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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Claire Marchant
Date Interviewed: 9/21/99 Date Transcribed: 1/13/00 Tape: #91 Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0213

21:01:11
Q:
All right. First of all if you could just give us your name and spell it to make sure we have it right.

A:
Okay. I'm Claire Marchant. And it's C-L-A-I-R-E, the last name M-A-R-C-H-A-N-T.

Q:
If you could give us a little bit of background, where you were born, where you went to school, a little bit about your family. You know sort of pre-Fernald stuff.

21:01:28
A:
Okay, I was born and raised in Middletown Ohio. Uh, I'm one of the end of the baby-boomers, 1949 baby. I went to parochial schools uh St. John Middletown _____ High, graduated from Fairfield High in 1967. Um, got married had three babies, two girls and a boy. I am now the proud grandmother of nine grandchildren, eight boys and one girl and number ten is on the way in March of this coming year.

21:01:56
Q:
Terrific. (Comment – yeah) Tell us a little bit about how you got your job at Fernald.

A:
Um, I was working in a little company in Fairfield called Croth and Beninghoffen and it was part of James David Furniture, Inc. And I was working in the machine shop area of the plant. I had been in small press and I saw a little ad in the paper about two by three square said that NLO Industries would probably be hiring some new people in the coming year.

21:02:23
A:
The company I was currently working for was losing their position in this area and I knew I was working my way out of a job. So I decided to go down and put an application in and I came out and I filled out an application. And about six weeks after that I uh received a phone call and was asked to come out for an interview.

21:02:44
A:
That was in February of 1980. And I came out and was interviewed in a little atrium area in Administration. I met Homer Cole and Wes Mahaffey who were the supervisors over machining. At

the time I had applied for general factory work. I figured I'd be a laborer. And the interview went very well and I went home and I found out after I gave, went home that evening I had had a phone call from employment services over here.

21:03:15
A:
And I called them the next morning on my break at the job I was at and they offered me a position as a machine tool operator. And I came to work the first part of May 1980 as the first female machine tool operator on site.

21:03:30
Q:
Terrific. Can we pause just a second?

21:03:44
Q:
So when you first got to site what was your very first impression of the site?

A:
Um, the first day I walked in I went through Administration, we went to a little conference room which was off to the right at the time. And there were two other people that were being inducted that day. Um, a fellow, person that ended up as a stamper in our area LeJay Holliday, we call Doc.

21:04:09
A:
And then uh John who was a young tall big 21 year old kid that worked, he was a laborer and he was finally assigned as an inspector over in Plant 6. Um, Doc ended up being a stamper and then eventually went in the tool room in Plant 6. And I was taken over to Plant 6. Um, you had an interview, you were showed safety glasses with side shields, leather palm gloves and then you were also showed the heavy rubber vinyl gloves that we used out in the process area.

21:04:44
A:
It was explained you would have steel-toed boots and coveralls and all your things would be furnished. From there I was taken over to laundry where I was issued a pair of boots um, my first pair of coveralls. And then I was taken over to a locker room, which was up behind the cafeteria at that time on the second floor of the Services building.

21:05:04
A:
And they had a very small locker room that used to belong to the dishwasher Floyd. And they had now put a supervisor, a personnel from the guards, she was sharing a locker room with us and two other women and myself. We were in this little cubby hole which wasn't big enough for one person much less for all of us in there.

21:05:28
A:
Although we weren't all in at the same time. And uh I was dressed, met somebody and had to go down the back stairwell on the process side and came out to the area. And then I walked over to Plant 6. Home Cole introduced me to the people within Plant 6 and we walked around and he showed me all the different things. So many things just overwhelmed me.

21:05:48
A:
I didn't know what a billet was or a derby or any of that. Then I was taken over to Plant 9 and showed the operations in Plant 9, then I was brought back to 6. And I was put to work uh pushing boxes between the cross-transformatic machine and the inspection station in the center of the machining bed. Uh, and that was my first day.

21:06:10
Q:
Let's wait for just a second while this announcement goes out.

21:06:16
Q:
Okay, so um how many other women were working on the process side when you first got here?

A:
Um, less than a dozen. Most of the clerks at that time were men in each one of the areas. All the supervisors were men except for Lucy Rathgens who was the first female supervisor at the time. We had a fork operator, Nancy Grubbs.

21:06:40
A:
We had a couple people over in chemical, uh; Brenda Perkins was one of them, Sue Ison, Paulette Thomas and Karen Beeman. She was out, ended up in the stores clerk. But there weren't too many of us, not very many at all.

21:07:00
Q:
And you were the first machine tool operator?

A:
Yes.

Q:
What was it like um being in the plant and being the only woman machine tool operator?

21:07:07
A:
(Chuckle) Well, first of all I think everybody wanted to see if you were going to fall on your face. okay, um when you got hired you had to have some knowledge of the machinery and the equipment and

how they operated and what you had to do. Uh, if you didn't make it per se then I was under the impression that they weren't going to be putting any more women in there.

21:07:31
A:
Uh, the funny joke was that I did make it, I knew machinery. I enjoyed working with machines and I learned each operation one step at a time. I worked with one gentleman for about five years. He was my daily partner. We worked the cutoff machines; the B&O cutoff and we ran the railroad. And then we were nailed to the cross, cross-transfermatic in the second part of the operations.

21:07:55
A:
And occasionally we'd do things like derby sampling, um then eventually the flat program. Some of the other experimental programs. And it was, it was good. But you had people that wanted to do things for you. Okay, like be your uncle or your dad, you don't move this barrel, don't move that box you know I'll take care of it.

21:08:16
A:
Then you had others that wouldn't lift a hand to help you move something if you wanted to. But for the most part, it was good. And you earned the respect of the people you worked with and uh you learned the jobs and eventually I helped to train some of the other new people that came in on the different operations over the years.

21:08:39
Q:
Now you mentioned your teeny-weeny little locker room. (Comment – yes) Tell us a little bit more about that, why exactly do you need a locker room at Fernald? You know I guess of course you couldn't use the men's so.

21:08:54
A:
Uh, they had lots of locker room spaces for men at that time 'cause this was a man's land. But because we had contamination to deal with okay and the dirt from the area from the different production aspects. You had to shower twice a day. You came in, in the morning, put on a clean pair of coveralls. You went out the area and did your job.

21:09:11
A:
Then when you went to lunch, you showered, changed into your street clothes, were allowed to go to lunch in the cafeteria and then after finishing lunch you would shower; or you would change back into a clean pair of coveralls, go back out to the area for the rest of the day and then at the end of the shift you took another shower and you were back in street clothes and out of here.

21:09:34
A:
Um, because we didn't have to dress-out per se like we do now. The way to keep contamination on that side of the fence was to make sure your clothing, your person were not contaminated through the showering and the cleaning. And I wore my hair real short then (chuckling) for obvious reasons, if you were taking showers you were washing your hair.

21:09:56
A:
And, um, I managed to do it all right. We became the fastest strip tease artist in town then. You could hit the gate at 7 o'clock and punch the timecard, and then you clear the locker room, changed and head out to your area because you had to hit the second timecard by ten minutes after the hour in order to start work. Because then we worked from, so then you became fast change artist.

21:10:20
Q:
And tell us a little bit about your responsibilities as a machine tool operator, exactly what was your job everyday?

21:10:29
A:
Um, it would depend on what position you were working in. In Plant 6, I would normally run either the B&O runs on all cutoff or I would be running the cross machine, one of the operators on cross machine. It took three operators when it came to the cross machine. You had one, two load material onto the machine and you had one that was taking the material off.

21:10:49
A:
In the meantime the third operator was on kind of a break because we worked in shifts. On the Burns and Oliver cutoff, we worked as a team. Each load that we did we worked as a team, we would change position, one would be the catcher and one would be the operator. And, um, you were cutting your pieces of material according to the length that was needed and then you were catching the scrape to keep from jamming up the machine.

21:11:13
A:
And, um, producing inners and outers cores of the Mark 35s. So that was a lot of it. Um, you would keep track of your material, you would stamp your material with an identification number, you would make sure that your work production quota was what it was supposed to be for that day. Um, when you weren't doing that you were working on cleanup in the area.

21:11:37
A:
You would always make sure, by end of your shift, that all the scrap was picked up. The drums were pulled off from the trims that came off the machines and you would mop around your area to make sure it was all policed up, so that the next person came in if it was, they were running second shift or for the next day, that it was ready for the next operation.

21:11:56
A:
Um, you were safety conscious about what you did and how the operation was done. If you were to have a fire in the drum then you would run to get the fire hose and try to get the fire out. In the meantime most, we never had any what you want to say big fires, just small ones a lot of the time. We did isotopic changeovers when you went from enriched to depleted to normal material.

21:12:18
A:
Depending on which job you were on and we did inventories quarterly as well as the yearly one.

21:12:28
Q:
What's an isotopic changeover?

21:12:29
A:
Um, when you would go from one enrichment to another. From enriched to depleted material. All the equipment that was used in those operations had to be cleaned down to nothing. Not one trace of the other material was there before you started up the next operation. And accordingly then your machine would be tagged with the type of material you were running.

21:12:49
A:
That way no other material would be put on the machine again until it was cleaned again.

21:12:55
Q:
How much did you know about the material you were handling?

21:12:57
A:
Originally, nothing. After awhile, you learned. Um, when we had to go through the classes on radioactivity and, um, being a nuclear workers and then I became part of the safety committee. And also did a lot of the inspections throughout the plants, not just my plant but all the plants all over the site; quite active in that of the project.

21:13:24
Q:
So when did that institute the training, the Rad II training?

21:13:30
A:
Um, we had radiation worker training when we first had the film and learned about how many REMs we were supposed to have almost from the beginning. We would have large meetings up in the cafeteria and would go through the training with that. We didn't really start with the test and the type

of in-depth training that we have now until about the time that NLO was switching over to Westinghouse.

21:14:00
A:
And then eventually as we went into the where we had to change-out and start to wear anti Cs and we had rad-techs then, things in place all over site. Before that we had one rad-tech for the whole site, just like you only had a tech that took care of your air sampling, monitoring, all that, then the rad-tech would be needed only if we had some major problems that they were worried about.

21:14:28
A:
After that they became commonplace.

21:14:32
Q:
So when you got here there weren't that many rad-techs?

21:14:35
A:
No.

21:14:40
Um, as far as handling material, how much material would you handle on a given day? What was your quota for the day?

21:14:50
A:
It would depend. Um, we would have 12 loads of the small cores which we run per day which was 90 some odd pieces on an average per load, then you would have 18 loads of the larger material on the outers. That would be on the cross machines to cut, or on the Barnes and Oliver to cut the cores. You would run 39 to 42 loads through the cross transportmatic per shift, per day.

21:15:16
A:
And that included knocking down all the chips and making sure that at the end of the shift that you had coolant circulating so that we didn't have any fires erupting in the whole underneath the cross machine. Um, then every, well, once a week on Friday you would shut-down early so that we would go down underneath the cross machine in a trench and would knock all the chips loose and get them out in baskets and get them out of the trench by the weekend.

21:15:38
A:
Um, and then we would end up working, um, taking an early shower that night because you were so dirty when you got done. It was your early quit for Friday. It was about the only way you got an extra shower was when you had to have an early quit from isotopic changeovers and inventory cleanup because you really do get dirty.

21:15:58
A:
I've seen the time when it was almost steel gray all the way to the skin and had to take Comet and hand cleaner to the locker room scrub it off and get it off the skin. It had penetrated through the clothing. So the change to the material we have now where we were working with anti C's wearing over the top of our clothing is a big change for the type of exposure that we had way back when.

21:16:22
Q:
Describe those two machines for us, exactly the Barnes and Oliver? (Comment: Yeah, the B&O railroad?)

21:16:34
A:
(Laughing). Yeah, we had two of them in Plant 6. Originally we had only one and then we had two, then we also had the Acme Gridleys, which were another type of cutoff machine. Um, the Acme Gridleys were only to operate on the small inners and then that we would have two normally during the time that I worked there. Plus the B&Os that ran the small cores.

21:16:52
A:
The outer cores that were the larger diameter we had to put through the Barnes and Oliver cutoff. And, um, when they came back, when the billets were sent to RMI for extrusion and brought back here, they came back as three rods for the outers or six rods for the small inners and we would run those through the machines.

21:17:10
A:
They were on a tray behind it and they would load them and then we would just run one tube after another through cutting the pieces according to what we needed for specifications and then we would load it in a box and each individual billet was stamped with the ID that was assigned to it from the beginning of its production age.

21:17:31
A:
And then those same loads would be eventually taken through salt oil for heat treatment and then it would go to the cross transfermatic machine, which had approximately six stations. You had one station where you loaded and then they were loaded on a conveyor system that fed the pieces through in a vertical pattern. They would rim them inside and outside, do an OD facing and ID facing and in facing on each end.

21:18:01
A:
Then when it would come off at the end stations, it would be put into a box and the stamper, it would be there responsibility to stamp the same identification number on those pieces and then it would go to the inspection station before they would back to inspection for final disposition.

21:18:18
Q:
And how important was it that they be a certain size?

21:18:23
A:
Oh, very important. We had to be conformed constantly. Um, you didn't have anything that was out of specification. We went through a period of time trying to find out why the last piece normally on each load ended up scrap. Um, it was eventually determined that when it came back from MRI, a lot of the impurities that seemed to settle within the production would end in that last segment, so there wasn't much that we could do with that so it ended up scrap.

21:18:51
A:
Um, we never lost any scrap; it was always sent back for re-melt. The chips that came off the machines were made into briquettes down at the _____ press in the south end of Plant 6 and then used in production in Plant 5. All of our scrape the same way. Anything that we did from the isotopic changeovers was used to remake material. So we really didn't loose anything in the process.

21:19:14
A:
Eventually, we started the flat program, with the two-inch flats. And I was instrumental in that, doing the sampling of the derbies, doing sampling of the flats where we took slices for comparison for the studies at the lab and then to facing the flats off. Milling them on the milling machines in south 6.

21:19:39
Q:
And what were the flats going to be used for?

21:19:42
A:
Um, armament, O.K. and billets in the submarines. We didn't know that at the time.

21:19:50
Q:
So I know that we made cores for the submarines but I didn't know that we made armor for the submarines.

21:19:57
A:
Um, um, armament for the tanks and the helicopters. It was rolled out into sheets because the uranium metal was the strongest metal that couldn't be penetrated other than by our penetrators which we also processed in Plant 6 that were used in the uranium war.

21:20:15
A:
I never operated the penetrator. The CBC, I never operated it but I did watch it while it was being operation on occasions.

21:20:30
Q:
Now were you aware when you were hired that Fernald's mission had changed a little bit. Because, like in the 60s and 70s they were purely making the cores and there had been a drop off in production of those types of materials and they were moving into newer materials when we were first hired. Did they explain any of that to you when you first got there?

21:20:50
A:
No, No. Um, I came to found out by talking to the guys I worked with that they had had times when things got slack and they were put out to plant the trees, do some of the gravel and some of the guys ended up working in laundry, and eventually went back to machine shop. But, um, no they didn't explain any of that to us; you were just hired to do a job.

21:21:14
Q:
Were you aware that most of this material was being used for the defense of the country?

21:21:17
A:
No, actually I wasn't at first; I did eventually doing the derbies for the Y2K and some of the other things and Y12s that went to Rocky Flats and some of them that went to Oakridge. I have been down to Oakridge in the facility, but, uh, one thing you did know about that; no two missions were allowed inside each other.

21:21:45
A:
If you went to Oakridge you were never allowed in the process area. It was strictly into the offices, they didn't want you to put two and two together. Just like when you first started here you weren't allowed to go from plant to plant. Um, you were assigned to an area, you stayed there. The only way you went to another plant if you had permission from your supervisor and he had to know where you were at.

21:22:04
A:
Because if you were stopped at any time that was a no, no.

21:22:12
Q:
This is something that we haven't got into; did you get a Q clearance when you started here?

21:22:15
A:
No, I have a limited clearance. Limited clearance.

21:22:17
Q:
Tell us bit about that process, how did you get that; that's called L clearance, I guess right. Um, what did you have to do to get that clearance?

21:22:25
A:
I had to fill out a form and I had to go back through my family history every place that I had lived, um, I had to put references down. The fact that my mother at that time was not a U.S. citizen came into play. She was a French War Bride brought here in 1947 and um, but that didn't seem to deter from it and the fact that I hadn't been in the military and hadn't traveled all over made it that my clearance came through rather fast.

21:22:54
A:
Um, never, at that time I'd never been in any troubles then.

21:23:00
Q:
And what kind of security was on site at the time?

21:23:01
A:
Um, we had our guards and the guards were armed with guns. They had went through random training, in fact, they even went through hostage situations and other training over periods of time. You always saw presence of the guards in the area. It wasn't just that you saw them at the main gate.

21:23:18
A:
You didn't go no place without your badge, your identification on you, had it on you constantly, and you always wore it on the outside of your clothing. That way that you would never, you know they would be able to tell who you were and that you belonged in the area.

21:23:34
A:
Special projects unless you were privy to it you were not to be hanging around and in offices that you weren't supposed to be. No file cabinets were left opened. A lot of file cabinets has safe locks on them and if a supervisor or a lab-technician wanted to talk to you it was for a reason. It was not basically to be chitchatting.

21:24:03
Q:
And how about discussing things with your friends and family. Did they warn you against that when you first started working at Fernald?

21:24:08
A:
Why, I was not allowed to discuss anything with my husband, my family, nobody. In fact, I didn't even know that two of my neighbors that I'd lived near for years worked out here. David Hobbs, Ray Hobbs who was our oiler at that time and Harry B. Turner who was working at the boiler house. I had lived across the street from then eight, ten years and never knew they worked out here, but eventually I found out.

21:24:32
Q:
When your friends and family would ask you what you were doing, like, hey, how's your new job or whatever, what would you tell them?

21:24:42
A:
I'm just a machinist. Um, some of the things I did, my husband and I, he's a maintenance Millwright, multi-craft classification and um, but we never discussed the kinds of machines that I ran, or the type of coolant I used or the tool tips I used or anything. Just I went to work he went to work.

21:25:00
A:
You were warned that if you were out in public you shouldn't say anything and if you were going to leave the country you were supposed to notify them that you were going to leave the country and where you were going to be.

21:25:13
A:
If it was going to be one of the political blocks of the eastern countries you had to have permission ahead of time. And if you did leave the country there was a possibility you would be interviewed afterwards as to where you had been and what you had done. I never left, so, didn't have to worry about it.

21:25:33
Q:
And, um as far as that whole security goes why was it so important to not talk about your job?

21:25:45
A:
As far as security goes the fact that we were doing a vital part of the defense department was top secret and you didn't want somebody outside this country that could hurt us to get any part of that information. We were the only plant that did the job that we did here in the U.S. We didn't want Russia to get that information or China.

21:26:17
A:
So, you did what you were told and you took a pride in what you did. There was a job to be done and you did it.

21:26:26
Q:
Let's talk a little bit about the Cold War, because you were working here sort of when the Cold War was coming to a head. I mean 1980 was a time when things were going on in the country where there was a lot going on from the 60s to the 80s. Tell us a little bit about your mindset during the Cold War.

21:26:52
A:
Um, I didn't agree with communism per se, my mother is from France and I knew a little about their political background. But I believed in voting and expressing your opinions, you know, as to what you felt should be right for this country. I am a registered voter, have been since the beginning and I believe that if there's a job to be done to protect this country you should do it.

21:27:25
A:
My family has always been military. My father served in WWII, my grandfather served in WWI with Teddy Roosevelt and, um, that has been something that has been passed down through the traditions. I don't always agree with all the politicians and I'm not sometimes always up on what's going on now. But at that time, I felt, you know, I had a young family and I didn't want them to be raised in an environment where would have to be afraid.

21:27:59
A:
Growing up in school we had the nuclear disaster, dry runs, you had to hide under your desk, you had to go and put yourself in the hallway. What to do in case of an emergency. You looked for bomb shelter signs on the banks and in the different buildings. And didn't want my kids to go through that. My parents weren't of the opinion to dig a bomb shelter and put it in the back yard.

21:28:25
A:
But that was the mindset at the time. And even though it got away from it in the later part of the 80s, I think that everyone still wondered who's going to push that button. You know, are we going to be the first ones or are we going to be the ones that are going to be left. That was kind of the mindset.

21:28:49
Q:
Were you ever worried about your safety working at Fernald, were you aware of the fact that it might be a target?

21:28:54
A:
Um, yeah, you were aware of it and we used to have a series of signals that went, you know, like one blast of a horn up to 12 and they always did say that if it was a 12, 12, 12 it was kiss your backside good-bye, so uh, yeah, you were aware of it. And I think that maybe that's why security kind of tightened toward the latter part of the 80's especially.

21:29:21
A:
Because they were afraid that uh, saboteurs and things might try to come in, you know they might possibly bring some things in here that they shouldn't, and try to blow up a building or whatever. Uh, and you were more aware of people that came and went, you noticed people on the back roads.

21:29:38
A:
If somebody was there that wasn't suppose to be there you went and found the guards and told them what you saw. Uh, but yea, you were aware of it. And yea there was a tension about it.

Tape FLHP0214

22:01:00
Q:
So uh, you're living in Hamilton while you were working here at Fernald. (Comment: Yes.) And how do you feel that the plant affected the surrounding communities?

21:01:13
A:
I don't think that Hamilton so much worried about the plant. As much as people who lived right here in the Ross and the Venice area. I would travel up and down 27 coming to work into 128, but uh, and when we would go like down to Ross to eat dinner, you know, and to the different functions, you would find that people, you know, were concerned.

21:01:35
A:
Uh, during that period of time, they ended up, there was a worry that the target, the plant would be a target, and they did set up missile sites, you know, over in Indiana. And there was talk that eventually they might have even set up a missile site, you know, close to the plant if not on plant property. And that really concerned some of the people that knew about it, within the area.

21:01:58
A:
Because uh, they didn't want their homes to be a target. Uh, and then it came out that uh, you know, ours was not the only facility that was in danger. You had GE, who produced a lot of the aircraft equipment, and things. That was another one that was in the targeted area. And when you took a look at the map, the overall map, of the different industries in the area that were involved then you understood, but uh, yeah, there was a lot of concern within the area for it.

21:02:24
A:
Not so much from the production standpoint as the fear of what could happen if somebody did do some damage in this area. Every time an alarm would go off, or what would be a sonic boom, people in the area were wondering what blew up at the plant now. What was going on? Uh, but uh, consequently there wasn't anything, but then that fear was still there.

21:02:50
Q:
Wow. And how do you feel that your job contributed to America's goals at the time?

A:
You did the best you could with what you had to work with. Uh, you tried to help each other. A lot of the workers, we became close, you know, we were like one big family, and uh, we still joke and tease, some of us, back and forth. But you had a job to do and a mission. And the mission was for the security of the country, and that was your job.

21:03:25
A:
And you took a pride in that work. You didn't, uh, just because you had a bad weekend, you know, when you came in on Monday you had your job to do, you had a job. And on Friday, yeah, when you went home you were satisfied.

21:03:43
Q:
Good. Now in the uh, in the 19, early 1980's, about 1984 or so, there was a lot of hoop-la over dust-collector releases in Plant 9. (Comment: Uh-huh.) There was a whole lot of media attention. Can you tell us, as a worker, what was your uh, reaction to that?

21:04:02
A:
Uh, hum, well, most of us were shutdown at that time. All of our operations came to a halt. And there was an investigation going on. And uh, it, we got bits and pieces, not so much first-hand information from here at the site, but what we got through the media. And you were concerned.

21:04:23
A:
They talked about, you know, danger to the environment, and then also to what it could do to different people in the area. And then you began to wonder has what we been doing all these years affected us? And uh, there was a lot of turmoil, especially from a union standpoint, with the union representatives trying to find out what was going on and trying to notify the people that worked here.

21:04:50
A:
The union members as to what was happening. So that they kind of alleviate the fears and then those who felt that there was some health problems that were beginning to show or could happen in the

future. That's when they started requesting studies through using outside people to do the studies on the employees and workers.

Q:
Did you worry about your health?

21:05:17
A:
Not too much though. Uh, I was a smoker in the beginning, and I stopped smoking about 1985, and that is a plus uh, I sometimes wonder about what we breathe within the area. When you would come out of the plant after working in machining, let me go back, when you would go into the plant, in Plant 6, in the front of Plant 6, and you would start down the aisle-way toward your machine you would see a haze, like a fog, hanging from the ceiling lights.

21:05:50
A:
And you knew that was the dust from the production. Almost like a fog in there but it was kind of up toward the ceiling and you breathe that ever day, even though we had air make-up machines that took, you know, the uh, process stuff away from you, you would go out at night, when you blow your nose it was black soot coming out of it. It didn't get there on its own. Okay.

21:06:14
A:
And so that does make you wonder, after the years of production that you've done, whether or not, you know, that there are some problems that may come later on, if you don't already have problems. Uh, I just sort of say, okay Lord, you handle it. But yeah, there are some concerns.

21:06:33
Q:
Do you worry about your fellow workers? Have you seen many of your fellow workers?

A:
It makes me sad when I see the ones who have retired, and then I find that certain ones have lasted three months, six months, a year, couple years and have passed on. Those who have developed cancer over the years, you know, whether they were a smoker or non-smoker, it's still hard to let somebody go that you became a friend with, and you knew.

21:07:03
A:
But yeah, you do worry. Some people, when you did the job, I had a good partner, he would tell you don't stand on top of the machine. And he was right, you know, time, distance and shielding, that was the key right there. Don't stand on top of it. So we've learned to operate sort of from a distance. You knew where the shut-off button was, and you could hit it with the palm of your hand.

21:07:30
A:
So you stayed kind of back there from your machine, you had a long handled hook that you used to catch the scraps off the machine when you were running like the B and O operations. Other machinery you couldn't back off so much. You had to be right on top of it when you operated it.

21:07:44
A:
Eventually, like drilling derby samples, they decided to put plastic sheeting, rubber mats, so that you weren't exposing your chest area when you were standing there drilling the derby samples and picking up the chips to put them in the sample jars. Uh, but yeah, you do worry.

Q:
What kind of safety equipment was available to you when you first started?

21:08:07
A:
You had safety glasses, with side shields, you had steel toed boots; you had coveralls and anything else that you needed underneath. You had your different gloves, uh; you were issued respirators when it was necessary to use one. If you were changing say the bag on a dust collector you would put a half mask respirator on.

21:08:25
A:
Uh, those who had to work on airline or you know, in full covered suits for acid, and things, those were available. Uh, we had equipment; it was use it when you needed it. And we had, like I said, we used hooks to grab scraps off the machines, uh, that way you weren't on top of it. But you had to be careful, you know, that you didn't grab it while it was twisting, and then twist the hook out of your hands.

21:08:56
A:
Uh, yeah, there was a lot of equipment. And whatever tool you needed, it was there, it was available. We were issued hand-tools because being a machinist you had to adjust your machinery. So you were issued hand-tools.

21:09:12
A:
Uh, we had, of course you had your fire extinguisher, your fire hoses that were available, and close by, readily to each and every station. Within the plant. Air lines for those who needed air lines; there was plant air available.

Q:
Now you mentioned working with the safety committee, when was that? Was that still during production years?

22:09:35
A:
Yes, in fact ah, as I came in the guys kind of volunteered me um, the old joke used to be, if you want to get out of work you got on a committee. Okay, whether it was the FEAA, the Fernald Employees Activities Association, or whether you were on the safety committee.

22:09:54
A:
Ah, but I did work on the safety committee, use to help do the plant inspections where you go around and checked to make sure fire extinguishers were tagged that, and in operation they way they were supposed to be. That your safety showers were operational, that the lights were working and they were all functioning. That you had clear aisle ways, that there were no trip hazards, slips and falls and um, we policed not only our areas, but other areas.

22:10:23
A:
As a same way other people would come from other areas and police ours. And ah, then eventually the union pushed for the 25-person safety committee. Which was for management as well as hourly employees from the trades and from the unions. And I became a member, one of the first member of the 25-person safety committee.

22:10:45
Q:
What types of things were you concerned about while you were on the safety committee? What kinds of things did you try to change?

A:
Ah, we tried to get ergonomic equipment to help people so that we didn't have a lot of the sprains and, you know, backaches and things that went on from people, you know, lifting and not having the proper equipment to do it with. To make sure that we had ladders, and platforms, and scaffoldings that were of the right quality and were pre-inspected before anybody used them.

22:11:12
A:
That people had the right training to do things. That ah, if you ended up with potholes all over, which can cause an accident or a fall, that those issues were addressed and it was done. That lighting was correct in all the areas, you know, that you didn't have areas that had dark spots where somebody could trip and fall.

22:11:32
A:
Or find a hole that wasn't supposed to. That barriers were maintained the way they were supposed to be maintain so that people didn't come across barriers, you know, accordingly. Ah, that issues, if something did happen ah, a leak or whatever, that it was brought up right away.

22:11:45
A:
And that the issue was addressed and taken care of right away through the proper channels. Ah, if somebody felt that there was a problem with their job, whether it had to do with ah, the way the job was being done or whatever, that those issues were addressed.

A:
Um, I fell in '92 or '91 on a handicap ramp that was covered with ice. Ah, after that the regulations were brought in that we had to have ramps according to the proper specifications for OSHA and that sidewalks and things had to be permanent and couldn't be these temporary things that were just throwed up all over the place.

22:12:26
A:
Ah, a lot of good came from it. We ended up with non-slick surfaces with special ah, surface material that was put down to keep people from falling and tripping. That salt cans were placed in areas that needed to be when we had to have snow and ice removal. Those types of things.

22:12:46
Q:
Good, and um, was that under NLO or Westinghouse?

A:
Um, actually we started this through; the safety committees were ongoing over the years through NLO. It became more so with Westinghouse and we ended up with a Quality Circle and got into a lot of that. And then it, it has really pushed forward with Fluor Daniel.

22:13:12
Q:
Tell us a little bit about the transition between ah, NLO and Westinghouse. Were you shocked to find out that NLO was going to be leaving?

A:
Yes we were and it kind of surprised us that we were having a new company coming in. Everybody was apprehensive about what's gonna happen. Ah, the union employees were given to understand that the new company had to take the contract.

22:13:34
A:
That we would still have a contract and they would have to abide by all the rules that had been set down within that contract. That nobody was going to lose their job. Ah, they were still wondering, we had been used to one type of management and dealing with those personnel and what would happen with the new people?

22:13:51
A:
How were you going to deal with them? If they were going to honor our safety committees? If they were going to continue with the same mode of safety conscience atmosphere and that was scary. But eventually we did end up with a working relationship with Westinghouse. And then we went through the same transition all over again with Fluor Daniel.

22:14:13
A:
Ah, these people came in from Fluor Corporation and we were working, wondering the same thing. Are they, what are they, what changes are going to come next um, it has been interesting. Ah, I can see a lot of evolution come through the processes.

22:14:31
A:
It ah, each group brings with it their own good qualities and I think that as long as people kept an open mind and were willing to adjust, and not just dig their heels in and say, no I'm not going to do this. Then it became a good relationship for all of us.

22:14:52
Q:
Um, you had the opportunities to change your jobs, to help in a good project, to learn new skills through the transitions and you've had the opportunity, if you decided you wanted to go for education, you've had the opportunity to even, you know, further your education. And ah, that has its advantages.

22:15:14
Q:
So when you left from Plant 6 did you go to a different position?

A:
Um, when Plant 6 shut down on the machining, I ended up being given to site service. I worked on the K-65 silos sampling crew for the original samples that we did for the K-65 silos. I also worked at Plant 1 chempad cleaning up all the wooden skids and things that we had up there.

22:15:37
A:
That was the first few wooden boxes and sea-lands that we filled to send out to the Nevada Test Site for burial. Ah, we were, the program was to clean that up. Eventually I ended up in transportation as a laborer for a short period of time.

22:15:53
A:
And then I worked in the cafeteria as utility person and dishwasher. And ah, back to the porter group for a period of time working in different areas. And then finally back out as a hazardous waste technician. And I was assigned original to safe shut down, worked on the UNH project in Plant 2/3 and Plant 8 through the completion of that.

22:16:13
A:
And then back to safe shut down and now I work in Records Management on the project for contaminated records to make copies.

Q:
Let's go back to sampling the K-65 silos, what was that about?

A:
Um, in the process of determining what materials had to be cleaned up and what would it take to do it, the K-65 silos were looked at as to the material of content. The silos were, are deteriorating after the period of years that they've been there. And it was to determine what types of materials were in there.

22:16:50
A:
They used a drill rig just like you would on an offshore drilling, on a crane to go down with a, what they call a lexon tube and retrieve core samples. Like you would, ah, an example would be to take a straw down to a glass of Coke and lift up the straw.

22:17:10
A:
And whatever material, whatever Coke was in the straw that was similar to what we drew the samples out of the K-65 silos. And then it was analyzed and determined what ah, materials, and then they came up with a plan. Because of the consistency, whether it was powder or dry or slushy as to how to clean up the silos, to empty them out and deal with the material that had been stored in them.

22:17:35
Q:
What are, what's in the silos right now?

A:
Ah, good question. The silos themselves originally were the slurries that were left from production. They were pumped out as a slurry material to the silos and, and just as a holding pattern to fill them up. Um, over a period of time a couple of 'em have ended up dry but the one ended up with ah, a wet material almost like a sloppy mud.

22:18:06
A:
And that had all the impurities and everything that ended up in there. Ah, some of 'em had talked about that there might have been gold residue or even industrial diamonds in there ah, I don't know. But whatever it was that was in there, and the old timers that had been here when those silos had been filled had said, the only way to get it out is the same way it went in.

22:18:31
A:
As a slurry it went in, it needed to come out as a slurry and basically that's what's happened. They finally determined that, that's what it would end up taking to get it out. And then the process to dry it and process it and get rid of it.

Q:
How dangerous is the material that's in there right now?

22:18:46
A:
Ah, from a radon standpoint it can be very dangerous. We had to use our radon facility to take off the radon before we were able to get into the silo area to work on it and um, radon is extremely high coming off of those.

22:19:02
A:
As for um, the rest of the material that would be up to the health physicists to determine, we wore not only our regular dosimeters but we had to wear pocket dosimeters and have other things done at the time. Um, there's a lot of material in there.

Q:
Did you ever see any of the camera shots of what's in there, inside or?

22:19:25
A:
No, I saw the material as it came out through the lexon tubes when we cut 'em in the trailer afterwards. Um, my job specifically was to help with the, as support for them and I ran the cascade, the air bottle system for the airline that was used for 'em when they did that.

Q:
And what does this stuff look like when it comes out?

22:19:45
A:
Um, kind of looked like a mushy mud. At the time when it came out, ah, we had one meeting, that some, the material that we were using, we, it didn't want to stay inside the tubes. Okay so we had kind of an all hands meeting to discuss ideas of what we could use to try to do a like a plug on the end where it had fingers where it would almost close up.

22:20:10
A:
Almost like a tea strainer that would close up to try to keep the material in so they could get it out. I think we ended up with something like 37 to 47 inches of material, which was the one good sample that we got through all the testing that we did that summer.

22:20:24
A:
Ah, they had two more crews come in to try sampling after us, from outside contractors, but I think it ended up we got the best samples there were.

Q:
And what year was that?

A:
Um, I'm not quite sure it was the latter part of the '80's.

22:20:44
Q:
So they threw the switch in 1989 to permanently shut the plant down (Comment – correct) tell me what that day was like when you found out they were going to do that.

A:
Well, hmm, we were told to shut our machines down right in the middle of production. We were not allowed to clean up anything, ah, coolant with chips down in there, equip-, material that was laying on the mills to be milled. Material that was inside the cross machine, all over site. You were just told to turn it off and sit down.

22:21:19
A:
And it was kind of a shock. And we were all under the impression that it was going to start back up and that we were going to be allowed to continue and that didn't happen. And for days afterwards we spent time, if we weren't pushing a broom and emptying garbage cans, we were sitting in break rooms. Just waiting for the word to start back up. And it didn't happen

Q:
So now you went into Safe Shutdown (Comment – yeah) and since they did a hot shutdown the way they did and since they didn't run the material through the lines, you were cleaning it up.

22:21:53
A:
Yes, some of it turned like cement.

Q:
Tell us about Safe Shutdown 'cause that's an interesting part of the history.

A:
Safe Shutdown's been an experience um, all over site all of the machinery with all the material that were in it whether it was in the middle of an operation or just cooking ah, liquids, solids whatever. If it was a liquid it became a solid like cement within the equipment.

22:22:18
A:
Ah, screw conveyors were caked with material ah, coolants had evaporated down to where you had nothing but oil and sludge and chips in the bottom of the machines. And the job in Safe Shutdown is to actually remove all what they call holdup material from any and all equipment.

22:22:43
A:
Ah, from the air vent systems all over site as well as each piece of equipment in each one of the buildings. And we have removed thousands and thousands of pounds of material in each one, every process. Ah, we started in Plant 7, then into Plant 4 and consequently we have gone subsequently from building to building to building.

22:23:06
A:
As each process has come down and it has an experience in just doing it from one to the next. We've used everything from ah, hoes like you would use out in your garden, to rake material, to actually cutting pieces of the pipes in the ceilings from the air vents and removing sections just to reach in there and pull out what we can of the solid materials.

22:23:30
Q:
So it was a big job.

A:
Yes, big job. We, it involved thousands and thousands of hours of just pre-planning for each operation. Estimating according to the records of what production was and what was left in material within each plant and in each building.

22:23:48
A:
And then all the different lines, tracing down each piece of equipment, every electrical line and then all the employees involved from the HAZWATs to the supervisors to the managers to all of our people from the millwrights, the electricians, the pipefitters. Everybody in coordinating those into different crews.

22:24:10
A:
As they go through each building. You didn't have just one set crew ah; we had several crews run by different supervisors. Each one was given a task and a part of the plan to work in each building and you would go in and you would do your job.

22:24:24
A:
I worked a lot of the times on the control point, taking care of the supplies and anti-C's and furnishing the equipment. Making sure they had rad bags when they needed rad bags and herculite and yellow tape and duct tape.

22:24:34
A:
And making sure everybody had what they needed, um, if a supervisor needed a certain type of tool or whatever or ah, bags for the um, vacuum systems or whatever, I would see to it they were gotten from Stores and they were supplied with them inside. And ah, you would have an average of 140 people do what we call four dives a day, every day to get each project done.

Q:
Dives?

22:24:02
A:
Yeah, that's where you dress-out in your anti-C's and you dive, dive into the job and then you come out for break and or go to lunch or whatever and then you can dive again. At the moment, I'm doing the same thing. I'm doing three dives a day working on another project.

22:25:20
Q:
Sounds like you're putting on scuba gear.

A:
It does almost. You're, if you are in some of the aspects of Safe Shutdown, full-face respirator. Okay, PAPRs, and you would have on one set of anti-C's possibly a second set anti-, of anti-C's depending on what you, what you were working with. If you're working with acids and things, you had to have on your waterproof and acid-proof anti-C's.

22:25:46
A:
And then you would have cloths, you would have the disposables, so yeah, basically you are. The only reference would be um, if you look at people like on the, the moonwalkers, the astronauts, it's a similar thing. Where you're strapped in and then you also have your air samplers that you have to wear, you know for rad protection.

22:26:04
A:
In order to be able to know that, you know, you're not breathing anything that you shouldn't be breathing even with a respirator on. You have to have random samples, but yeah, it, that's a good analogy for it. Dressing out like an astronaut going in.

Q:
So what is it like knowing that a lot of the places that you just sort of used to walked into when you were in production, you didn't have to wear anti-C's and all this gear to go into the same areas?

A:
It's hard. That was a big adjustment for everybody. It was a big adjustment just learning not, not to cross a rad rope, or to have to wait for a rad tech for radiation protection to ah, give you the blessing to

be able to go in or come out.

22:26:43
A:
Um, that was a hard thing for people to learn. It was hard when you had to, before you just took a shower, you know, you just walked away. If you were going to go into a confined space area, or what was considered confined space area, yes you would have them come from health physicist and they would end up taking and getting our ah, samples, air samples and making sure everything was all right to go in before hand.

22:27:05
A:
But having to adjust to having a rad tech lead you around all the time that was a big hard one. Once you got over that and learned that it was there for your own protection, okay, and to keep contamination from being transmitted from one place to another.

22:27:22
A:
Okay, then it was okay. Then you became used to it, and they become your friends, they're not enemy. They're not just police officers.

Q:
Did you ever wonder about the safety of production considering you never had to wear that stuff before you started cleanup or?

22:27:38
A:
Um, yeah, you do begin to wonder. Ah, I read the book, "*At Work In The Fields Of The Bomb"* and I read some of the ah, comments that were made by the people involved with the _____. And the testing that was done there and some of the Navy personnel that would state they were out on the decks cleaning the decks with flyash from the explosions which just literally coming on the decks.

22:28:06
A:
They were just in their shorts sweeping off the decks. And here rad protection would come out dressed in full anti-C's, with respirators and their Geiger counters and they did not understand and yeah, that would be the analogy, what, you know, we used this in our shirt sleeves and now we're doing it in full anti-C's. There's a big difference.

22:28:26
Q:
A big difference, um, recently they had production where they had to sample material from Plant 6 machining for resale off site, that was one of the projects here in the last couple of years. And the same machine that I used to drill derby samples, they had ah, moved the machine and put on a coolant line to run a constant stream of coolant for it.

22:28:51
A:
And the person had to do it had to do it dressed out in anti-C's and a respirator where I used to do in just in coveralls, and a pair of gloves, and a needlenose pliers.

Q:
I have a feeling we're at the second, at the end of the second.

Tape FLHP0215

23:01:08
Um, are we ready to speak? Um, I guess, yeah just tell us about the procedure stations because I find that interesting.

A:
Okay, ah, there came a time within production that it, from a management standpoint and from a DOE standpoint, they wanted to make sure that every operations could be run, you know, even if it hadn't been run in 10 years.

23:01:34
A:
So each operation they took and evaluated it and they worked with each operator that was running the operation, to go a step by step format on how the job was started what step you did 2, step 3, step 4, step 5; all the way down and, to finish the process. And those were called procedures stations. The engineers and them would come back; they would re-interview you, they would watch you they would tape you on film and they, then they would come back and eventually they set up these white metal stands in each area.

23:02:07
A:
And it was called a procedure station and the procedure for that particular operation was in that book. You could open that book and it would give you all the health data, it would give you the equipment that you needed, it would show each operation step by step by step.

23:02:18
A:
And it was hoped that should the time come that certain operations were no longer needed and then say after a period of years they would have to do it again; then you could go back and you could just take that manual and you would start the same procedure over and over again.

23:02:36
A:
To be able to start the operations back up again, and we had procedure stations throughout the site. And you were never allowed to put anything on that table other than the book that was used for the procedure.

Q:
That's interesting because they never did start back up again.

A:
No, but the procedure books are still around and occasionally you can still one of the white stands that was used for those stations.

23:03:00
Q:
I want to ask you about one of the great mysteries of Fernald. And that's the gentleman that disappeared in the salt furnace.

A:
Mr. _____.

Q:
Can you tell us what you know about that?

23:03:11
A:
I worked in Plant 6 and at the time I was working on the BNO machine, which was right next to the doorway to the rolling mill of Plant 6. Um, I happened to have been sick that night when the gentleman disappeared and when I came in the next day (clears throat) they were literally waiting for the furnace to cool down in order to break it apart to find ah, what they could find of the missing man.

23:03:42
A:
Um, at that period in time there were a lot of things going on. We had had some bad runs in production from Plant's 9 and 5 as well as Plant 6 um, it was believed that it had to do with some drug use that was going on at the time. And there was quite a bit.

23:04:00
A:
Um, we had had an undercover narcotics agent that was posing as ah, health and safety person that was within the plant. Nobody knew it at the time, but he was there and there were several arrests that happened.

23:04:16
A:
Um, I honestly believe that possibly, I don't believe that he was involved in it, but I think that the gentleman might have come against, come up against something, you know, in the plant. I've heard rumors that they thought maybe he was going to be a whistleblower onto what was going on in the project.

23:4:32
A:
And I don't believe that. Um, I think he either got into an argument with somebody that night and he was inadvertently killed and the person tried to cover it up. Or he came across something he shouldn't have and it might have been doing, you know, to do with the drug dealing that was going on at the time.

23:04:48
A:
And um, the person placed his body, using a hoist, inside the furnace over in the rolling mill. Ah, I know a lot of people say he's not there, that was chicken bones but I was in my supervisors office when the box came back from the FBI lab that contained what they considered was his remains.

23:05:10
A:
And ah, I'm sorry but I believe that gentleman was in there. I don't believe it was chicken bones. The FBI wouldn't send back a box like that, through that investigation.

Q:
On a lighter note, you were kind of known as the flower girl, can you explain that?

23:05:33
A:
Um, I had just recently gotten my hair cut prior to coming here and I wore it in a short Afro at the time and I kind of took a shine to wearing a little rose on the side of my hair, clipped on with a bobby pin. Um, and then I got into the habit of it, whatever color I was wearing if it happened to be blue it was blue.

23:05:54
A:
If it was yellow, it was yellow and if it was orange, it was orange and ah, I had dozens and dozens of flowers. When I came to work out here because there were so few women I decided I was going to continue wearing my flower.

23:06:06
A:
So, I wore my flowers and I would even wear them on the contaminated side. Eventually because of an argument ah, with the possibility of cross contamination, I had clean side flowers and dirty side flowers. So I wore flowers in my hair for a lot of years and I had certain people, they nicknamed me Rose and there's still a couple that call me Rose even to this day.

23:06:29
A:
Ah, I don't wear the flowers anymore. I went through a time I even wore bows in my hair but ah, it was just my way of being female and a woman and daring to be different. I've been known to wear pink shoelaces (laughing) and a pink belt. Yeah, it was just my way of being different.

Q:
I love that. I just think that's great in a man's world.

23:06:55
A:
Yeah, it was, it was a man's world. You know, when you go into a situation where, you've worked in factories before and you've had a fair amount of women working there, but to come out here, there were very few women.

23:07:11
A:
You would go for, unless at lunchtime you didn't see another woman. So um, you didn't want to be just one of the boys. And that was my way of being different.

Q:
That's beautiful. Okay, I'm kind of bouncing around a little bit but I wanted to cover the UNH project. Tell us a little bit about the UNH project. What you did during cleanup?

23:07:34
A:
Okay, all right. We had um, acids in Plant 2/3, which would have to be processed into what they call UNH. And ah, it would be processed in Plant 8, run through the east and west _____ machines.

A:
Um, when I first came into the UNH project we were working with the subcontractors, which were doing the piping and arranging for the pump skids which were used throughout the project. From Plant 2/3 to pump it over to Plant 8 and the pumps get in Plant 8 that move the machinery, the material around over there.

23:08:07
A:
So we ended ah, I worked the control point and I also did a lot of the acid leak inspections where we would check through all the different equipment and we had noticed that over a period of years there were beginning to be leaks.

23:08:22
A:
And we would actually count the drips per shift, seven days a week in order to meet the requirements for the EPA that we were not violating and allowing a contaminated and caustic solution to go into the ground and into the water tables. So we kept track of that and ah, eventually we processed all the material through Plant 8.

23:08:43
A:
Including the ah, not only what was stored in Plant 2/3 but what was also stored in the ah, tanks across the road ah, right in front of Plant 1 that also held the material. And ah, I worked originally in Plant 2/3 while they were getting the equipment ready to pump it and to process it over in Plant 8.

23:09:08
A:
And then I had worked in Plant 8 throughout the process period as we ran the materials into, through the end of completion. And then we started into the HF tank cars and worked on the HF tank car problem too at the same time.

Q:
Tell us about the HF tank car. First of all what is HF?

A:
Um, I believe it's hexfluoride, but I'm not sure, okay. And it was another caustic solution, which had to be transferred, it was stored in tank cars and it had to be diluted and the impur-, the material had to be separated to where it would be able to be released through the general sump eventually.

23:09:46
A:
And all the solids and the caustic materials were trapped in what we call the coating in the _____ machine. And then it was drummed up as a sump cake which was sent up to Plant 1 storage and then eventually it would be sent to Nevada Test Site for storage on a permanent basis.

23:10:05
A:
Um, and I worked in that project for a while too, as well as processing all the water through the general sumps and things through Plant 8. 'Cause everything at one time before we have the AWWT facility that we have now all went though Plant 8 for processing. We worked; they had the large imco and the east and west imco. We would coat them with a slurry which would make a coating on the machine. It used a vacuum system to force the liquids through the machine and then the impurities were trapped in that coating.

23:10:33
A:
And a large knife would cut very thin layers of that material off of the drum as it rotated. And then the water would go into storage tanks, and then it would be tested, checked through the labs before it was released. And ah, then the impurities would be drummed up and sent for storage at Plant 1 pad.

23:10:57
Q:
Now we were discussing sort of during the break about the ah, throwing the switch while it was still involved in all this type of cleanup. In your opinion why would they do a hot shut down?

A:
Um, number one I don't think they were really ready to see um, a permanent shutdown at the point in time. Ah, and they were in the hopes that eventually, you know, couple of weeks whatever we'd be able to run. Ah, at that point in time as I recall it came out that a lot of the processes that Fernald ran on, were on temporary licenses to be able to release things into the environment.

23:11:32
A:
Ah, meaning clean water into the aquifer and things. But we had to have, present a ah, a plan outlining all the materials and everything and it to be approved by the EPA and we never have, from what I understand we never did have a real actual operators license to be able to continue that.

23:12:03
A:
And at that point in time there was a big discrepancy especially with the leaks coming from the dust collectors into the atmosphere of what other things might have been going on here on site. So, everything was shut down and we were on a standby mode until we were allowed to continue back on.

23:12:23
A:
If you look at it from a standpoint of jobs, I almost wonder if maybe DOE didn't have a master plan. That they knew as the Cold War was winding down and that there was a stockpile of nuclear materials that somehow they would have to get the money to be able to finance the cleanup for all the different sites and facilities.

23:12:44
A:
And ah, we were just a test case to start. And then the process has evolved since, and now you're looking at Hanford and some of the other projects that are beginning their cleanup phases and they're basing a lot of what they're doing on the experiences that we've had here.

23:13:00
A:
In the pre-planning and in the firs-, safe shut down cleanup gear up. And ah, that's what we're looking at right now.

Q:
And ah, why did the plant sit for so many years before cleanup finally started?

A:
First you have to do a total evaluation. Ah, a lot of the process records and a lot of the people who were knowledgeable have retired over a period of time. And some of the newer employees that came in they have, don't have a clue of what went on or what was involved in the different lines and in the different processes.

23:13:34
A:
So you had to do a total evaluation and random sampling of everything and pre-plan everything, you know, it's plan your work and work your plan. So then the processes were outlined and the plans had to be approved both in Washington as well as by the EPA.

23:13:52
A:
And then we had to follow the guidelines as set down to be able to start the cleanup phases and we're winding down now for what we're doing.

Q:
How do you think the cleanup's going?

A:
It's going good. It really is. When you go into the different buildings that, when you first walk into a building before Safe Shutdown takes over, it you kind of look at it and you wonder, "oh, no now what are we gotten into." And when you leave the building then you can have the satisfaction of knowing that you have gotten the material out.

23:14:22
A:
Occasionally they will find a little bit of something and we have, there was an example in Plant 4 when we had to go back in. Some of the Safe Shutdown people for the, subcontractors and get some of the material out that was found in a couple of air ducts and whatever.

23:14:34
A:
But ah, on an all and all basis, we've got a good batting average. I'd say ah, 99 percent on the cleanup phase.

Q:
Now something that we really haven't gotten into at all is the union involvement and also the ah, the ah, lawsuit that was filed on behalf of the workers. Tell us what your reaction was to that and how did that all work?

23:14:57
A:
Um, I was a member of the Fernald Atomic Trade and Labor Council, one of the representatives on the council. We had some people from, that did _____ studies that came in and talked to us. Couple of doctors from UC and a couple of other places ah, some of our officers had requested outside people to come and speak to us.

23:15:21
A:
And eventually they got together and they said they wanted to do lawsuit for damages on the employees that had been there, it also included the subcontractors and anybody who had worked at the site at one point or another during that point in time.

23:15:39
A:
Ah, that's kind of a sore subject with a lot of people and ah, the lawyers took the majority of the money and most of the employees saw very little. Those who were involved in the lawsuit for the surrounding communities, there were a few key people who got money and there were others that got very little checks.

23:16:01
A:
And I don't think that's quite equitable. I think it should have been a little bit different. I tend to agree with some of the feeling now that ah, there should be a cap on what fees the lawyer's can expect from different things like this. But ah, we'll have to wait and see what history plays out.

23:16:22
Q:
How do you feel about ah, some of the community members getting more money than workers?

A:
Well, ah, I don't think that was really right. You know, granted the community feels that they were damaged, but those employees that worked here, those who are no longer with us now that have died from brain cancer, from different forms of cancers that have affected them.

23:16:53
A:
Ah, from lung problems and those types of things, I think they should have gotten more for their families. They were the ones that were rightfully damaged versus the ones that were in the neighborhood.

23:17:07
A:
Now I'm not gonna say that the ones that who's children developed cancer shouldn't have gotten money because I do believe they should have. But some of them from saying that, you know, all the stress, I think if anybody had the stress it was the people who work here. Once everything came out, what was going on, yeah, I think those are the ones that should have had it.

23:17:34
Q:
Generally, how do you feel about having worked at Fernald?

23:17:38
A:
It's been a good time. It's been an interesting time; I've learned a lot. I've had the opportunity to try my wings in a few different areas. At the moment I'm working on my bachelor's degree and eventually I hope to go into the Master's program, um, its been good. I've made good friends. Um, there've been a few problems over the years, but then you're going to break a few eggs occasionally.

23:18:06
A:
And, um, all in all I've enjoyed my time here. If I had it to do over, I'd do it again.

23:18:10
Q:
Tell us a little about your involvement with the book, "At Work in the Fields of the Bomb?"

23:18:25
A:
Oh, um, ah, we had been on strike and we had an eleven-week strike back in the 80s and one of the gentlemen that I had worked with used to be an instrument mechanic said that he had seen my picture in a book. A review of a book and he brought me a copy of that review and he was right it was me drilling a derby sample.

23:18:50
A:
Um, I came to find out that the book was called "At Work in the Fields of the Bomb" it was written by Delta Ditzy and it was a proposal to the DOE on pro-nuclear industry. The only thing is that he told the truth. He took photographs and small captions from all the different jobs and aspects throughout the DOE complex and then that was the first half of the book and the second half was interviews.

23:19:23
A:
No names were mentioned as to who the photographs were. The picture of me drilling derby sample just said the woman with the rose in her hair drilling derby sample. Um, but its been interesting and I've obtained three copies for my children because I figured my grandchildren one day could say hey, my grandma did this.

23:19:39
A:
And I can remember the day they took those photographs. Um, Jim Denney, our photographer here on site, he took the photographs and those were the ones from Fernald that were used. Um, they didn't give him credit but they should of; but they were DOE property so DOE gave them to them, um, declassified because some of this stuff was classified material that was being declassified at the time.

23:20:03
Q:
Now you said he often told the truth what did you mean?

23:20:07
A:
Nuclear power, it was supposed to be the upcoming thing and the nuclear industry involving with the war effort with the Defense Department. But the cleanup, the contamination, the people who have suffered physical problems and diseases over a period time including my cancer; he told the truth on those things.

23:20:43
A:
And when you weigh the consequences, you have to use your own judgement whether or not it's worth the cost. And I think that's where he left it you know it was left up to the individual to decide will we continue to use an energy source that have such a high cost or will we search for other alternatives. It's like in the weapons industry their always looking for the stealth bomber, um, different types of missiles you know that use a different type of nose cone, heat seeking missiles, you know, things like that.

23:21:18
A:
You have to decide yourself what you're willing to use and what the cost is going to be. In the form of the Defense Department, the DOE complexes were a necessity and in some aspects still are and that's where the cost lay. You know what do you get ride of do you get rid of your people by allowing them to be vulnerable to outside things or do you defend them on the other hand, and I think that's where it comes from.

23:23:56
Q:
How do you personally feel about that, do you think Fernald is was worth it?

23:22:02
A:
Yes, Yes. We had a job to do and we did it very well. Granted it would have been nice if we had been given the opportunity for maybe some of the protective clothing and things right from the beginning other than just coveralls and gloves, safety glasses and steel toes.

23:22:22
A:
But, um there was a job to be done and we did it. Um, we had a good record, good safety record and our production was some of the best that the DOE complexes accepted. So yeah, we did a god job.

23:22:43
Q:
So, now they-re tearing this place down pretty fast, buildings are coming down all around us. How are you going to feel once Plant 6 comes down?

23:22:47
A:
I went to the closure, the dedication, when Secretary Richards was here from March of this year and, um, I was sad. After everybody went through I took the time to kind of lagged behind and I walked

through the different areas that I was allowed to that I had worked at and I remembered the people I had worked with and there's a pain (thumping chest) but its o.k. life goes on.

23:23:22
Q:
And what would you like to see done with the land when all the buildings are gone?

23:23:28
A:
(Laughing) I almost envision someday there going to have condominiums and a golf course. Um, it would have been nice to have a library, you know, or possibly a kind of a memorial building, a small one, with different exhibits of what this place did and the people that were involved in it. And to be allowed to leave this in a park setting, you know, for the recreation and stuff.

23:24:02
A:
Um, I can understand that there will be certain areas that'll never happen, how clean is clean, there's no way that can be done. But at the same time to be able to allow people to see the natural habit, the deer out here, to see the big red hawk that we see once in a while out here by the water treatment facilities and things.

23:24:21
A:
To be able to know that this place even though we had a job to do that it can still can go back to what it was once; almost like the farm land it was originally.

23:24:33
Q:
Good. Anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to cover.

23:24:38
A:
No, not really. Other than the fact that there are those of us that really feel this was a good place to work and it still is.

23:24:54
Q:
Do you want to run off nat sound? All right, we just need quiet on the set for about 30 second, this is called natural sound.