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Transcript

Name: Jane Harper

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Tape: #80

Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0184

01:01:03

Q:

Great. First of all, if you could just give us your name and spell it so we make sure we have it right.

A:

Lois Jane Harper. H-A-R-P-E-R. Do you need the rest of it?

Q:

Uh, how do you spell Lois?

A:

L-O-I-S J-A-N-E.

01:01:17

Q:

Great and uh first of all if you could give us a little background about uh your involvement here in the area. The fact that uh how long have you been here? And I know your house was built back in the 1800's.

01:01:28

A:

Right. I was born here in this house. My dad was born here. It's been in our family for over 100 years. And I've lived in Crosby Township all of my life as did my father and my grandmother lived here all of her life. So we're pretty long-lived people here.

01:01:49

Q:

When you were a child, can you tell us a little bit about what the area was like?

A:

Um, at that time we were the only house on the street. There was another farm back the long driveway over here but this was the only house here. And of course it was very quiet, very rural, farmfields, cornfields all around you. Very peaceful.

01:02:14

Q:

And where did you go to school here?

A:

Uh, I went to Crosby Elementary. My eighth grade was the first class to graduate from Crosby Elementary. We moved in there at Christmastime and finished our year there, that was 1952. And

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before that, we had gone to the little school in New Haven that was across from the cemetery for grades one through four and five through eight we went to what is now the corn processing plant outside of New Baltimore, Fort Scott School.

01:02:49

Q:

Wow. I didn't know that was a school.

A:

Oh, yes. Where they do the sugar corn right pass the corner of 128. That's where I went to fifth through eighth grade.

Q:

Oh, neat, I didn't know that.

01:02:03

A:

It was a neat old building. The architecture on that is very rare. It's a very different tower that's on there where the bell was. It's Queen Anne, I believe is the name of the architecture. It's very rare for this area. So at the time, we didn't appreciate it but I guess we do now.

01:03:24

Q:

So when you were a child when you were living in this area, what, what did you do for fun?

A:

Ah, living in this area, well I think I grew up in back of a team of horses and then I guess as dad got a tractor, I think I grew up in the wagon in the back of the tractor. Until I graduated from high school, I was always outside. My mother said she didn't see us from sunup to sundown 'cause we were always following the farmers, my dad and the farmers around.

01:03:55

A:

So I guess it wasn't as much play as just helping out doing things which I really loved doing. And we would play in the creek. We were always down around the creek. And we'd walk around; of course we had horses we always rode around. And just typical things you do on a farm.

01:04:18

Q:

Tell us a little bit about that creek? That's Paddy's Run?

A:

No. That's Howard's Creek.

Q:

Oh, Howard's Creek, okay.

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01:04:24

A:

It empties eventually into Dry Fork out at New Haven. And it's starts someplace in Butler County. I'm not really sure where it does start. It's very long creek, very prone to flooding. When it floods, when we have a heavy rain it just comes down in huge waves of water. It goes up very rapidly and of course recedes very rapidly. It's been fun to live alongside of it.

01:05:00

Q:

Now you said you graduated from the eighth grade in '52? (Comment – uh-huh) Um, that was about the same year that they were just getting Fernald underway. (Comment – that's correct) Can you tell us a little bit about your impressions of Fernald? You probably watched them build it or at least.

01:05:16

A:

Um, I think my first memory was of mom and dad talking about a family that, another farm family that they had also gone to church with and how upset they were and how they were sharing their concerns. Because they really were shocked that would have been Marion Fuchs' mom and dad. Of course Marion was older than I was. I didn't know him that well.

01:05:41

A:

But I knew the family from going to church with them. And I remember dad talking about how hard it would be to lose your family farm and have to move and how upset they were that they were going to move and couldn't find anything in the area to start over with. I remember them talking about how upset the whole family was that they had to leave the area.

01:06:05

A:

That's one of my first memories. And of course we always called it the bomb factory as kids. We knew from the very beginning that it wasn't a feed plant. When people said a feed plant we knew that it meant it was a processing plant. And it was always, when people would say something about it; we always referred to it as the bomb plant. It was even before, actually I think they were in the process of manufacturing we were aware of what it was and what it did.

01:06:39

Q:

Do you remember being aware, uh you mentioned eminent domain, people losing their farms to eminent domain, uh do you remember being aware of why the government was moving in or do you remember seeing any black cars or anything like that?

01:06:54

A:

Uh, I don't remember any cars. I remember the discussions some of the different farmers were having. That it seemed a shame to give up your land when you'd had maybe three or four generations working that land. I remember some of them saying they were glad it wasn't them and they were sorry to see

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these other people have to go. But I don't remember there being any posse of black cars or helicopters and anything like this driving around.

01:07:25

Q:

Do you remember any of your neighbors discussing the price? Whether it was a fair price for the land that the government was paying?

A:

I don't remember them saying anything, no. I suppose at that time money wasn't one of the things that I was too aware of.

01:07:45

Q:

So um, did you sort of watch them build Fernald?

A:

Yes.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about your impressions of the building process and construction and those kinds of things.

01:07:55

A:

Uh, of course you know it was kind of far off the road. And we knew it was kind of secretive. Um, and the fences went up and then of course within four years, several people that I went to high school with, as soon as they graduated from high school were employed there. And everybody was kind of glad to have an employer close who paid very good wages and had very good benefits.

01:08:26

A:

The people that went to work there were considered pretty lucky that they were able to go into a job like that. And it was considered you know a good place to go and work. I don't think anybody thought about some of the things that were, that they were being exposed to. They were just very glad to get a high paying job close to home.

01:08:48

Q:

And what kind of contact did you have with the, some workers?

A:

Um, not a lot. I knew a lot of kids from high school who were employed there. And many of them I think stayed almost a lifetime of employment over there. Um, I do know that then after I started teaching, I went on to college and came back here to teach, we used to have to do a count every fall the number of children in our rooms who were here because their parents were employed at Fernald.

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01:09:24

A:

And that had to be recorded. They had a special attendance record they kept because it was considered an impact on the school district to have a government installation. So you had to keep special record of how many were in your room and their attendance. And there was some type of compensation given to the school district. I'm not sure how much it was but I know that was something you had to do every year. Check out whose mom and dad worked at Fernald.

01:09:55

Q:

During your years of teaching um, did the children ever discuss the plant or ask you about it?

A:

Only after all the news broke about the contamination. And then of course I did have several children the first two or three years who carried their water to school because their parents didn't want them drinking from the fountain at school. Up until that point everyone just seemed to accept that it was there and didn't think much about it.

01:10:29

A:

But after all the scandal broke about the water being contaminated I've had several kids who were never allowed to drink from the drinking fountains. Even though the school was quite a distance away.

01:10:43

Q:

And we'll get into that time period here in a few minutes. (Comment – okay) Um, other people that you had contact with as far as uh workers uh did they ever discuss their jobs?

A:

No, it was all very secretive. You never asked them what they did because you knew they weren't allowed to talk about it. You know it was just considered high level secret government work.

01:11:08

A:

In fact, I remember for years when you applied they even had I believe it was Q security, was that the term for it? Where the FBI would come to your house and interview and investigate the families even that were there.

01:11:22

Q:

Did you ever have to do an interview with an FBI?

A:

Yes.

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Q:

Could you, you're the first person we talked to that actually had to do an interview, could you tell us about how that was like?

01:11:32

A:

Oh, well one of my sons applied for work over there and that was under a Q security, whatever his position was. In fact, he still works there. And at that time they did come to the house and talk to his father and I both. Asked about childhood, asked about our childhood and our background. Um, and of course it was kind of ironic too because our dog nipped him on the leg (laughing).

01:11:59

A:

So we think there goes the job but it didn't have any effect on it but he did get nipped by our dog. So I suppose that's one of the hazards of the job. But yes, he came to our house, sat in our kitchen and interviewed us, asked personal questions about both of our families. How long they'd lived here, how many generations had been in the United States, our background. It was kind of interesting.

01:12:27

Q:

What was the most odd question you thought that he asked?

A:

Oh golly, uh, probably did the dog have his rabies shots I would imagine. Um, gee I can't remember that he asked anything that was too odd other than he seemed like he wanted to go back generations and generations into our background. But I suppose that was just routine questioning to see if we ever had any ancestors that might be suspect I suppose. The interview was very short. I suppose he was only there 15 minutes or so.

01:13:08

Q:

And he was from the FBI? (Comment – Yes, uh-huh) Wow.

A:

I believe it was termed Q security. I don't know what Matt's position was at the time and that was another at that time, they couldn't tell you what their position was when they were on Q security. I understand now there is no Q security. I don't know what the different terms were. I think Q was the highest-ranking security they had.

01:13:38

Q:

So did your, did your son ever discuss his job with you?

A:

Um, no. Both of my sons worked there and they, no they never talked about what they did at all. I never asked because I knew it was just secure.

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01:13:55

Q:

So in your estimation um how, how had Fernald changed the surrounding community especially in the '50's and the '60's just when they started being under production?

A:

Um, I would suppose the main thing I could think of would have been the financial impact. The fact that so many people had employment there. It was not only this community, the whole area. Many, many of the people worked there. It was the basis of their whole life. That was where their income came from.

01:14:31

Q:

And did that change the uh, did that change the area you think from sort of a agricultural society to be more of any industrial society and how did that affect the people?

A:

This area, I don't think it really changed it that rapidly because the people that worked there seemed to move into the smaller towns. A lot of people from, live in Harrison that work there. There was some building that went on of homes that were built for the workers.

01:15:00

A:

But it didn't seem to have a great impact. Most of the farms, except the farms of course that were purchased um by the government. And of course they disappeared but otherwise, no it stayed rural for another 35, 40 years.

01:15:17

Q:

And how about traffic?

A:

Um definitely at starting and closing the people in New Haven did have some complaints about the traffic at that time. But they knew too that it was only going to last ten minutes at each time and then it would be over with. But yes it definitely impact the small towns.

01:15:41

Q:

Now let's get into a little bit of the, the uh mid '80's when there was a lot of media attention about Fernald. There was dust collector releases and all kinds of stuff. Um, uh questions about contamination. Uh, tell us what your reactions to that type of news was in the mid '80's.

01:16:00

A:

Um, at first I think shock and disbelief feeling that the government wouldn't do that to you. That this wasn't really happening that it was a publicity thing. That it couldn't possibly have happened. At

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school we were subjected to a lot of jokes about being the only school that didn't need electricity because we all glowed.

01:16:27

A:

Uh, you would go to the different teachers meetings and they would as we would come in they would say oh here comes the glowing Crosby group. Or ask us different questions like how was it like to have recess duty when you knew you were being bombed with radioactive dust. Um, and then I think people suddenly as investigation went on and they discovered it was true it was a lot of shock and disbelief.

01:16:57

A:

And probably a little feeling of betrayal, mistrust. That they had allowed this plant to come in, no one had questioned and everyone had just assumed it was safe. And then to find out that it wasn't, that there was a possibility of children's health being damaged I think there was a lot of anger. I think the feeling that I got from most people, from parents was mistrust. They felt they had been betrayed by the government.

01:17:29

A:

It kind of, there was a lot, the first year, a lot of parents didn't want their children playing on the playground. Keep them inside at recess. They didn't want the classroom windows opened but that soon passed. I think that was just the initial shock. And it kind of tapered off after that. But still, that feeling of mistrust I think is still there in a lot of kids who grew up here and their parents. They all feel like maybe things weren't as honest as they would have liked.

01:18:12

Q:

As a teacher what uh, what grade were you teaching at that point?

A:

First grade.

Q:

How did, how did the children react to the news? I mean, I know they were young and they might not understand exactly what was going on but what, was there fear or?

01:18:25

A:

Um, yes there was some, yeah. As the news media made a bigger thing of it and then of course for several weeks they would go out to get on the buses and there would be news media in the parking lot of the school with cameras in their faces as they got on the bus.

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01:18:44

A:

Several times they were in the halls of the school and that was kind of disruptive. It wasn't the best conditions for the kids to be learning. And then there were several of the public meetings were held in the school and of course news media would be swarming all over. The kids were, they reacted to that.

01:19:04

A:

It was kind of a different lifestyle for most of these kids who had lived in a small area, had never been exposed to being on television before and here the television cameras or news reporters putting cameras in their faces and it was kind of an unpleasant thing. A little disruptive to the school life.

01:19:32

Q:

Um, did you ever have to talk to the news media yourself, were you ever approached?

A:

No, not on that issue, I don't believe I was.

01:19:45

Q:

Um, we were just talking a second ago about the kids being taped as they were getting on the bus, on and off the bus and uh was it national news media that was?

A:

Uh, no it was the local channels. And it would you know maybe just be a three second spot as they were saying something about Fernald they would have a shot of the kids getting on the school bus or on the playground. Mostly 'cause the school was close to the site.

01:20:13

Q:

Did you ever attend any of the public meetings? (Comment – oh yes) Can you tell, I know some of them got really hot. (Comment – yes they did) Can you tell us a little bit about those early public meetings?

01:20:24

A:

Um, well as you said they got pretty hot, there was a lot of anger, a lot of harsh words exchanged. Um, a lot of shock, many, many people attended those meetings. It was usually standing room only. At that time it was um I guess the word I would use would be disbelief. People couldn't really believe this had happened.

01:20:49

A:

They just keep wanting denials. They wanted the government to say no it's all fine there was no contamination. It's all been proven that it didn't happen. And of course it went the other way, it had turned out that it had happened and it was a lot of anger.

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01:21:08

A:

A lot of yelling back and forth. I think the whole attitude has changed since then. It's more open and everybody is trying to deal with each other and communicate much better than it was that time. No longer the attitude of secrecy and I guess everybody has accepted well it happened and we have to go on from there now we have to make the best we can of cleaning it up and getting a liveable situation out of it.

01:21:39

Q:

At those public meetings what were most of the residents most worried about, or what were they most angry about.

A:

Um, contamination. Drinking water contamination, soil contamination and air contamination. The fact that it was released in the air and they had been exposed to it. And they didn't know how much. They didn't know the damage, the future damage of the next generations.

01:22:05

A:

I think that was their biggest fear, that all of the sudden they'd start seeing very sick children and future generations might have some genetic problems.

Q:

And to your knowledge has there ever been any of those types of health effects in the community?

01:22:21

A:

Um, I think according to the maps and the studies that have been done, it does seem to be a higher incidents of cancer. Particularly lung cancer seems to be up. And I believe the rate of thyroid problems seems to be higher here than in other areas. So it looks like there might be some correlation there, yes.

01:22:50

A:

I think FRESH keeps a map and pinpoints where the illnesses have occurred. And it does appear that there's an awful cluster of illnesses that maybe wouldn't have been there if it hadn't have been for the contamination.

01:23:09

Q:

Now as somebody, how far are you away from the Fernald site?

A:

Um, we're five miles. We're right inside the five mile limit. And of course we're upwind of it not downwind of it.

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01:23:19

Q:

As a mother now looking back on living here, um are there things that bother you living close to Fernald?

A:

No, I guess I always felt fortunate that I live on the other side of the prevailing wind. I did not worry about my kids with it. I did not worry about our creek because we were north of it. So no it did not worry me.

01:23:43

A:

Had I lived in the area where the winds were coming and blowing onto the kids, I suppose yes, I'd be very concerned. I know I would have been very concerned. But was just always felt thankful that I was north from the prevailing winds instead of downwind from it.

01:24:02

Q:

Do you know people who live in that area?

A:

Yes I do.

Q:

Can you tell us some of the fears that they have had and some of the problems that they may have had?

01:24:11

A:

I'm not really aware of any major problems other than, in the people I know other than seeing this map and realizing those pinpoints mean there's a high incidence. I can't name anyone specifically that has had problems that they know they can trace. I do know some people that have had lung cancer but along with their exposure most of them are also smokers.

01:24:39

A:

So you know I think smoking probably accelerated the problems that they had. I don't think I'd have been, I'd have been very worried had I worked there and been a smoker also. I think I'd been pretty worried that I was doubling or tripling my chances of having lung cancer.

01:25:02

Q:

Now those first public meetings that you attended, how was the government handling the whole issue?

A:

Oh, at first it seemed like they were very defensive, very denying. Uh, no we didn't do this. You know, could not have happened. And then you know as the reports, the confirmations kept coming in they became a little less aggressive, a little less hostile in their denying.

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01:25:38

A:

Finally it turned to the point, well yes we did it and now we're sorry and we have to clean it up. But the first couple of meetings it was pretty confrontational where everybody is, one group is accusing and the other group is denying and it got pretty hostile. That was the first couple but I think by the second, probably by the third public meeting there had been enough data given that yes there was contamination. But there was no longer any point in denying what had happened.

01:26:09

Q:

I think it was 1986 that Phil Donahue came to town.

A:

Oh yes. Yeah, I went to that meeting.

Q:

Can you tell us a little bit about that whole experience?

01:26:19

A:

Uh well it was of course a big thing for Crosby Township to have a national, national program here. It was in the school, standing room only. People were all over the gymnasium. I think there were many people there who had never come to any other issues simply because they wanted to see the Phil Donahue show. And once again, it was pretty much the same thing as other meetings other than a much larger crowd.

01:26:56

A:

The people were just jam-packed in that building. Really large crowd. The parking lot was full of cars, that's when of course there were many media there that night too with their cameras, with their recorders. Just the typical large crowd who seemed to be enjoying all the attention at that point. It was almost like a big party time.

01:27:29

Q:

And how did the producers and how did Phil Donahue himself, how did they handle the show? Do you think it was well handled?

A:

Uh yes it was as well as could be expected taking place in a small gym. It was overcrowded, it was handled okay, yeah.

01:27:47

Q:

And how about the issues themselves? Do you think he you know treated everyone fairly?

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A:

Um, yes, yeah. I think the only thing that really stands out in my mind about that evening was one of his cameramen was on a boom type thing because he was trying to pan the audience and also get the group in front. And the man, at that time the boom was apparently manually operated and he kept giving him the signal to raise him.

01:28:19

A:

And he cranked him right through the roof of the gymnasium. He went right up through the paneling in the gymnasium. Which kind of the whole back section was kind of lost at what was going on up there. He was going through the roof, it was kind of, it interrupted the program a little bit. That's what stands out most in my mind was seeing him being cranked right on through the ceiling tile.

01:28:48

Q:

That's great. I hadn't heard that story. But I've watched that show and I've often wondered what was going on. 'Cause you see the people in the back row kind of going...

A:

Does it show up on the tape?

Q:

Yeah.

A:

What is going on is he was up through the tiles of the gymnasium.

01:29:08

Q:

Oh my gosh. We're going to take a break and switch tapes. That's terrific.

TAPE FLHP0185

02:01:08

Q:

Okay, great. So we were discussing the, the uh media attention here. What was it like to look in the pages of TIME magazine and see your home town?

A:

Um, a little, I had a feeling of sadness. It made me feel like I don't want this to happen to our community. I just want us to be the quiet clean little community we've always been. I didn't like all the media attention. I just kind of wanted to be left alone I guess. I didn't get a thrill from it at all.

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02:01:47

Q:

That would be hard.

A:

Yeah, it was. It wasn't something you gloried in, you didn't like to go someplace and say I'm from Fernald. I live right by the plant because everybody of course heard about it. And I think they all kind of took a step back like oh you must be contaminated or something so I was, I was sorry to see all the media attention on it.

02:02:13

Q:

So the people in the city that you had contact with, how much understanding did people in Cincinnati have of what Fernald was and where your community was?

A:

Uh, I don't think they had ever heard of it before this issue happened. They had no idea where it was or what the life was like out here.

02:02:34

A:

Um, I think a lot of people seemed to feel like, I'm glad it isn't us living by it. And I actually felt like some of them though oh, they're all radioactive. You could almost see them withdraw from you. Like give me a little space away from this person because I don't want to pick up anything. I still find that when I go to government conventions or something and mention that Crosby Township is the home of Fernald, they all kind of laugh and say well I'm glad it's you and not us. So it's got a stigma with it.

02:03:18

Q:

And how do you usually deal with that? Do you explain to people what's really going on?

A:

Uh-huh. You try to tell 'em it's in the process of being cleaned up, that they're no longer producing and yes there are some contaminated areas that we will be living with for generations. And of course I'm one that's not happy with the disposal pit. So I feel like we didn't ask to have that brought on us and I'd like to see it cleaned up and gone.

02:03:47

A:

But I realize also that that's something you can't do is haul off that much contaminated soil and material. But I uh I'm not really thrilled about leaving a site here. I just hope the government is responsible for it forever and ever. I don't want to see it used a thousand years from now for a subdivision or something.

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02:04:14

A:

That's kind of a scary thought because the shelf life of some of that material is a long time. So yeah I'm not crazy about the thought that five generations from now there's still going to be a site over there that harbors contaminated materials.

02:04:36

Q:

Let's get into a little bit of um this is a Cold War relic (Comment – yes) Fernald is. And uh, you grew up mainly during the Cold War, during the Cold War, can you tell us a little bit about the typical American's mindset um during that time, that historical time?

02:04:57

A:

I think we were so anxious to be, beat the Russians, do everything first and make sure that we came out on top. That we really kind of felt like oh I'm glad the plant's there, it's defending our country, it's in the defense process. I'm glad they're doing something because we have to prevail. We have to be ahead of the Russians on this.

02:05:27

A:

Or at the time you know I think a lot of people thought and I guess some of the quotes were "we'll overcome you" and there was a great fear that Russia would prevail. So we were kind of I guess glad, we were part of the defense process, we were proud of it. Not realizing of course some of these releases were being made on us and it would come back to haunt us.

02:05:51

Q:

And how were some folks reacting to the threat of the Russians? Were people putting in bomb shelters in?

A:

Oh, yes oh yes.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about that.

02:06:04

A:

Um, I personally don't know anyone that put a bomb shelter in but I know where there are several sites here in Crosby Township that do have bomb shelters. In fact, in the tornado in '90 or '91 I knew a family that went into their old bomb shelter and they were very glad it was there. Because their mobile home was just wiped out and they had gone into the old bomb shelter and they were quite happy and quite safe.

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02:06:35

A:

But yes, that was quite the thing to do was furnish your bomb shelter and make sure you had a supply of food in there, and blankets and candles. That was something a lot of people did and others talked about. Well, we need to make a bomb shelter. So that was, quite a few people around here. And at the time it wasn't fear of Fernald that caused it, it was fear of Russians attacking.

02:07:04

Q:

What were people's attitudes towards Fernald maybe being a target, was that an issue?

A:

Yes it was. It was brought up several times that we might be a high impact area because of the uranium processing plant here. That was one fear that people did have. If it was ever bombing in the interior of the United States we might be a target. I think that's why a lot of people did go into building the bomb shelters.

02:07:34

Q:

Were people generally aware of the uh missile sites too? The ones in Oxford and also in Dillsboro, those types of?

A:

Uh, vaguely. If you read different magazines but I don't think people realized how close they were. That seemed like a long way away then. Dillsboro was way off in the boonies but of course when you really study it I guess it, if it ever had become a target, we'd have had fallout from that too.

02:08:06

Q:

You need to stop the tape?

02:08:14

A:

Oh I know where Matt's going. (Turns around and looks toward house)

Q:

Yeah, you might want to.

(Tape stops and restarts)

02:08:24

Q:

Okay, we were talking about uh people in this area, their attitudes towards Fernald being a target.

A:

Yes, it was brought up that if there ever was an attack on the interior of the country we probably would be one of the targets. But I don't think anybody ever thought they'd be past the perimeters of the

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United States. I don't think it was a constant worry. But it was there and it was mentioned in newspaper articles that yes it was a processing plant and it would be on one of the lists of prime targets.

02:09:00

A:

But I think everybody was so secure with the government that they knew, they didn't think the Russians would ever get by our defenses on the outside. Or at least it wasn't a consuming fear in my life that we'd be attacked.

02:09:15

Q:

And you had mentioned earlier about so many residents having a sense of betrayal, um how do you personally feel, I guess, in those, in that period of time in the mid '80's how did you personally feel about the government?

02:09:31

A:

I think my first reaction was denial, didn't happen. Um, it's provided such a good income for so many people, provided financial security for so many people in the area. Um, just go away and don't give us all this publicity. I really didn't believe it at first. And of course as more and more facts were revealed and more and more studies did show the large amount of contamination, I too felt a little angry with the government for doing this.

02:10:09

A:

Although I know too there were many other companies that were doing it. People weren't as conscious of contamination and uh pollution in the '50's and '60's as they are now. A lot of companies polluted lakes, polluted rivers because they just didn't have the safeguards or the technology that they have now to prevent it. And I know Fernald is not the only one that was guilty of it.

02:10:40

A:

But I guess you don't think your government's going to work against you. It's just something you feel like well that's our government, they're our leaders, they'll do everything to protect us. And it was really a sense of as I said before, betrayal. That the company, the people you place the most trust in were undermining the health of the area.

02:11:10

Q:

And your sons worked at Fernald when all this was happening?

A:

Uh, no not really. Just for the last 2 years. They both went to work there in the late '80's.

Q:

So after cleanup?

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A:
Yes.

02:11:23

Q:
Okay, I was going to say, you might be worried about them if you.

A:
No, they were still, I think maybe a year or so of production when they were both working there. But they've been more involved in the cleanup than the actual production.

02:11:38

Q:
So what are your impressions of the cleanup, how it's going right now?

A:
Uh, well every time we have a report it seems like progress is being made. I don't think they're going to meet their goal because they've had so many setbacks. I think they'll still be in the process of cleanup in the 2010 would be my bet. I don't think you'll meet, is it 2006 was the first, I don't think it will be done by then but I suppose maybe 15 years after that they'll be a total clean site over there.

02:12:15

Q:
And have you ever taken tours of the site?

A:
Yes I have.

Q:
Tell us what your impressions of the plant were during your tours.

02:12:22

A:
Uh, you can really see the progress. From the first tour we took, I think the first tour I took was 12 years ago, and I was kind of horrified at all the things sitting around. And the fact that it wasn't a cleaner, neater site and as work has progressed it really is a difference. You can really see cleanup being done. I mean the buildings that were run down are now removed.

02:12:52

A:
Everything is much, much cleaner. Looking good, I'm impressed. The last tour we took which was March of this year, I was really impressed. It looked great.

02:13:06

Q:
And that first tour you took 12 years ago what were the kinds of things that worried you that you saw on site?

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A:

Um, the abandoned equipment was just sitting around. Barrels sitting all over, um looking at those waste pits. They were really scary to look at. They were nasty looking. The condition of some of the buildings had deteriorated. There were rusty pieces of equipment sitting in the far corners of all around apparently had just been pulled there and abandoned. And that's all been cleaned up. Looks much, much better.

02:13:49

Q:

Tell us a little bit about your involvement with various community groups. What types of community groups are you involved with?

A:

Uh, you mean that would be connected with Fernald or just community? (Comment – just community)
Uh, of course I've been a Township Trustee. I'm in the middle of my third term of Township Trustee so that means that we do go to a lot of the meetings.

02:14:12

A:

Um, we attend the cleanup committee, the update meetings. Right now I'm serving on the FCAB which is a Citizens Advisory Board. Um, I attend maybe half of the FRESH meetings. I do try and attend the, some of the Health Effects Subcommittee meetings. I do try and go to some of them. I don't get to all of them because we have other business also.

02:14:41

A:

I think I'm very partial right now to our historical society which is trying to restore some of the old buildings and the artifacts of the community. Our early history, the 1800 to the 1850 period we're working in. We're restoring a log cabin that's one of the original houses in Crosby Township. That's kind of my pet project right now in the community.

02:15:11

Q:

As a trustee um in relations to Fernald uh what do you see your responsibilities?

A:

Well I think my main responsibilities are to the citizens to make sure that the cleanup continues and that the government is responsible for continual perpetual care of the site. I think we have to kind of serve as a watchdog to see that it's never allowed to go into an abandoned condition. We need to be alert and keep in communication with them because we certainly don't want them to abandon the site completely. We want them to accept responsibility for it in, forever.

02:16:02

Q:

Do you need to pause?

(Tape stops and restarts here)

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02:16:09

Q:

Generally um how do you feel about having lived in such close proximity to Fernald?

A:

Um, well as I said before, we're upwind from it so I've had no major fears about it. Had I lived on the other side of it I would have been uncomfortable and I think I would have insisted that my kids get very adequate checkups.

02:16:37

A:

And I myself, my husband and I both use the medical monitoring. We did apply for that to make sure that we are tested. And I've had no major fears just because of where I live. I've always been kind of glad that I was here instead of the other side of it.

02:16:59

Q:

Let's talk a little bit about also uh the lawsuit that happened in the mid '80's. Uh there was a class action law suit and of course in behalf of the residents. Can you tell us what your impressions of that was?

02:17:09

A:

Well, I uh, can you turn that off for a second?

(Cameraman: Sure)

(Tape stops and restarts here)

02:17:22

A:

Delete that one.

Q:

No problem.

A:

Okay.

02:17:28

Q:

Um, if you could tell us a little bit about the medical monitoring program. Uh, how did you get involved in it and what do you have to do?

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A:

Uh, I picked up the applications at one of the public meetings and brought it home and my husband and I both decided that from what would could see on the questionnaires it looked like it might be something that we should have for our own safety and piece of mind. It was a very good physical.

02:17:56

A:

And that would be better for our own health if we do it. So you go um every other year for awhile it was every three years and of course as you get older they see you more often. And it's a very good physical, I'm glad we take part in it. They uh discovered a minor problem with my husband's stomach that had nothing to do with Fernald but it led to some follow-up medical treatment for him that we probably wouldn't have caught for several years. Uh, it's just a very good physical and I'm very glad it's offered.

02:18:44

Q:

And how do you think uh the government's attitude towards the community and its rapport with the community has changed since 1984 to now?

A:

Um, hopefully they're being a lot more honest with us. Communication is much better. When there are problems they do call the trustees or they notify us of anything. I think there's a lot more open communication than there was in '84.

02:19:16

A:

We hope it's honest and above board. We hope nothing's being concealed. They seem like they really are trying to work with us and avoid any more scandal and any more scenes with newspapers and reporters gathering around. It seems like they're much more cooperative. Hopefully that's what's going on.

02:19:43

Q:

And tell us a little bit about what the FCAB has underway. What exactly, what types of things are they working on?

A:

Um they have several subcommittees. There's a stewardship subcommittee and one of the main focuses right now is with the natural resources where they're trying to decide some future uses for the site when all production and all other parts are gone.

02:20:08

A:

The future use that will be usable for the community and areas around it. My pet thing on that I think would be a museum and uh featuring the reburial of some of the Indians featuring some Indian history plus some Cold War history. The schools could use, could be made into quite a little museum. I'm very much in favor of that idea.

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02:20:37

Q:

And what else would you like to say about the future land use there um anything else you'd like to see on that site?

A:

Um, well I don't, I don't feel it should ever be used for any other commercial developments or housing. I think it should be kept as green land above it and not used for anything that might disturb the soil. I have some fears about digging into it even a thousand years from now.

02:21:11

A:

I have some concerns that there could still be radioactivity there. I don't want to see it become another Love Canal. So my feeling is it should be fenced in and left open and green.

02:21:29

Q:

Now is there anything that you wanted to add? Anything that we didn't ask that you wanted to talk about?

A:

Oh I don't think so. I think you pretty much covered everything.

Q:

Well I'll ask you one further question. (Comment – sure) How do you feel about the Fernald Living History Project itself?

02:21:44

A:

Oh, very pleased to be working on it and quite anxious to see some results from it. I can't wait to see these tapes and to share them and have them on file for people 100 years from now. Of course I know they'll have to change all the tapes we played because there won't be things to play them on. We'll have to convert them to something but I think it's a wonderful idea to save them.

02:22:10

A:

It's a big part of the history of this area. It definitely affected everybody's lifestyle and it should be recorded for posterity and for future studies and use. Cold War Era was a very important part of the '50's and '60's. So I think it's definitely a good idea to preserve it for history.

02:22:33

A:

As we're working on things for the Historical Society now how wonderful it would have been if back in the 1840's and '50's they'd have recorded some of the things that were going on around them. How interesting it would have been for future generations.

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02:22:50

Q:

Great. Anything else you want to add?

A:

No.

Q:

Okay, great. We're going to do something we call nat sound now. We just need some quite on the set for just a second so we can get some tone of the area. This is nat sound.