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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Dick Rathgens
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Tape FLHP0098

05:01:03
Q:
First of all if you could give us your name and spell it, just to make sure that we have it.

A:
Richard Rathgens. R-I-C-H-A-R-D R-A-T-H-G-E-N-S.

Q:
And if you could give us just a little bit of background, where you were born, where you.

05:01:19
A:
(Begins talking before question is finished) born in Hamilton Ohio. Ah, my dad is a construction electrician. My mom was a beautician. Ah, I went to Hamilton High School, and then after graduating from Hamilton High, went to UC for two years and also while I was going to UC, after graduating I was taking up the electrical trade as an apprentice.

05:01:47
A:
And two years there, and after that ah, ah some problems occurred and I had to kind of drop out of UC. And then decided to join the Air Force. So I was in the Air Force for four years. And went to Hickem Field in Hawaii. And ah, served most of my term there in Hawaii, and ah, there was an opening after I got out of the service there, there was an opening at the same place in Hickem Field as a, a mechanic.

05:02:27
And ah, decided to apply for it. Took the civil service exam and passed. And so there was a several months went by and ah, finally Mr. Barren called me up and said "you scored the highest and since you know everything there ah, we're going to hire you." So I was hired at Hickem field as a aircraft instrument mechanic and spent three years and about eight months there.

05:03:00
A:
Met a lady and got married and had a couple children. And then there was an opening at Andrews Air Force Base. And so I applied for that job and we packed everything up and came back to find out that they had given the job to a retired Master Sargent. So, now I was looking for a new job. Could have gone back to Hickem, but that was kind of hard to do.

05:03:30
So, I came back to Hamilton and applied for a job at NLO. Well they, I took a test there and did very well. Well, meanwhile they said it'd be a few months so I applied also at Fisher Body. And also at ah,

Armco Steel. Well, all came about at the same time, Fisher Body said you come over and get a physical and NLO said can you come to work in ah, September the 3rd , 1968.

05:04:05
A:
And I said well, I said this is gonna be quicker than I wanted to, but I said yes I'll come to work. So, ah, in September 3rd, 1968 I was hired as a instrument mechanic which is an hourly employee. And ah, ah, was checked in because I had a, a ah, Q clearance with the Air Force because we worked on ah, confidential airplanes.

05:04:37
A:
Ah, they ah, didn't have to do much checking as far as a background. And ah, I was ah, came to work and started to work as a instrument mechanic. And like first 30 days you were on probation and, and you kind of went around with other people as ah, show you the ropes. And so ah, ah after 30 days ah probation, I was ah, taken in.

05:05:08
A:
And I was working in Plant 4 on the ah, third, third deck and I was working on an instrument and I saw a cloud like a steam cloud. And I didn't pay much attention to it because you know, I was still new. And all of a sudden I heard a siren go off and I'm wondering you know, something must be wrong and all of a sudden one of the panel workers came running up and said ah, "Get out of there! Get out of there! We've had a release!"

05:05:38
A:
And I'm going yeah, what do I do now. And he says crawl on the floor. So I crawled on the floor and went, went to the ah south end to get away from the, the cloud of, what looked like to be steam, but it was a HF release. Got out of the building and ah, everything was safe and sound. And ah, then continued on working in different areas which most of the areas I worked in from Plant 1, to 2, and 3, to 4, to 5, to 6, 9, Pilot Plant. Where ever a instrument mechanic was needed that's where I had to go.

05:06:16
A:
And there was a funny situation one time. We was working over between 2 and 3 in Plant 8, and ah, ah there was a little cloud of yellow that came out of the ah nitric acid tower and it fell. Well I was outside doing some adjustments while the guys were inside watching the, the instruments.

05:06:39
A:
And all of a sudden I started going like this (demonstrates by brushing his right arm with his hand) and I'm looking around you know, looking for what might be stinging me. Not knowing at the time that that was nitric acid that was falling. And they started laughing. I could see them looking out the window and ah, it was, it was ah, it was funny to them, but I didn't know what was happening.

05:07:00
A:
So the nitric acid was falling on me and I was trying to wipe it off and they was laughing. And so finally when I went inside they told me what that was. And ah, they laughed, they laughed pretty hard. And ah, I was a instrument mechanic for 15 years. And ah, in those 15 years, five of 'em they moved me down to the scales.

05:07:25
A:
Shop which is the weights and measurements. And uh, we would get audited every March, the last week of March and the first week of, of April. And uh, the people from Oak Ridge would come up and they would check derbies with the isotopes and, and they would come to the scale shop and ask how we were doing.

05:07:49
A:
And they would wanna know uh, they'd check when our weights were sent out to N-, NBS, NTS, and to be certified. And you know, as usual, they were sent out at the proper time. And uh, we got a passing grade, uh, before that and so I asked the supervisor at the time, could we cut our tolerances in half? And he asked, why would, why would we wanna do that?

05:08:16
A:
And I said, if anything ever got outta calibration, it would still be in calibration. And he said, well, we can try that. And so we decided to cut all of our tolerances in half. And after that year when Oak Ridge would come up, we got an exceptional uh, rating for the next seven to eight years. Well after 15 years of bein' a instrument mechanic, things were getting pretty hectic as far as production.

05:08:51
A:
And, they asked to have another instrument supervisor. And Mr. Adams said, why don't you take Richard because he's been working in that area? And he knows everything and so they accepted me as a new supervisor. And that was in 1986. And that was right before Westinghouse came on board. But we still been getting exceptional grades.

05:09:21
A:
And uh, uh, a few funny, a few funny things was one time we had a new instrument apprentice. And I told him not to operate anything unless he had a journeyman with him, or myself. Well, he took it upon himself, we had a $23,000 uh, testing uh, scale and he took it upon himself to operate it.

05:09:52
A:
Well, he had a 500-pound weight on one end and nothing on the other end, and so when he started raising it up, everything just flipped up in the air. And it was, peculiar, but uh, he came out with a funny look on his face and said, I think I did something wrong. And I thought, oh my God, and I went in there and here, the beam was half in the air and everything was topsy-turvy.

05:10:16
A:
But we, we corrected it and uh, continued on. Then they made me supervisor, besides being weights and measurements, uh to hoists and cranes and under-hook lifting devices. Which at one time, they were not doing very well as far as keeping things calibrated and checked for p.m. and so I kinda changed that system around and we uh, started getting exceptional ratings on, on that.

05:10:48
A:
And then they added the oilers to me, and I had uh five oilers. And they kinda did their own thing, they were pretty self-sufficient. And uh, at one time in the program, uh, when Hanford was uh, shipping green salt from Hanford to, to us, by uh, hoppers, our weights were really off. We would accept plus or minus a hundred pounds, in, in Plant 4, but all of a sudden, we were off like a thousand pounds off.

05:11:23
A:
And they asked me, and the maintenance supervisor, could we figure anything out why the weights were so much different. And I said, well, I said, the only thing I could understand, I'll do is I'll check our scale which we weigh 'em on when they get there, and uh, see what happens.

05:11:45
A:
So we put our, our weights up to 20,000 pounds, and ours was within our tolerance of plus or minus one increment, which at that time was 5 pounds. And so then uh, Oak Ridge and Mr. Adams said, would you like to go out to Hanford and see how their operation of weights and measurements were? And I said, sure. We can go out there.

05:12:10
A:
Well, peculiar thing happened when we got out there, they had a forest fire. And the forest fire had changed the turbulence so much because of the heat coming off of it, that it bounced the plane so bad that, that I thought we were gonna crash, even though I'd been in the Air Force, uh, I thought the plane was gonna crash, but it didn't and we made it in.

05:12:36
A:
And we started to uh, check their systems, and I think it was called 300 Area out at Hanford, or 200 Area, something like that. And come to find out their weights and measurements department, was way back in Richland and they would have to send a truck out there. And they didn't have any 1000 pounds or 500-pound weights. They had 50-pound weights.

05:13:07
A:
And I said to the gentleman that was there, How do you calibrate your scale? And he says, with those 50-pound weights. And I said, but you've got a 20,000-pound scale, in 5-pound increments, the same as ours, they were both identical. He said, that's all we've got. Well in talking with him, I watched,

watched the gentleman who was operating the hopper.
05:13:30
A:
The, the doors were open and the wind was blowing so fierce that it was blowing sand in from off of the desert, because it was a desert area out there. It was blowing sand in. And I'm going, don't you ever close the door to keep the wind down so you can get the proper, proper readings? And he goes, well, we never thought o' that.

05:13:52
A:
(Laughing) So I said to my, my supervisor I said, Mark, I said, whaddya think about these things here? And he says, I think you better start writing down some notes, in trying to help 'em out. And so, we wrote down some ideas for 'em, and I think they improved their, their, their weights and measurement department.

05:14:15
A:
And uh another time was, the green salt came in on the uh, the uh, rail cars in hoppers. Well there was green salt deposited on the rail cars. And so there was a investigation of where did the green salt, did somebody, did somebody get on the uh, rail cars and open the lids? And so they was going to have some of us try and trace this down.

05:14:45
A:
Which meant we might have to go back in the route that they came from, from Washington. And they finally decided that uh, when we weighed 'em, there musta been just something deposited on 'em and it fell off, that there was no big problem there.

Q:
Jeez. And um, you had Q c- clearance.

A:
Yes.

05:15:12
Q:
To work there. And uh during your years at Fernald, were you able to communicate it with your friends and your family about your job at all?

A:
Well, you know, it was uh, like uh probably the rest o' the folks. You kinda kept it uh, to a minimum. I know when I'd go to the bowling alley, they'd say, where are you working at? I'd say, Fernald. And they would say, oh. The, you glow in the dark, don't ya? And I'm like, kinda, but no, not really.

05:15:41
A:
And as far as the children, well, my dad was in construction, electrician. He worked out there before,

before the plant opened up. And uh, he, everybody would call, back in the '50s, they would call it the Bomb Plant. And it was kinda peculiar, you know because, folks didn't really understand what the Bomb Plant was, what, what they were doing out there.

05:16:07
A:
And so it was funny when they would say, you probably glow in the dark, and, and uh, isn't it dangerous out there? Well no, it wasn't really dangerous if you understood what was happening. Uh, so you know, you just had to go by your instincts and be a little bit smart in the way you operated things.

05:16:31
A:
Uh, I remember one time I was working in Plant 4. And uh, we put in a new electronic system, and it was to shut off at 200 and some pounds. Well it wasn't doing that. So I had to go inside. And green salt collects on white really good; it looks like, (laughing) it looks like you're covered with it.

05:16:57
A:
And I had a respirator on because it was one o' the uh, things told ya had to wear a respirator when ya go inside a enclosure. Well I had a co-worker working with me and I needed a couple tools, and I would talk but he wouldn't understand me.

05:17:14
A:
You know it was like (muffles his voice with his tongue to confuse the words, but says) I need a electri-, I need a screwdriver! Well he didn't understand that. And so I raised up my respirator so that he would understand me, and about the time I raised it up, my supervisor went by and when I got outta there, he really chewed me out.

05:17:30
A:
I mean, you know, he said, you know you're supposed wear that. And I said, well, he didn't understand what I needed. He said, that's no excuse. If you, he didn't understand, you step outside and tell him what ya need. And uh, then later on you know, he uh, he kinda said, well, I was just tryin' to do this for your own good. Which you know, that was good.

05:17:53
A:
'Cause sometimes it would get lax and, people would uh, do things they shouldn't do, even though they knew better. Uh, one time uh, another funny, it was really hot, like 90 degrees out and I was workin' in Plant 9. I came around a corner unexpectedly and got drenched with a cold bucket o' water. It felt good, but at the time I mean it kinda took your breath away. And, and everybody was laughin'.

05:18:25
A:
You know, they thought that was funny, and it was at the time. But uh, it was a funny thing that

happened to me and I, I recall that. Working, in 1971, I, I got laid off in March. And uh, I was off for about 10 months and all of a sudden, they called me back. Well, when they called me back, I had just finished workin' at Gulf Refinery as an instrument mechanic down there.

05:18:59
A:
And uh, when they called me back, they said, you'll have to work night shift. And I said, that's all right, I said, No problem. Well, like so many others, you know there wasn't that many people on nights. So I was the only instrument mechanic. So I had to cover all the areas that were running. And I did learn a lot because you, I was the only one there.

05:19:20
A:
S-, so I had to fix things that I hadn't worked on before. And that was a great experience working on lots o' different instruments and uh, lots o' different plants. They had furnaces in, in 2 and 3. And we always had a temperamental furnace that you could get the outer ring lit, but the inner ring when ya try to light the inner ring, it would blow the outer ring out.

05:19:47
A:
And it was like a temperamental woman, you know. (chuckling) She just wouldn't s-, light most o' the time you know. And so, that was a good experience. But uh, I enjoyed, I have, and I still am enjoying working out there. Raised my three children, uh, they're, they've all gotten good jobs. Been married to my wife now, Lucy, for, for 25 years.

05:20:18
A:
And we've done a lot o' things together. Ah, and if it wasn't for working at Fernald, I you know, might not have gotten to do these things.

Q:
Now Lucy worked there as well.

A:
Yes.

05:20:35
Q:
Can you tell me what it was like to have your wife working in the same place you did?

05:20:38
A:
Well, when she worked up front it was, it was all right. You know, I'd call her and, and she's very business minded. She'd say, you got 5 minutes to talk to me. And I'm goin', what? Well, I you know, if I didn't have a job, that's when I'd call her, you know. And uh, she'd say, you got 5 minutes. And it was kinda funny you know, we'd go to lunch together, and ride in together.

05:21:09
A:
And, and that was great, you know. Then all of a sudden, she became the first woman production supervisor. Well, I'd become a supervisor before in maintenance before this happened. And uh, one, one particular incident was one of her scales went down. And she called over and said, we've got a problem with one of our scales, and I need for you to send somebody over.

05:21:39
A:
And I said, well right now I said, the two mechanics are out. She says, I've got six or seven guys just standin' around doin' nothin', so you better get 'em over here. And I'm goin', well, I will as soon as they get done with the other two jobs. So she tried to pull a little, a little rank on me and, and tell me I had to get over there. And I said, you'll get, they'll get a mechanic as soon as they're finished.

05:22:04
A:
And it wasn't long after that that I sent one over there. And it wasn't, it wasn't a bad job, as far as fixin' it, but it was funny how she said, you're gonna have to get somebody over here! And then we used to argue about, well, not argue but we'd just discuss.

05:22:20
A:
Who's more important, maintenance or production? And she thought production because she was in production, and I thought maintenance because I was maintenance. And I said, without maintenance you can't run, and she said, without production, you don't get paid. (laughing) And I thought that was kinda, I thought that was kinda clever, you know.

05:22:41
A:
So, we got along pretty good though. I really, when she had to go on night shift it was kinda hard because you know, some nights it was raining hard or it was snowing and we had ice, and, and I really wanted to take her to work, uh, but she, she insisted, No. She'd go to work and then I'd, I'd say, well, I'll call ya to make sure you made it there on time.

05:23:04
A:
And she kinda resented me sayin' that because she, she thought I was I don't know, just being over-, uh, protective, and uh, but I guess we both got over that and uh, went on with our lives. But I recall another incident when I was working on a tank in the Tank Farm and it was raining and it was at night time.

05:23:34
A:
And I had a problem with a pH meter, and I had to climb on this tank to get to the pH cell. And not knowing that the rain had started to freeze. And I was working up there putting a new cell in and I as I s-, step back I lost my balance and I started sliding off of the tank.

05:24:01
A:
Well, just luckily, there was this electrical pipe, conduit that I grabbed a hold of to catch myself from, from uh sliding off and maybe falling thirty feet to the ground. 'Course I didn't tell anybody at the time you know, because (laughing) that woulda been a, a bummer. But later on you know, you kinda look back and ya, ya think, oh boy, that was, that was dangerous.

05:24:25
A:
And then at night there was not that many people around so I might've laid there on the ground for a long time, so, I was lucky there, in catching. And, and in Plant 4 we had the hydrogen generator, and the uh, hydrogen generator would fill into tanks in the back. Well, I went back, and the ammonia tanks, uh, I smelled a small leak. So I went around to get to the s-, get the supervisor.

05:24:58
A:
Well, he had came in the other door as I was going out the west door. And uh, I called and called for him, and finally he came out the west door as I was going around the other side and there was this large explosion, and blew the back north wall out. And I would say that both of us were kind of lucky that no one was in there when the, when the tank erupted and blew that wall out. So that was another experience that happened.

05:25:34
Q:
Wow. And uh, during those, sort of earlier years, can you tell us a little bit about your responsibilities um, when you were supervisor in the maintenance department?

A:
Well, the responsibilities for, as a supervisor was to try and pick, pick the jobs as they, as they came in as troubleshooting, or troubleshooting or jobs that were broke down, you tried to pick the job that took the most impact, you know, like six or seven people standing around, or was this one just used frequently and at that time it was down.

05:26:17
A:
So you had to pick your priorities correctly and uh, get your, get your people over there where they're needed. It's the same way as hoists and cranes and lifting devices, a, a lot o' people didn't understand that a hoist that wasn't operating correctly could be very dangerous.

05:26:43
A:
Because if you were lifting a heavy weight of, I mean not a heavy weight, but any weight that was several hundred pounds, if it would just let go you might have someone close by that it might fall on or bounce and break a leg or a foot. And there were several incidents where uh, one of the hoists uh, would drift. And as it would drift, it would go up fine, but then all of a sudden it would drift down.

05:27:13
A:
And some of the, some of the guys would not report this. And uh, because they wanted to get their job done and then take their breaks. And uh, we had to really push to tell these fellows how dangerous it was. And that was, that was a program that I think I kind of started you know.

05:27:34
A:
That, tell everyone how important it is to if there was something wrong with their hoist or crane, not to operate it but to get someone over there to look at it and repair it. So uh, and a lot of people would use slings that had, had frays in 'em.

05:27:54
A:
That if ya had more than four frays on a sling then ya had to take it outta service, but they would continue to use it until some of our guys would catch it uh, and take it outta service. Also I think in the, la-, earl-, middle '80s, I decided that all of our mechanical scales, which were still good, and we needed to update because they were coming out with electronic scales.

05:28:28
A:
And they were much more reliable and much more sturdy, that they could take a, a pretty good pounding and still work sufficient. So uh, I decided to push the issue with the maintenance superintendent and see if we could get some in for trial. And sure enough, I was successful in getting five, five new Toledos in.

05:28:59
A:
And things worked so well then we started replacing all the old scales that weren't working very well with new electronic ones and, Toledo and Macetron were our biggest buyer. So uh, we had some real good luck with the electronic scales, which we, I think we have now out there, most of 'em are all electronics now.

Q:
Great, we're gonna take a little break now and switch tapes.

Tape FLHP0099

06:01:01
A:
Oh I got one more thing I can tell ya about.

Q:
Oh hang on, let's roll here. Okay, go ahead (laughs).

A:
Now? There was a time when uh, RMI which is up in Ashtabula, and uh, Mr. Harris and Mr. Campbell from Oak Ridge was uh, wondering why RMI's weights were so bad. We used to send 'em ingots up there and they would send it through extrusion uh, and extrusion would come out in cores.

06:01:40
A:
And so Mr. Harris said to, to uh, Mr. Karl, he says, I'd like to have Richard go up to RMI with a committee and give them a, a uh scope on what their problem is with their, their weights and measurements. And so I said, wow, pick me again? Because I had already gone to Hanford and Piketon. And uh, so I said, sure, I'll go.

06:02:08
A:
And uh, Mr. Harris said, well since you've taken over he said, you've had exceptional grades, and you've got the best program in the, the whole, the DOE system in this area. And I'm goin', wow. So anyway we went to RMI and uh, it was a, it's a little bitty place, it's not very big. And they do also production for the outside, besides doing for the government.

06:02:44
A:
And so anyway, we're we were talking to the people that was running it. And uh, they said, well we're supposed to get a little snow tomorrow, or this evening. And I'm goin', a little snow? And I'm goin', well this is just September. And they go, well, sometimes you can never tell you know. And, well what's the forecast for? And he, oh an inch or so.

06:03:08
A:
Well we went out and ate that night, the next mornin' we woke up and they had 7 inches o' snow (laughing)! And Mr. Harris says, well I'm glad I don't live here I live in Tennessee. And so we went on, on back to RMI and, and uh finished our business. And uh, came up with a new program for their weights and measurements department.

06:03:31
A:
Plus, they were trying to send all their uh, uh, uh, uncharacterized material back to, to Fernald, so we decided if, if they could get a calciner they could do a lot o' their own up there. Well we came back and I don't know if it ever happened, but uh,

06:03:57
A:
We would get a lot of drums of residue from, from RMI and that was one o' the things we was tryin' to accomplish is they would take care of their own residue and then get rid of the, the rest o' the stuff. But that was a peculiar, seven inches o' snow that night, (laughs) in September.

Q:
Man. I've been up to RMI. It's an interesting place. Small.

A:
Yeah. It's very small.

06:04:27
Q:
Tiny. And we went up there to take a couple of pictures of that, big press that they had.

A:
The extruder?

Q:
It's about the only thing that was there was the big extruder.

A:
Yeah, right.

06:04:35
Q:
So it was an interesting place. Um, so in, in the mid '80s then, Fernald started to get a lot of media attention because of the dust collector releases of Plant 9.

A:
Right.

Q:
Um, tell me what your reaction, personally as a Fernald worker was to that.

A:
Well, uh, it's like most o' the people that work out at Fernald, it was over, over-published. It wasn't as bad as everybody thought, I mean there was something like 200 and, 270 pounds I believe was released, but most of it was caught in the dust collector.

06:05:16
A:
Uh, and then there was I think when they started checking and they looked on the roof uh, there was some on the roof, which maybe accounted for maybe 75 pounds or so. As you know, uranium is very heavy so it's not gonna travel very far, in, into the air. And so, the media, exploited a whole lot in what had happened. We knew what had happened, the dust collector, one o' the bags had, had broken.

06:05:52
A:
And, but most of it was caught inside the dust collector. And uh, you know how the media does, they, anything for a story they can get it in a newspaper. So they exploited it and blew it out of proportion.

And uh, from then on, you know, things started going down hill uh saying you know, Fernald's outta control, and they're doin' things they shouldn't be doing.

06:06:22
A:
And, and so, we kinda resented that because we did, we tried to take care of all of our processes as well as we could. And uh, we all kinda thought, well we're all gonna lose our jobs, because the media's gonna just keep pounding on Fernald, they're doing something wrong. Then in the mid '80s in '85 or '86, the, the uh government decided that you know, maybe we, maybe we should shut down.

06:07:03
A:
The Cold War was starting to uh, to run down, and uh, I think if it wasn't for the uranium factories, uh, some of the Cold War countries might've tried to start another war, but because of the United States having uh, nuclear bombs, I think they thought twice. And so I think we were a deterrent in, in their eyes and they didn't want anything like that to happen.

06:07:35
A:
So I think we accomplished something very well as far as keeping another nuclear bomb or atomic bomb from being set off. And, a lot of people don't understand that, but uh, nuclear power I think will eventually come into its own, because coal is going to run out. I think we're gonna run outta coal, so the next, next thing to run power plants is nuclear power.

06:08:07
A:
I mean we have a lot of 'em. Europe has a lot of 'em, and they take care of thousands and thousands of people, as far as electrical power. And they take care of their, their uh, residues or their cores or fuel cores, and there's no problem over there because those folks understand it. I think we're a little touchy over here as far as nuclear, because of a couple incidents that, that we had here.

06:08:36
A:
But if ya educate the public I think, you'll, they'll understand that this is the, the thing in the future is nuclear, nuclear power.

06:08:47
Q:
Now how did the cleanup years and the process years differ?

A:
Well the process years, we knew we had a job to do. And we knew we had to produce a certain amount of ingots and a certain amount of derbies, and we knew that in Plant 2 and 3, you, you sent orange salt over to 4. (Plant) 4 turned orange salt into green salt. Green salt was sent over to Plant 5, and that was where you got your derbies and your ingots was in Plant 5.

06:09:24
A:
And so we all knew that we had a job to do. Well when started shuttin' down, people were kind of leery. No. Are we gonna lose our jobs now? Uh, how long is it gonna take, or are they just gonna say, hey, shut the gates and put the locks on? Or ah, are we gonna clean this up?

06:09:44
A:
Well we was all skeptic of how that was gonna happen, but during production you knew what you had to do and as far as shutting down when it went from un-production to clean up. Ah, we weren't too sure until there was a, a guidance or someone coming out and saying this is what we want you to do.

06:10:06
A:
And then it got to the point where ah, where it would take maybe a couple of pieces of paper to do this job. Now it's taking six or seven pieces of paper to do the job that in production days you had two pieces of paper. Now it's, it's you've got to do it this way and you've got to do it that way. When we use to do the same thing and it didn't take all that in production.

06:10:33
A:
So, now you have got a lot of paper work ah, that piles up and a lot of decision making before a job can be done now, in ah, shut down. So it was, it's very different than, than in production days. Ah, sometimes it gets so frustrating that, that you just wanna say "Ah, let's just get the job done and forget it, you know."

16:10:59
A:
And ah, sometimes I think people wanna, they get so upset that their nerves are on edge. But I guess what we're doing is, is safe and much safer than, in the way we're doing it, and not a whole lot of things are happening. I mean, we do have a few incidents but ah, it is, it's, it's safer. But I think there's a lot of overkill (chuckles).

06:11:25
Q:
And ah, there's quite a bit of land that Fernald sits on, and what would you personally like to see done with the land once ah the plant is gone?

06:11:37
A:
Well, ah, after I, after I left maintenance as a supervisor I, I became ah, a ah engineer and ah, the group that I was in was ah, looking to, looking to build the TACO trailers. But we also come up with a idea of putting up a four story building out in front. And said that we could house a, a big majority of the, the ah salary people there and then after we were completed in our shut down. That they could use that building to the public as a library or ah, ah, maybe even the schools.

06:12:27
A:
But then ah, someone in the upper management said no, we don't want no more permanent buildings out there. Ah, even though it cost them more to put the TACO trailers in then it would've to built a, build a four story block building ah, and they could have used that in the future. Ah, for the, for the neighbors or anything else.

06:12:49
A:
So, ah, they didn't like our idea because they didn't want any more permanent buildings. Ah, but ah, I think there's a 1,058 acres if my memory serves me right ah, I think when we get done cleaning up, might even ah, put a golf course there.

06:13:11
A:
Because we talked about that ah, in the ah, '60's. Even baseball diamonds, ah, things like that, that the neighbors could use ah, at ah, good, good thing in hand. So uh, I, I don't know how long it's gonna take, you know how the bureaucrats are. They, they kinda stretch things out, so it supposed to be 2007 I believe but I think it'll be a little bit longer than that.

06:13:46
A:
Uh, b-, I will, I will be gone. I will retire. So I'll, I'll be gone, and so what happens I hope is for the good of the neighbors. Even though a lot o' the neighbors didn't understand what was happening in the, in the uh, '80s when the release was happening.

Q:
Um, one of the terms that they're sort of bandying about in uh, uh at the plant these days with the 50th anniversary coming up, is Cold War Warriors. You've probably heard that around plant a couple times.

A:
Right.

Q:
And I guess that would apply to you. How do you feel about being called the Cold War Warrior?

06:14:25
A:
I, don't have any feelings at all about being a Cold War Warrior. I think, uh, I was in the, I was in Vietnam, uh era. And uh, I, I kinda resented that the people didn't understand what was happening in Vietnam.

06:14:44
A:
But uh, as a Cold War Warrior doesn't bother me because I know, know what the reason for the, the uranium, uh that was a producing uh, deterrent bomb, producing bombs that were a deterrent to the other fact-, other countries that thought maybe you know, they might use a nuclear bomb on us or

something like that. So I think the Cold War people helped deter uh, maybe the use of another nuclear weapon on us. So I'm kinda proud to be in that era.

Q:
So is there anything you wanna add? Anything we didn't cover you wanted to cover?

06:15:32
A:
Well, I've, I been there for 30 years, going on 31. I've uh, enjoyed working out there. I, I have a lot of friends, uh, one of the things I'm proud of, I'm captain of the industrial team for the uh, 10th year. And uh, our, our team has won 6 times in the last 10 years and runner up in uh, in one year. And so I'm kinda proud o' that accomplishment. We have a lot o' trophies in the trophy case up there.

06:16:11
A:
Uh, we have a lot o' good, good folks out there that uh, that accomplished a lot. Uh, during, whaddya wanna say, the Cold War years? Uh, we had some fantastic uh, scientists that uh, developed the penetrator. And then also the 4A program that was armament for tanks, we developed that out there, so, kinda proud that I worked out there.

06:16:45
A:
Uh, now it's kinda tough to, because it's hard to get jobs done the way we used to. It's kinda tough, but ya just have to go along and, with the flow I assume. And if I had to do it over again, I think I'd uh, I'd still have worked there. If not, I wouldn't a came back in 1972, and continued working there.

06:17:10
A:
So uh, I enjoyed working there. I've met a lot o' friends and I still, we still uh, reminisce of, of the old times when we get together, so uh, there's no, no regrets.

Q:
Great, anything else?

A:
No, I think that's about all (laughs).

06:17:34
Terrific! Well thanks. We've gonna get a little bit of nat sound now. It's called natural sound, it's just a, if we could just have quiet on the set for a minute. Um, this is nat sound.