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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Hillman Grubbs

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Tape: 29

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Tape FLHP0058

10:01:03

Q:

And you can just talk to me, you can completely ignore the camera, if you can (laughs).

(off camera: "speed")

Q:

OK, the first question we ask is always the hardest, all right? (laughs) We need you to give us your name and spell it, just so we make sure we have it right.

A:

First name is Hillman – H I L L M A N. Last name is Grubbs. – G R U B B S.

10:01:26

Q:

Great. And ah, we'll wait for this car to go by real quick. Is that real loud? How're you doing on that? Traffic. Good. OK. First of all, if you could give us a little background information how long you've been in the area.

10:01:40

(off camera: "let's (break in recording) we're rolling now")

Q:

OK, good. All right, so we're back to that last question. If you could give us some background information; where you were born, where you went to school, when you got married, when you moved out here, that kind of stuff.

10:01:53

A:

Well, I was born and raised in Harrison. Went to school in Harrison, finished all 12 years there. And ah, I previously had worked at Chandley Distilleries in Lawrenceburg. It was a seasonable job, I got laid off from there. Then ah, in March of '52, I went over and put in an application at Fernald.

A:

After Q, ah, Q clearance, got hired and went to work in June of 1952. And I worked ah, oh, roughly, about a year as a chemical operator; that's what I was hired in for, and in about two and a half years for, as a lead man and then two and a half years as a shift foreman. And I left there, I quit in 19-, Febr-, er ah, March of 1958. And I been in the area ever since, really.

10:02:51

Q:

And where did you go after you left Fernald?

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A:

Well, I tried selling ah, life insurance for a year, and that was kind of a bust, so I went to put in application at Procter & Gamble and I got hired at Procter & Gamble. Went into tra-, training program and I was a line mechanic for them for about 25 years. Had a total time at Procter I guess it was about 31 years.

Q:

Great, and so you've been on, in this particular house now for how long?

10:03:24

A:

Ah, we bought the ground in 1975, ah, from a former Procter, ah, not Procter but former Fernald man, Charlie Baxter. And we had the home built in 1976 and we've been up here ever since.

Q:

Great, now tell us again, how did you get your job at Fernald?

A:

Well, I was working part time for appliance dealer after I got laid off at Schenley Distilleries. And I installed a television for, an antenna for a guy named Donald Nelson who used to be, well, I guess he was president of National Lead at Fernald. And I asked him if they were doing any hiring and he said yes. And he said if you'll come over and put in an application, he said we'll see what we can do.

10:04:10

A:

So I went over there a few days after that and ah, he personally interviewed me, and I got hired that day because I had to wait the 90 days for the clearance to come through.

Q:

The Q clearance. What was it, did you have to go through to get the Q clearance?

A:

I think it was more of a background check. I didn't have to do anything. I think they were checking on you know, if you had any ties with Communists or any subversive activities of any kind, you know. I don't know whether they checked on your financial situation or not. I doubt they did that, I think they were more interested in the ah, aspects of, you know, what organizations you might have belonged to, or been associated with.

10:04:57

Q:

And who did they talk to?

A:

That I really couldn't tell you. They did come around, well, I should take that back. They did come around and in the town of Harrison where I was living, and they would ask about you, you know, what kind of person you were, and so on and so forth, and did you ever get into trouble or anything like that. I know they did that, but other than that, I don't really know what they did.

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Q:

And why was the Q clearance necessary while you worked at Fernald?

A:

I presume that they were looking for people that might have been in subversive activities you know. That could pass on information to the Communist countries, because then you know the Cold War was pretty well heated up, and I don't think they, ah, that's what they was looking for, people that wouldn't have anything to do with activities like that.

10:05:50

Q:

Great, great, and ah, tell us about the early years when you first got there.

A:

Well, I first went in there, they had an old steam engine setting out there in the yard before the boiler plant was built. So the steam was, ah, provided to the plant was the old steam engine. And I don't really remember when they took that out of there.

A:

I ah, it's hard to say. I think they had safety in mind, but it was something new, and there hadn't been that much exposure to it. And I think there was, I think they did the best they could as far as safety is concerned, but I think in some cases, as we've gotten older, and learned more about it. Some of it wasn't really the greatest, you know.

10:06:37

Q:

Could you give us a few examples of that?

A:

I don't remember when we first started there of even wearing a film badge. Later on, I think we had a film badge attached to your, your regular badge. And they would take that film badge off of there, I think, either every week or every two weeks, and they would monitor that for to see what, how much radiation you'd picked up.

10:07:04

Q:

And you'd worked in the Pilot Plant originally?

A:

Um-hmm. I was.

Q:

Could you tell us a little about that?

A:

Well, kind of primitive, we, I can remember we washed our metal in nitric acid, and of course we had to wear gloves with everything, and you wore coveralls and a hat. And you had to wear a respirator when, a lot of the times in there. Especially, like when you were washing the metal to be re-melted, I mean like when you dropped the uranium down in the nitric acid, it would just boil like green smoke.

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And put out an awful odor, so you didn't want to breathe that.

10:07:38

A:

And then when you were, after you made it poured, and the furnace, and you were taking the ingot out of there, you were required to wear a respirator, and you were required to wear it when you were loading the furnace, too. So, they tried to do the best they could for, I guess for what they knew at that particular time.

10:08:00

Q:

Can you explain the process that was taking place in the Pilot Plant, Plant and ah, really what your, what your, ah job was there? What you did there?

A:

Well, the Pilot Plant, we would get ah, magnesium and green salt in from another place and we'd put 'em in jolters and we jolted those all down, and then they went into a Rockwell furnace and they were re-melted and came out as a derby. Then we would take the derbies and load those into the graphite crucible for the big induction furnace.

10:08:34

A:

And that got melted down; you had to heat that up to a certain degree. I don't even remember what the degrees are any more, somewhere in my mind, I'm thinking somewhere around 4000 ah, Fahrenheit. And then that was all, you knocked the plug out of the bottom of the crucible, and then the metal poured into a graphite mold underneath the furnace.

10:08:59

A:

And it had a specific cooling time which I don't remember either. Then you would take that bottom off of that furnace and strip the mold off and that was your ingot you had. That was my part of the Pilot Plant; now there was another part of the Pilot Plant which I'm not aware of what they were doing exactly over there.

Q:

Now later on, you moved over to Plant 5. Ah, what exactly did you do in Plant 5 then?

10:09:21

A:

Well, basically the same thing that we did in Pilot Plant. You know, only thing we were divided into two sections; we had at one time, I don't know, there was around 200 and some men in there. We had what they call A area and B area. A area consisted of the where we would take the jolters and make the ah, lime liner and put the graphite, not graphite but ah, green salt and magnesium in it.

10:09:47

A:

And they had the filling machine that filled those, those ah iron pots. And then they went in to the Rockwell furnace and was melted down and came out as derbies. That was all A area. Then B area, we would take that same pot and go up to what they call the breakout area. And we would take the pot

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upside down.

10:10:04

A:

It got jarred until you shake the derby out of it. And then you clean the derby up, and then that derby went to the loading station where you put it into the graphite crucible, and that in turn, back into furnace like we did in the Pilot Plant. And ah, that was melted and it came out, it. You had also like a mold-stripping station in the back where they stripped the molds off and pulled the ingots out.

10:10:27

A:

And then we had, I don't know, probably half a dozen probably, large circular saws back there where we cut the ah, the drip end off the ingot and then they would take a sample off that and send that to the lab to sample what the purity the uranium was. And we had up on the second floor, then we had a de-greaser up there to de-grease the metal that we re-melted.

10:10:50

A:

We also had a burnout area where they would burn the graphite crucibles in there and burn any excess, you know. Like the, like anything, that if pots of grease and stuff, you burned all the impurities out of there, and then they would re-coat them and use them over again.

10:11:06

A:

We also had ah, a big saw, saw operating machine back there. A fellow would saw, sharpen these big saw blades. They were like 30 inches in diameter, the saw blades were. Then clear back in the back up there, we had a graphite shop where they used to make or, or rebuild, or re-work the crucibles that we melted the derbies and stuff in to.

Q:

So in a typical day, how much metal would be made?

A:

If we had a good day, we could, if my memory serves me right, I would say we could pour around 40 to 45 ingots.

Q:

And how much did those ingots weigh?

A:

About 1200 pound apiece.

10:11:53

Q:

That's a lot of metal. That's a lot of metal. (Chuckles). Now when you first got there, the plant was pretty much still under construction. Can you tell us a little bit about the construction that was going on like in 1952?

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A:

Well, we were more or less restricted to whatever plant you were in. I never saw, I never saw the inside of Plant 4 or Plant 6 during all this construction phase. You know, like I said we were in the Pilot Plant, and then when we did go over to Plant 5, it was still under construction.

A:

And it was, I don't remember. We went into Plant 5 in February of '53, but I don't remember when our startup was. I'd say it was, I'm guessing, but I'd say it was two to three months after that.

10:12:39

Q:

Wow, so they were still putting in all of the machinery when you got there.

A:

Um-hmm.

Q:

Well, that's interesting. Tell us a little bit about the magnesium warehouse.

A:

Well, Mag Plant was a plant that sat up northeast of, of ah, Plant 9 and it handled strictly magnesium. The fork trucks all had beryllium forks on them. The tools that were used to, to do any repair or anything were all beryllium, non-sparking so they didn't catch fire. No water allowed in there.

A:

But it didn't get used a whole lot. There wasn't a lot of people working up there is what I'm saying. I can't even remember how many men was up there at that time.

10:13:28

Q:

And ah, how did you explain your job to your friends and family?

A:

Golly, I don't even remember how we did that. Only thing we did basically was tell them we're not allowed to even talk about what goes on over there. That was where we were coming from most of the time, because you couldn't relate that, "I'm melting uranium down".

Q:

Because of your Q clearance is what you couldn't talk about?

A:

Right.

Q:

How did they know whether you were talking to your friends and family or not?

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10:14:01

A:

Well, I think, I'm not sure, but I think that there was always people around that were listening or so on and watch for things like that. I don't know of anybody that ever got prosecuted from that, but there was, they used to say that you could get, I think 10 years in prison and \$10,000 fine but I don't know of that ever happening to anybody.

A:

And I know they reminded you of this. When I quit over there, you had to sign a form stating that. So.

10:14:35

Q:

So in 1958, when you left, you had to promise that you're still not going to talk about it.

A:

Right, uh-hmm.

10:14:40

Q:

Wow, that's interesting. That's a new one too. I hadn't heard that one. Um, who were some of your favorite people that you worked with?

A:

Oh, there was a lot of good people, it's hard to even think back. (Chuckles) I'm going back 50 years. (Chuckles) Ah, I guess the one's I remember most recently, the guys like ah, Bill Nucam's a lead man, Gene Roffus was a foreman ah, Art Thoraton was a foreman. Um, Ralph James was a foreman, Art Harris was area foreman, Bill Gibbons was a B area foreman, ah a lot of good men.

10:15:20

A:

There's, there was a guy named Clarence Sams who was a very good furn-, top furnace operator, there was a guy named ah, Bob _____ was a good furnace operator, fellow named Luke Cooker was a good furnace operator. If I mention names, I'm gonna get myself in trouble with this, cause I know I'm not gonna think of all the guys that I worked with.

10:15:42

A:

And, all in all, names I can't think of. It was a good crew of men, it was really good people. They were all, seemed like they tried, and they were all good workers, you know. Ah, well like, we had, this was probably my first experience of working with black people and we had some real good black people working there, really did.

10:16:06

A:

It was, it was tough on a lot of 'em, you know. A lot it, a lot of 'em too was the first, first deal with working three shifts. And that third shift could be a beast, you know, when you hadn't worked it. So, all in all, um almost all the guys I worked with, I think they was all good people, you know.

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10:16:23

A:

There was 200 and some, I think at a prime, in our plant but I can't even begin to name all of 'em, you know. But they all seem, were good people.

Q:

Ah, you mentioned the first time you ever worked with black people, and it seems, that was in the '50's of course, was there any racial tension at all in the plant?

10:16:41

A:

No. No, I don't think there was.

Q:

That's, that's great. I mean, that's good to hear. Um, did anything unusual happen while you were working at Fernald?

10:16:55

A:

Well, nothing other than normal every day routine. I mean we wouldn't go a week, we didn't blow a furnace up probably.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about that.

10:17:05

A:

Well nobody ever got hurt too bad in our plant as far as furnaces blowing up, but at Plant 9 they blew one up and ah two fellows died from that. One fellow burned all his privates off of him, and the other guy lived 'til the next day and, and he died. But ah, it was kind of a dan-, I thought it was kind of a dangerous place to work.

10:17:27

A:

If fact that's what made me decide to quit and get out of there. At that, when I left there I was 30 years old, course back then there was more emphasis put on not hiring older people. So I thought, if I'm gonna to get a decent job, I can't wait another five years, so I'm gonna have to make the switch now.

10:17:45

A:

So that's, I mean, like I said I was a little scared of the place, and I figured I'm 30 it's time, if I'm gonna make a switch, now's the time to do it.

Q:

What kind of day-to-day dangers did you see in the plant?

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10:17:59

A:

Well, you never knew when you might blow a furnace up. There was, there was always fires. It's ah, in fact, you know when we would move, we had 5 gallon cans that we had saw chips in. They'd press the saw chips out, you know, when they sampled the ingot. They put these in 5 gallon cans, of course like I said, you learn as you go.

10:18:21

A:

Well, they put lids on them cans. They put them on a pallet, and a fork truck would haul 'em, well them, they'd jiggle a little bit on there. Well uranium will spark real easy. Well, they'd catch fire, next you know, and blow the lids off them cans, going down through the plant.

A:

Well, then they started venting the cans, and it quit doing that, but then, when that can, that 5 gallon would catch fire, it would burn a flame on it. Well, out the back door we would keep a 55 gallon drum clear full of water. And we would slide that burning can off the forks of that fork truck into that 55 gallon can of water, and it'd go to the bottom of that watering can and the flame would burn 4 to 5 inches off the top of that water.

10:19:02

Q:

Geez. (laughing) And ah, how was the fire and safety department when you worked there? Speaking of fires. (laughs again)

A:

Well, I think they did a pretty good job. They, we never had any huge fires in our plant that I remember, while I was there. You take, uranium is so daggone hot, and burns so easy, you know. You could take and drop a mold out from under the furnace and maybe be, while you were moving it, a spot of uranium the size of a quarter or half a dollar might drip or fall on the floor.

A:

And if laying there, that thing would crack like a .22 rifle and it would blow a little piece of concrete out of the floor. (smiles)

10:19:47

Q:

Geez. (laughing) What kind of, speaking of uranium and stuff, how much training did you get; what kind of training did you get to work with uranium?

A:

The training you got was when you started in the Pilot Plant, you know, you worked in there with the other people. I don't know how they got trained, of course, when I started working in the Pilot Plant, I was the 14th oldest man on the seniority list. Of course, the ones ahead of me, you know, they started the same as I did. So, I think it was, by golly and by gosh training just to start out with.

Q:

So you didn't know a whole lot about uranium when you started working.

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A:

Didn't know anything about it.

10:20:29

Q:

Wow. And as far safety goes, how much did they tell you about the safety of working around such materials?

A:

Well, I think they told us as much as probably what they knew, but you know, in 1952, uranium hadn't what, you know, we set the first bomb off in '45, so you're only talking about 7 years down the road. And of course, I presume they had some knowledge of it through a couple of the early plants where the bomb was originally made.

A:

But ah, it's hard for me to talk about safety because I really don't know that much about it. I do know, there was I think there was times when there was things hidden from the people. You know, there was a guy that got burned one time. Instead of sending him to a hospital, they kept him in there two or three days. You know, they didn't want that out I guess that he got burned in there, or didn't know how to handle it or whatever, so.

Q:

How did he get burned?

10:21:27

A:

I don't know. He wasn't in my plant. See, you never hardly knew what went on in the other plants too well. I never was, in the 6 years that I was there, I never was in the ... I was in the rolling mills one time for just a short period of time; like I went over for a half hour to check on something.

A:

I never was in the machining, ah, end of it, and at one time, I was sent over to Plant 4 to see a foreman about something, and that was the only time I'd been in 4. And like the other plants, 1, 2, 3, I never have been in 'em. Plant 9, I was in it, like the same thing, I was sent over to check on something, and the Mag Plant, I went up there to get magnesium already. But the rest of the place, if you weren't there, you didn't have access to it that much.

10:22:18

Q:

So how much did you know about the process by the time you left there?

A:

Well, I knew it pretty well by the time I left there.

Q:

And how much did you know before you got there?

A:

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(smiling) None.

Q:

So they didn't really tell you, train you or anything about the process. What was the major secret?

10:22:37

A:

Well, I don't think they didn't wanted to know what the melting point was of derbies, or the melting point of furnaces. I don't think they wanted to know how much you were putting out a day, of course that varied from time to time depending on what was going on. And you had, ah Well they had 3 different types of uranium, they had depleted, the enriched and the regular, and I think they didn't want that known.

A:

I don't think they know how much was shipped out there. I've seen them when we used to load a truck; we used to get the slugs that came back from ah, Plant 6 and we had a large scale in the back, and when they were to load a semi, the boxes that they would put these slugs in would be, oh, roughly eighteen inches wide by about a foot square.

A:

They would put a single row of them right straight down the center through that truck and shore it up and that was a load. One of those boxes would weigh eleven to twelve hundred pounds.

Q:

So why did they leave so much room on either side?

A:

To, well, they had all the weight they could carry.

Q:

Oh, (laughing).

A:

A single row of boxes was all the weight that truck could support. So and then they shored it up on the sides so the boxes couldn't shift. That's the way they hauled it out of there.

10:24:00

Q:

That's interesting I hadn't heard that yet. (laughs) You mentioned earlier about the Cold War, and the kinds of work that was going on at Fernald to support the Cold War. What was the typical American's mindset about the Cold War at that time in the '50s?

A:

Well, that was relatively new too. You know, you had, what'd I say, the hearings in Washington went on, you know in talking about the Communists, so I guess every American would think about Communism, and say, Hey, I don't want anything to do with this. So, that's about the extent.

10:24:39

Q:

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And how about the fear of, I guess, if I've heard this phrase before, of "living in the shadow of the bomb?" Especially in this area with Fernald being so close, how did people react to that whole situation?

A:

I don't know, I don't think people seemed to be that scared of it, you know. I think later on, some of them started being scared about their water supply and so on, but I think anything around Harrison and Fernald itself and Ross, I don't think there was that much scare about it. Maybe it's because of, of they really didn't know what was going on, if they had-a known exactly what was going on, they might have been more scared.

10:25:27

Q:

What did most people that lived in the community think that Fernald did?

A:

(pauses) I think they, (pauses) well, you used to hear the term, They refined uranium. They didn't say anything about any parts were being made for a bomb or ah, you know an actuator or anything like that. It was just like you would hear refined uranium, and that was the extent of it.

Q:

And I think most people called it the atomic plant.

A:

Right.

Q:

(laughs) That's what we've heard so many times. Generally, how do you feel about having worked at Fernald?

A:

Well, it was an experience, but I don't think I would want to go back to it.

Q:

Why is that?

10:26:11

A:

Well, it's ... I don't ah, I just don't want to be in that uranium. You don't know, I don't know whether they know today, well, I guess they do know, but it's hard on you. It's like I said, there was two brother-in-laws, and my father-in-law worked there, and my father-in-law died of cancer and one of my brother-in-laws died of cancer, so I felt like I did the best thing by getting out of there. I'm not saying that everybody that worked there is going to get cancer, but there is a higher rate of cancer in the people that worked there than didn't, so.

Q:

And ah, did the government ever give you any guidelines later on after you left Fernald about safety?

A:

No. We do get the physicals once a year.

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Q:
So you're on the medical monitoring?

A:
Right. Um-hmm.

10:27:06

Q:
Tell us a little bit about the medical monitoring program. What exactly do you have to do?

A:
Well, they give you a good physical every year. I feel real good about that. I go in every December, and they do every test just about that I know they do. They're checking your colon, they check your prostate, they, they your hearing, your eyes, your blood pressure. I don't think there's hardly anything they miss.

Q:
And where do you have to go to get that done?

A:
Uh, Drake Hospital. They do it, they do a good job as far as I'm concerned on the physicals.

10:27:43

Q:
And, and when did, how did the Medical Monitoring Program come about?

A:
I really don't know, I think there was some employees might have got together and form a class-action suit on it, I think that's how it got started.

Q:
And how, how did they contact you? Since you hadn't been there since 1958.

A:
Well, they didn't; I had to contact them. I, there was, I read a piece in the paper or something. Or at least I think that's what happened. I don't think they contacted me.

Q:
Wow. Um, let's see. We were talking a little bit ago about the surrounding community, and since you were there for the, pretty much the very beginning of Fernald, how do you think the plant changed the surrounding communities?

A:
Well, it was probably (laughs) there's a lot of pros and cons there. People made some good money when some times were hard. You know, like I said, I had worked at a distillery, and I'd been down there 4 years, of course it was a seasonable job, and I hadn't been laid off for a year, so I thought I had it made.

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A:

And then that particular year, they laid off back to eleven years. So an awful bunch of them from the distillery came up there and went to work, so it gave them jobs where they would have been unemployed. You know. The biggest complaint I think around the community had to come from some of the people that had to live close by, and they complained about their wells.

10:29:23

A:

Well, sometimes, I have mixed feelings about that. I'm thinking well, if you move into an area, and you know that the uranium's there, this is something you should be taking into consideration before you move in there. Don't blame them wholly if, when you're moving into something.

A:

You know, ain't going to walk into a rat trap if you know there's a trap there, so that's kind of, but all in all, I don't think it hurt the community much, and around here, it seemed like everything was pretty good.

Tape FLHP0059

11:01:09

Q:

(whispers) Go ahead here and roll again, tape's rolling. In ah, well actually, this sort of ties in, but, first of all, let's talk about the aquifer. You'd mentioned that a lot of community members were upset about their water supply. What exactly did you hear about that?

A:

Well, I heard it was being contaminated with, from uranium going into the wells or the aquifer, or somewhere in the area of Fernald plant area itself. I don't know, I guess they tested that, so they had to come up with that there. The thing I never did understand about, about the deal over there is, they graze cattle right up to the chain-link fence.

A:

Now they talked about the dust escaped out of the, out of your ah, stacks, well, that tells me those cows had to be eating some of that uranium off of that grass, but they sold the milk, so I don't know.
(laughing)

11:02:12

Q:

And how do you think Fernald affected the environment, of the area, right where it sits?

A:

I don't know (shaking his head). I never heard too much kick about the environment. You know, Like I said, the biggest thing was I heard people complain about the water contamination. That's about the only thing I heard. Well, we moved out here, and I'm just about four and a half miles from Fernald, so it didn't bother me too much when I moved out here in '75.

Q:

Now in 19-, Around the mid '80s, I guess 1984, so ah, there was a lot of press about a release of uranium into the environment. Ah, since you're only four and a half miles from Fernald, what did you

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hear about that particular event?

11:03:04

A:

Well, if you read in the newspaper about how much has escaped out of there, but that's nothing new. They was escaping out of the stacks when I was over there in the '50s. There wasn't, it was a rare occasion that one of our big dust collectors, when we'd shut the dust collector down, and go inside that one of the bags wouldn't be down laying on the floor.

A:

So that meant there was stuff going out the stack. So that had been going out for years. So I, to me that, didn't seem like that was nothing new I mean, might not have been the best thing that could have happen, but it was happening.

11:03:34

Q:

And tell us exactly what a dust collector's supposed to do?

A:

Well, where you had enclosures for example, ah, breakout areas where you would be in there with a jack hammer busting a derbies out or something, and then that would suck all that, supposedly take all that dust out of that particular enclosure, you know. Ah, and it was supposed to be collected in there, and they'd shut 'em down and you'd clean 'em all out, you know.

11:03:58

A:

But sometimes if the bag came loose, then the bag couldn't keep the dust from going to the outside, so it went right out the sack.

Q:

Did you ever have to write any, up any reports when that happened or?

11:04:13

A:

I don't remember writing up a report. We could have. Just been almost too long for me to remember all these things.

Q:

And ah, we were talking earlier about the Cold War, and ah, America's mission, and ah, how do you feel that, how do you see your job in relation to America's mission?

A:

Well I felt the job was important as far as gettin', refined uranium, ah we were never told where this ref-, uranium was being used, it was kind of left in the dark. I just felt like, well we're doing something good for the country or we wouldn't be doing it.

11:05:05

Q:

Right, and ah, how do you feel about the work that's going on at Fernald now?

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A:

I went on one tour over there and I, I thought, to me it looked like they're doing a pretty good job. I mean, it's, it's not something that's gonna to, be cleaned up overnight. It's gonna take a number of years to do that. And I think they'll, they'll eventually get it all cleaned up.

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11:05:28

And, it'll be turned into something good, maybe a park or something like that, you know. I think everything will work out good.

Q:

When did you go on the tour?

A:

Um, couple of years ago, I guess.

Q:

Was that at the open house event?

11:05:46

A:

It was at one of the open house, where they took us around on the buses. I missed the one before that where you could go through the plants. I, I would have liked to of had that, but I had something else come up and I couldn't make that one. But the one that we took on the bus trip I really enjoyed.

Q:

What was it like being back on site?

A:

Well, (chuckles) after 40 some years, I mean I still remembered about where everything was, you know. Of course there had been some, some new buildings and stuff added on there, you know. It was a little bit, ah different, but not a whole lot. Everything looked basically about the same.

11:06:19

Q:

And what kind of clean up efforts did you see going on?

A:

Well, they took us around there and they had them, they were talking about building that new Pilot Plant to try to, what was it, encase this stuff in glass or some type of a thing. They showed us that. And then they showed us where they had been cleaning up the ah, what we used to call the pad. Where they had all the stuff stacked on pallets and stuff in there, and a lot of that was gone at the time.

11:06:49

A:

So, they're making headway. It's just gonna take more time, that's all.

Q:

Now, ah, you're probably have seen footage and are aware of the fact that most of the time when ah, ah when people enter those plants they're wearing full face respirators and anti-C's and all kinds of protective gear. How, how does it make you feel to know that folks that are walking into those same plants where you worked without wearing much protective gear are like in full face respirators and stuff?

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11:07:21

A:

Well that just kind of bears out the fact that when we were first there, nobody knew as much about it as they do today. And when we were there, ah, yeah we had a respirator hanging around our neck all the time. But you didn't wear that respirator all the time, and, well you could even smoke in the plant. Which, I don't know if they allowed 'em to do that or not.

11:07:40

A:

But you know, when your in there, for example, and you're wearing gloves part of that time and you strip them off and you put 'em back on, you've got to have uranium on your hands and then your lightin' up a cigarette off of that, you know. I don't think any of that was good. And I think they learned from that, you know, in the early years.

11:07:57

A:

Like I said, in a sense, we might've all been guinea pigs in a sense when we first started there. Because, they didn't know that much about it. Today they know a lot more about it. And going in with, with full respirators and everything today, I don't know it may be, it might be an overkill, I don't know, you know. Especially when you're not operating.

A:

11:08:17

'Cause you know we had, you had fumes from smoke and everything going on in there, and when you got in an area, certain areas you were supposed to wear respirators all the time or if like you opened up the furnace you've got to have a respirator on. Or you go in a enclosure, you had to have it on, but other than that, I mean you didn't have to wear the whole 8 hours you were in there.

11:08:37

Q:

What did the respirators look like? What, what kind of respirators were they?

A:

Well, they just kind of fit right across your nose, and then on the bottom had like a little, little box almost and had a, I won't say cardboard filter, but a, a little filter. Paper type filter in there.

Q:

So they weren't the-

A:

No.

Q:

-head gear things.

A:

No, no big.

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11:09:01

Q:

Wow, and um, how did the, I mean I know you weren't really there during the clean-up years, but from what you've heard, how did the process years and the clean-up years differ?

A:

Um, I don't know that I can relate to that, because I don't know just how they're handling that clean-up.

Q:

Okay, good. Um, once Fernald is all torn down, ah, what would you like to see happen to the land that it sits on now?

11:09:32

A:

I think it would be great if they had a nice big museum there and maybe a park. Something of that nature. I read once in the paper where they thought there might have been some ah, Indians buried there or artifacts and that, you know. I think, you know it would ah, that with a park possibly with a museum, you know, it turns the ground back into something useful anyway.

Q:

Do you think people would be interested in going to a museum like that?

11:10:05

A:

Well I definitely would be, but I don't know if you hadn't worked there, or, or if some of your relatives or descendents hadn't worked there, maybe you wouldn't be. But I would think they would. 'Cause you know, there was, at peak production I think they had roughly 2,500 people over there, you know. So, there's, I think they'd still want to go back. I'd still like to go back and see old Plant 5 before it's tore down. But, of course I worked there. See, some that didn't might not.

Q:

What would you like to see about Plant 5, if you could go back?

11:10:41

A:

I'd just like to walk through from one end to the other. It brings back memories and stuff of what went on, and, I just think it'd be real interesting.

Q:

Great, um, what, let's see. Got that one actually. Is there anything you'd like to add, anything that we didn't talk about that you'd like to talk about?

A:

Not off hand, I can't think of anything. I think we pretty much covered it (chuckles).

Q:

Great, we're gonna get a little bit of nat sound. So we're a gonna have quiet on the set a little bit.