to be approved to fit within the budget restraints that they have. And once it is approved their job is done. And we try to keep that price within the price he agreed upon paying for it. And that's where the estimator comes.

13:22:38

A:

We have to make sure our estimation is true to the actual cost. You know your plan verses your actuals and that your actuals are really what you planned. Sometimes things go wrong and they have to be adjusted. But you keep track of what supervisor, how's the job doing. Is everything all right because adjustments can be made?

13:22:57

A:

And even in those adjustments the CAM is notified. Say this job we thought it was going to take, cost 500.00, it might cost 750.00 or 1000.00, if that's all right, he gives approval to do that. So it's an amazing amount of um people working together out here to get a job done and that takes time and many people don't understand that time element.

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13:23:27

A:

Where they can actually see what's actually being done. As a matter of fact we had a couple of VPs that came here from another site. And part of our job in maintenance was to walk the VP down so that he could actually see why does it take you so long to get these jobs done.

13:23:44

A:

And when he actually walked these jobs down from cradle to grave, sort of speak, he had to almost say I am very sorry. I didn't realize that it takes so long through paperwork and through procedures and through interfacing with other people that it takes so long to do the job.

13:24:05

A:

But at every point, i's had to be dotted and our t's had to be crossed before that work was done. And so now that he sees it, he's more sympathetic and seeing the cost of things, you know.

13:24:21

Q:

That's also true about the public too, because we've heard quite a few times that the cleanup is inefficient. Can you address that?

13:24:28

A:

Where I can address that, I wasn't so much aware for the public because I don't live in this area even though I live in the Cincinnati area. But I can address that and somewhat empathize with the public from a worker's standpoint because we would wonder why is it taking them so long to get this work order out and we put work order in. This is before I was a planner.

13:24:48

A:

We would address the issue that this piping has to be isolated and it would come back 6 months later with the actual paperwork and I would say why is it taking so long because I never saw the other side of it. And now when people call me up on the phone, what's taking that work order so long. I chuckle because I'm saying I understand what you mean.

13:25:14

A:

But believe me this is the policy, practices and procedures even by DOE, OSHA, NIOSH is involved because of some radiological concerns. And also just what you call computerization now; fax machines, telephones and all these things to help us communicate better sometimes work to our detriment. Because people communicate so much better now.

13:25:41

A:

Everybody gets too much communication, through e-mail, cc-mail; we're communicating too well. And that means more people can contact and you and you have to get back with so many people now.

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So, um that's involved now so I really empathize with the public as far as what takes so long. But I'm glad to hear that, I think the public getting involved in what it takes here to get it done.

13:26:06

A:

And if they had between just get it done and seeing how we really get things done, they would choose plan B over plan A. Because when you make a cake, you don't just make a cake, you have to get all the ingredients together, make sure everything is right, the oven has to be right, you know in temperature. And only then you begin to whip and only so many times.

13:26:27

A:

Go by a recipe, go by a plan, certain amount of ingredients and then the cake has to cool. So before people can even eat it from the time you planned to bake a cake and combine the ingredients to make sure the oven is right. Nobody is jumping up and down in the kitchen so the cake can fall, to the time they actually ice it to eat it that's hours and all they see is the cake.

13:26:50

A:

But they didn't see the money it costs, the time and effort it took to make the cake. So I'm kind of saying this is what it is when they see the work done that's the final product. But it's so many ingredients involved in it that you just don't know. So I would tell the public if they say it takes a cake. I would say yes it does, it takes a cake, as long as it takes to make a cake.

13:27:16

A:

In construction terms it does take a long time to get things done here. But believe me we're not sitting on our ducks we're getting out there trying to get the job done. But I wouldn't have said that a year and a half ago because I didn't see the other side of the fence. I can only say this because I see both sides now.

13:27:36

Q:

That's great. How do you feel the cleanup is going from both sides of the fence there?

13:27:46

A:

Well, I tell you what, from the inside I think it's going a lot quicker. In a matter of fact hearing from the workers because I really work with the workers, the buildings that they used to work in they're not working in there anymore and they're saying it looks a lot different now. Building 12 where maintenance was is moving to, um, far away remote little building.

13:28:06

A:

And we're not allowed there. We're walking in areas in the back that used to be workable sites and nobody's in that building and the lights are off and all the isolation is ready to be dismantled and people

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are saying that they're serious about this place. They're serious about getting these things done and this is just the worker's point of view.

13:28:28

A:

Um, I guess I put it like this I've got two teenage sons and I'm with them all the time and I don't see them growing but then their grandmother says, wow, he's grown so much because she, you know, she doesn't see them every day. So everyday I don't see much growth because I'm here every day. But then when you look, really look at a year ago the places you used to work, the buildings that used to be here.

13:29:03

A:

You say, wow that's a big difference. So I think we've kind of got the kid syndrome where you don't really see your kids growing but they're growing until you have to buy some shoes for them. So I don't see it, really don't, because I'm here every day, I'm just too close. But when I back up after 6 months to say wow, that job is done.

13:29:19

A:

I remember (pointing behind her) when they just started that job and it's done and it's up and about. And Isolation Systems as a planner, I'm planning work to isolate work and the work that used to be live and there was piping in those, you know, water, systems going. Those are dead systems and I remember that those were live systems. So I just see my small advantage point in some areas that there's growth.

13:29:47

A:

Not necessarily growth, the opposite of growth, we would say digressing which is probably positive, getting smaller and smaller.

13:29:47

Q:

Okay, we're going to take a short break while we switch tapes.

Tape FLHP 0154

14:01:07

Q:

Now for a long time, um, you were the only female pipefitter on the process side and can you tell us a little bit what it's like finding your self-confidence as a woman in sort of a man's world.

14:01:20

A:

Well, uh, I guess before I came here onsite I worked with a lot of men out in construction. So being a woman and non-traditional it's different, it develops you, I believe it makes or breaks you. You

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develop a certain amount of internal; I think all self esteem comes from within, I think someone says you can't build your esteem, self-esteem and motivation comes from within.

14:01:44

A:

But unless you've tried sometimes we don't know it's there and in a woman in any possibly now traditional job you have to find your motivation and you have to find your own self-esteem because it can be challenged every day. Most people feel the challenge but when you're constantly challenged every brand new day with the same type of challenges every day you have to say I know my job and I'm good at my job.

14:02:09

A:

And I think it's good and when I came here I was used to being, even though I know there are other pipefitters out at the construction, here I was just the only female pipefitter. So I've already established myself as a good worker, as a good pipefitter and I already knew in myself, Rhonda, you're here to stay. After 20 or 15 years you know that this is what you're doing, so I've already established myself as a pipefitter.

14:02:35

A:

And I had that self-confidence with me and when you show that self-confidence I think people pick that up and if she can feel confident about herself then I believe I can have confidence in her. So, uh, it's very important to show confidence in your work and who you are.

14:02:54

Q:

Good. And being a planner you know a lot about the site and all the challenges involved in the cleanup. Can you tell us like some of the major problems that you see? I really don't want to use problems; I want to use challenges, the major challenges of the site cleanup.

14:03:11

A:

O.K., I'm glad you changed problems to challenges because here even though technically you may have problems the minute you got to incorporate problems, you've got a team of people who are trying to solve the problem. So problems are always trying to be solved in the process of being challenges. The problem remains a problem if it doesn't get addressed, but they address problems in meetings and believe me problems are always addressed out here.

14:03:39

A:

So then they become challenges. The biggest challenge I see is the working with salaried and labor. Now that's probably universal, not necessarily Fluor Daniel Fernald. But at most places you have management versus that versus labor. Labor has a particular mind set. We're a laborer we know what we're doing, we don't need management to tell us to do our job.

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14:04:07

A:

Management is looking at the books, they're looking at the numbers, they're looking at the codes and the regulations and they're saying you're going to have to do this. Uh, you have to be within the budget, so you have that gulf between management and labor. And although we have teams that we're working with where it's called an approach where everybody works together; integrated to do team work, there is some type of gap between salaried and labor.

14:04:40

A:

And I think that it's probably miscommunication, not enough that in salaried and labor and vice versus because if you were you could see both sides of it, that's one of the challenges. Secondly, is keeping people motivated out here, everybody that's out here knows that this is a temporary job. Now I came from construction where jobs lasted two or three months, two or three days, and I'm at another one.

14:05:07

A:

So I'm used to moving from job to job and not really knowing how long a job will be. So that's not really a problem with me at all. But some people that are used to being at jobs for years, think they are going to retire here, they're like this job is not going to last forever, so they're pondering I've got to find another job or what am I going to do.

14:05:30

A:

But they've made some arrangements with CDC, they paid for my last year of college and I'm going to go and get my Masters at Xavier and that's going to be paid for so I'm feeling good about that. They have so many training programs but people know that this is not going to be here forever have to deal with those issues. Also motivation, I'm a highly motivated individual; I like to see things done.

14:05:52

A:

You know, and because you don't see things done overnight, those highly motivated, they suffer. They really do. Because they either tone down in order to go home at night without ulcers because you can't get it done right now. Or learn to adapt and that's the adaptation that I have to adapt to a system that is not moving as fast as say a private company or corporate entity.

14:06:24

A:

Because they don't have to deal with of course they can move at a faster past. I think that the past is the number one thing that we move slow not because we want to move slow because these are the safety practices that have to be met. So those are the challenges everyday that we are faced with out here. I don't see so much safe issues because they are always being addressed and you all can stop because you have the right to stop work.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
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14:06:55

A:

But motivation might be it. Um, I guess because I'm anti-war per say. I'm a peace; I'm kind of what Einstein said why build bombs to make peace, you build bombs to make war. So I'm on the advantage of let's talk this thing out because I'm against war. So of course the history of this place has something to do with the wars and whenever a history of a building is and you have to come cleanup, you're not cleaning up wonderful things.

14:07:27

A:

And my opinion, it killed, it was for war, I'm sure maybe it was good, but I'm against war. So know we're coming up after the fact to buildings that were built for particular reasons and cultures and buildings to me they have lingering atmospheres not radiation atmospheres, but atmospheres carry with those buildings and that's still here. Even though the process is not being done some of the workers are not working here anymore.

14:08:07

A:

That atmosphere of really what they did is still here and we're actually cleaning up something that was for a war and that was a time and place where this was did all over the country and different sites. So just from my small perspective that is added to our job and some people can't pick up on it, some people are more attuned it. But to come to site if we're really cleaning up something, you know.

14:08:36

A:

It's kind of like your child, all right I'm a mother, I'm always thinking of kids stuff. They ate too much stuff, you know, in the middle of the night they throw up and, oh, and it's like I've got to clean this up. Okay, so you don't like to cleanup, so you don't like to cleanup. Cleanup is not good work, cleanup is messy and it's dirty and it's moving stuff from here to there, but it has to be done.

14:08:59

A:

You know, so you might have eaten those burgers in one minute flat but the time to cleanup. It's going to take a lot longer to cleanup than the time he ate 2 or 3 burgers and 3 ice cream cones. Now you've got to clean that stuff up and wash those clothes, change his bed, change his clothing. So it took him 5 minutes to eat them burgers but it's going to take you a few hours to clean the mess up and it's not going to be fun.

14:09:23

A:

So I kind of take this job as like this. We've got to clean this up and sometimes it's not all that pretty but it's a job that has to get done (laughing).

14:09:36

Q:

That's a great analogy (laughing).

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Talking to cameraman – How crazy was that change in color temperature? Yes, we had a big cloud come over the sun, how far are we from there? Let's pause. I'm going to ask you that again. How are we away from that again? You want to pause?

14:09:54

Q:

I'm going to ask you that question again and you can answer it the same or a little bit different. I like what you were talking about, you know, what this place was for and fact that it was affiliated with the Cold War, you know, how does that affect your feeling about the cleanup?

14:10:14

A:

Well the Cold War in of itself is not good. The Cold War and the fighting, I guess that's my own personal opinion, political things, but it leaves, uh atmosphere that this is why it was built. It's not a hospital to heal people; it wasn't something done for entertainment to fund. It's not like we're going to Walt Disney World and dismantling a wonderful type of ride.

14:10:41

A:

This is dismantling things that were hot in more ways than one. And, also, cleanup of itself is not good, it takes a long time to cleanup. I remember my kid one time he had like some burgers, ice cream and candy. He must of downed that food in 10 minutes and a few hours later in the middle of the night. He throws up all over his clothes, on the carpet, on the bed, because of what he did in a few minutes. And of course I've got to clean it up.

14:11:09

A:

And the cleanup wasn't fun and I've got to get rags and cleanup. He's got to take a bath and it took so long and it was nasty. So this kind of reminded me of this job. We did something that had to be done and that's neither here nor there, but now there's the cleanup up 50 or 60 years later and it's going to take a long time and it's not a nice job.

14:11:31

A:

So where it took my son 15 minutes to get sick is taking me two or three hours to clean it up. So I've got to clean and wash the stuff, clean his bed, clean the carpet and make sure there are no lingering smells, okay. Because nobody wants to smell any of that stuff up. So I got to make sure it's all cleaned up. If you leave a little bit of a spot then you're going to smell, smell, smell.

14:11:53

A:

And I think about this job. We want to make sure that we get it cleaned up so that there won't be any afterglows of the smell or anything here. And that's not a pretty sight, it's not something that done overnight and everybody here, rather it from the porters, to upper management, to craft. We have to keep that in mind, this is not going to be an overnight thing, this is a process to be done.

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14:12:22

A:

And that's probably one of our biggest challenges realizing this is a process in everything we do. And it can be frustrating, you know. And I think over lunch, during break we talk about those frustrations. But that's a climate where you can. Some jobs I hear you can't talk about your frustrations, because it seems like you're not coping with the job.

14:12:42

A:

Here we talk about the frustrations in our meetings are we frustrated about this, what can we do about it. So those frustrations are addressed, at least you can talk about them. Sometimes you can't do much about it because you still have to follow policy and procedures but at least they're addressed.

14:13:07

Q:

Um, you see, we were talking before you see the buildings coming down and things are changing so rapidly. Um, soon this place won't be here and um, what you like to see done with the land?

14:13:21

A:

Wow. Now I've heard some things, I think I heard it's going to be an amusement park. As a matter of fact I was talking with my coworkers a few weeks ago because I want to buy some land, we live in the city. I said if they were to sell this land cheap, would you buy I would buy, to me I would buy some of this land and somebody would say ah, they couldn't give me that land some people were saying.

14:13:39

A:

This guy said, ah, I don't know, I wouldn't want that land it's in. I don't know, I would like to see, maybe some trees up here, maybe the wildlife. Anything to bring back the wildlife back here. Because I didn't realize way back there, there's a forest back there with all those pine trees, I used to just... There's hummingbirds back there that I have never seen, hummingbirds not far from here where all those other trees are.

14:14:03

A:

So at least it bringing the wildlife if nothing else by bringing back the trees and wildlife, at least that's something. So, um, a park, I don't know I may come to the park, you know, but I never really thought about it. Now if they want to give some land away, I'll take it. I might not do too much penetration, I won't cut into the grass too much but I'll take the land for something, yeah.

14:14:32

A:

I know you don't live in this area, but you sort of get connected with the towns that surround Fernald, the communities that surround Fernald. How do you think the site has changed the surrounding communities?

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14:14:48

A:

Um, in it's right now or just this site from the beginning? (Comment – No all of it, whatever you feel) Well I tell you I think it's probably the number one contributor to the economy. Because when we go the restaurants there's always Fernald people there, um, that's the positive side. I mean you go to the restaurants here, I don't know as a matter of fact, a couple of years ago they didn't have a Wendy's up they're in Miamitown.

14:15:11

A:

A Wendy's wasn't there. Now Wendy's has built here now in these 2 or 3 years. So you have some restaurants here. At least 1,500 workers, 2,000 at least are going to restaurants and spending their money here. That's good for the economy, at least. But, um, the negative side, of course, is the one that reads the newspapers and looks at the news. I still hear that too on the news.

14:15:45

A:

You know and I'm concerned about what's going on out here and how do the people feel about working out here. But I turn the corner, I see cabbage growing and I see corn across the street and these are very close to where these were. I'm sure these farmers wouldn't grow the corn or the cabbage if they had any concerns.

14:16:04

A:

People wouldn't even buy it. People buy that stuff right off the street here. I stopped and bought some tomatoes and corn myself. So, I work here and I eat the fruit and vegetables from the market so, and I'm in good health. I'm not worried about that there; I know how media works.

14:16:27

Q:

Tell us a little bit about your personnel success story?

14:16:30

A:

Personal success, I guess I'm successful because I'm happy and I'm healthy. But I think of success, would you address that as I came in '97 as a pipefitter? Worked a year as that and um, went into another department maintenance where I was a planner estimator for a year and a half and I received my degree in communication and arts from Mt. St. Joe.

14:16:53

A:

And I realized that they had a job opening in Public Affairs. Now I love public work, I love to talk to people, I do stories, I do programs and to actually work in an actual department that you're allowed to talk to people and meet people. So I thought it would be great, so I believe that I'm a success because I will be doing in a couple of weeks the things I really love to do is working with the public.

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14:17:18

A:

And doing public type of things, working with the media, communication type of things. That's what I normally naturally like to do, I do that on the side, but now I'll be doing that for a job. So I normally smile all the time, but I know in a couple of weeks I'll have a bigger smile because I'll say their paying me to do this and um I'm happy about it.

14:17:43

A:

Now I know that a part of my job is going to be dealing with, this is what they tell me, dealing with outside the stakeholder, dealing with the organization called FRESH and dealing with a lot of people. Now I know both sides of things and um, what we learned in school as far as the media in integrity and honesty that comes first. So I've seen both sides.

14:18:05

A:

So I know I'm taking integrity into the job the integrity I've learned as a communicator is to be honest and truth to whoever your speaking with. So I'm looking forward to it. And it's going to be one of my concerns as would I know what would be true I'm going to relay to my audience. That's yet to happen, but um, I'm looking forward to the challenge that's going to bring.

14:18:27

A:

Because Public Relations in any company knows important and this company is always in the newspaper. So part of our job is going to be working with those issues there and so I'll cross that bridge when I cross it. But at least I can say that I've seen both sides of the fence and I can give them my honest assessment and experience, you know, what my take is on it. That's all I can say.

14:18:53

Q:

Great, great. And how do you think the company supported your move from being a pipefitter into your move now into Public Affairs.

14:19:08

A:

Well first of all I can almost put it in a portfolio, came here as a pipefitter within two or three months Julie Doering calls me on the phone and says Rhonda we'd like to put you in the Forward, because they do different stories of people.

14:19:18

A:

So Julie came out to where I was actually working out in the back. I had my construction clothes on, my hard hat and I was dismantling something. She took some pictures and did a story about female pipefitter, she talked about me and my family and the different things I do in the community with woman's groups, storytelling. So that was mentioned in the Forward.

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14:19:38

A:

A few months later I was asked by another construction company outside of this to do some construction videos to promote construction nationwide. And Multi-Media department stepped in and did some footage of it, as a matter of fact it was you and Dave, Joyce Templeton and Dave actually ran that video. And I believe that video is going to be shown nationwide or at least to all the 8th grade schools in the Tri-state area.

14:20:07

A:

And that's promoting construction video and Fluor Daniel was a part of that. It's actually bringing in and showing me doing some pipefitting in that work. Every time I'm in the newspaper I'm always featured here. They've always supported me in what I'm doing, so I'm saying that's great. Personally, they've really helped me out more than other fourteen years me and another construction company.

14:20:33

A:

So um, that just shows what two years have done. I mean I've done this in other companies, but it hasn't been so much progress, you know personal progress or interest in who I was and what I was doing off the job. But this company does and that's a rare, rare find. It's hard to find that, maybe some companies are changing as the millenium is changing they get more people-friendly.

14:20:56

A:

I think that's the new corporate thing, but at least this company has shown interest in me, as well as other people, I'm seeing them in the Forward and doing things outside in the community that I haven't seen before. So that's a good plus.

14:21:12

Q:

Great. And now what do you say for the future of Fernald?

14:21:14

A:

Wow. Asking now, this is August of 1999, I don't know about the future of Fernald, I would hope that Fluor Daniel would be here, I don't know if there is going to be another contractor or not. I see it dwindling, you know, at a steady past, not a fast past, I see it slowly moving toward completion. I don't know, 10 years in the future or so, but it's going to be a while.

14:21:47

A:

I wonder about the people that work here, where are they going to find work, what are they going to do. I wonder about what's going to happen to the land. I really don't know about Fernald and the future. Although they talk about there's going to be end in sight. They talk about the future of Fernald that, you know, we're going to have to wrap the work up, do it in so many years.

14:22:17

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A:

But, uh, it's best to just take things project at a time at least from where I'm sitting. Finish this project and let's move on to the next one and let's deal with the 10, 20 years when it comes, you know. So, um, I hope that it's a good ending, you know.

14:22:31

A:

I want to feel good that I worked in a project that did something good for the environment, although I didn't work on the building of the Cold War process, at least I can say that I was a part of something that cleaned it up. That we're trying to clean up something for the environment. And then our country can see this, although the war is over, we're still paying for something that was done 50 years ago.

14:22:59

A:

And um, it's a high cost in defense because it has a long life way after the bombs are done and the tanks are driven what are you going to do with that stuff, and this is a lesson for our nation to see. So hopefully in the future we don't have to go through this again, another Fernald, another Hanford, another Mound. Realize that it is too high an price to pay, so let's think of something else.

14:23:29

Q:

Great. Is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to cover?

14:23:29

A:

Oh, I don't know, I think we covered a lot. I don't know, I guess my question is I know, I wonder what the people feel about that live around here. Because you know when you live, this is in your backyard, your completely different than somebody that has to drive 20 miles here, so I wonder how they feel, you know and as a worker I always kind of keep that in mind.

14:23:57

A:

That no, I don't live around here, but how do they feel about things, so that kind of makes me try to care about what I'm doing, because this is not my backyard but this is somebody else's backyard. So let me treat it like it is mine, because you got people living across the street and I'll try to keep that in mind.

14:24:15

A:

When I work or if I go to town, go to a store, go to a bakery, how are you guys doing out there. You got the bakers, you got the restaurant people who are very interested in us, you know, being there, but they always ask how are things going out there.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
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14:24:34

A:

You know, so they're interested about this job site, things are going pretty good, best be expected, you know. So I see the citizens here probably are pretty active on what's going on out here, so I kind of empathize with them.

14:24:50

Q:

That's great. That's going to make you a great Public Affairs official.

14:24:52

A:

I live next to the zoo and it's great, the best thing is when they have a leak it's always the animals, the harmless ones like the peacocks. They get out; they fly over the fence, so periodically you see beautiful peacocks walking around in the neighborhood. But you hear the animals, you hear the lions at 5:00 in the morning and when the lions go off all the other animals are quiet and then they scream, the monkeys go and the animals roar.

14:25:25

A:

So we do, we are affected by the zoo because, I mean, the zoo is right in my backyard, so I have that idea this is a wonderful institution in my backyard but the zoo is nothing like here. But I do know how the zoo affects me, because the parking, they take all the parking places. They're tearing down a lot of buildings down there so that one zoo is affecting everybody in that whole area. So I understand how companies effect streets and personal people.

14:25:58

A:

And they have concerts there and they're loud sometimes at 9:00 at night. So that's why I say I can empathize with a company in your backyard so to speak. So um, I understand how that is, but I enjoy working here and the people are great. The people are really fun. So it's good that you're doing this and getting a cross-section of a lot of people because there's some really good people here.

14:26:26

A:

It really is and because the work move so slow and these are really good people and you don't always see people at their best because you can't because of the restrictions of our procedures you can't shine the way you want to shine, you know. You have to fit into policy and procedures and safety and all of these other things. But there are some great people that does a lot of good things out here that sometimes they not seen, spotlighted on and that's kind of sad.

14:27:02

Q:

Okay, I do have one more questions (laughing), that made me think of something. How do you feel about the Fernald Living History project itself?

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14:27:12

A:

Oh, I think it's great. I just saw it, I think I saw it a few months ago, we were seeing the media saying it's in the process of, they were sending it out over the T.V. and some other things here internally about the history progress and I said that's a good idea when I first heard it and I didn't know what it was about. And I kind of forgot about it because I didn't hear too much on it until I had the phone call, but I initially thought it was a good idea.

14:27:38

A:

Because at the Mound they're selling books of a guy here that wrote poetry and um, a matter of fact their books are at the Mt. St. Joseph. Poems by Fernald, do you know that book, and I said that's great. That people are actually buying it and I didn't realize it that not only people that lived in the neighborhood but people who live in Cincinnati want to know what's going on here.

14:28:06

A:

I didn't realize it, this is a hot seat because I'm here, but if you tell somebody that you work at Fernald, "Oh, tell me what's it like out there?" So this is great to have something historical for someone to do history on and put it in the video. I'm sure a college kid 20 years from now is going to have to do something on the old site and when he, she goes through that and sees all of these and sees real people.

14:28:33

A:

You can actually bring some of these people to their classroom and they can actually do their presentation. That's great, because when I've done research in school I've had to go to the microfiche, I haven't had a video history of it, and I'm sure now this is new technology. But I've never had video history in any of my presentations or my research.

14:28:54

A:

But this is great that you're actually kind of thinking ahead of time and he or she will have to present to their class on the cleanup. And have eyewitnesses to it, so I think that's a very innovative approach to future education.

14:29:15

Q:

Well that's great. Thank you. That's terrific. We're going to do natural sound right now so I just need quiet on the set for 30 seconds.