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Transcript

Name: Bob Schwab

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Tape: 82

Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0188

05:00:58

Q:

Are you ready?

A:

I'm ready.

Q:

Cool.

(Cameraman: Tape she goes round and round – speak)

05:01:05

Q:

All right, first if you could just give us a little bit of background, where you were born, where you went to school, um just sort of pre-Fernald stuff right now.

A:

I was ah, born in Hamilton Ohio, right here in this location, ah, Fort Hamilton Hospital in Hamilton. Lived and grew up around the community here, ah, just not far from the facility. Went to Ross High School, graduated from there and ah, after started hunting employment. And this place caught my eye.

05:01:38

Q:

And you can just talk to me; you can ignore the camera all together.

A:

Okay.

Q:

Poor crew, ignore the crew (chuckles). Um, tell us a little bit about how you got your job at Fernald, how did you find out about it and um, how, what the, the interview was like.

05:01:54

A:

Well with the ah, getting the job at Fernald ah, after I got out of high school, I grew up around here as I said and lived right in the community. And it was always close ah, and, and I liked that possibility of

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having a job that was close to home, a few minutes each way rather than doing a lot of traveling. And I came in and applied for a job and ah, I was very successful of getting through the door.

05:02:19

A:

The interview was ah, quite simply. I just said, "hey, give me a job. I'm willing to do anything." That was my answers, I was just out of high school and didn't have any experience at anything, it was just; I want a job. If you've got something, I'll be here and do it for ya and it seemed to work for me. So, I got through the door that was the important thing.

05:02:42

Q:

Now you grew up in the area, do you remember when they were building the site?

A:

Yes, I do ah, my mother and father used to talk about it. I was ah, about 7, 8 years old and ah, we used to come up here on top of the hill while they were building it. You could see it off the top of the hills, some of the facilities going in, in the early days. I can remember it as a kid.

05:03:07

Q:

And what ah, did most of your friends and family and what did you personally think this site did then.

A:

Well back then nobody seemed to know what it did. It was a new facility was being built and it was atomic energy ah, being built. Nobody knew what all it was gonna do, it was ah, ah factory being built in the immediate area.

05:03:29

Q:

Oh great, now there's another one (chuckles) it doesn't look like.

(Tape cuts out and begins again)

(Cameraman: we are rolling again)

05:03:36

Q:

Okay, (laughing) yeah they're moving around a little bit, but that's.

(Cameraman: stop tape or?)

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Q:
No, cause they're just lining up. They're lining up basically.

(Off camera: why don't you get nat sound?)

(Cameraman: we're getting plenty of nat sound)

05:03:59

(Cameraman: let's stop tape, we're getting a lot of)

(Tape cuts out and begins again)

05:04:06

Q:
So, um, in those early years while they were building the site, we were discussing what people thought, or what it was. Did you ever hear any rumors or any kind of um, you know just around town what the place might be?

A:
Well I was quite little; I didn't totally understand everything that was going on. I heard a lot of things but kids doesn't really ah, take a lot of ah, interest in it. Yeah it was interesting to see it being built but as far as what the rumor mill was or what it was gonna do, it never entered my mind what that was all about. It was, just the controversy was more interesting than seeing it being built.

05:04:46

Q:
Did you know any of the families who lost their land, eminent domain?

A:
No, I didn't. Now my father and mother did. They knew some of the families here that were being relocated and that that's what the controversy was all about. Was the eminent, eminent domain of reclaiming the, the land here for the facility. And I know there was a lot of fightin' over that. And I just heard things as far as they're not paying the right price for what they're getting' and ah, didn't really get involved 'cause I was too small to it, but - it's interesting.

05:05:27

Q:
Good, and when you started your job at Fernald, what were your first impressions of the plant, you had to come onto the plant to be interviewed?

A:
Yes, I did, in ah, Industrial Relations when I was interviewed; I came in the facility. I never got across the fence but ah, just getting through the medical department and they, you know, the process of getting

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in; it was impressive for the simple reason of everything that they done it wasn't ah, in a manner of it was step by step as you went through it. You had to meet this requirement that requirement; security clearance.

05:06:04

A:

Had to go through an interview with that after I was hired, to get the Q clearance, to go out into the facility and it made me wonder sometimes you know, really what's it all about. But I was more interested in a job than I was, what I was gonna be doing. It was, get here, I needed a job.

05:06:24

Q:

Now tell us a little bit about getting a Q clearance. What kind of process did you have to go through?

A:

There was quite an interview ah, a questionnaire had to be filled out, you had to give references for them to ah, ah, follow back and do interviews with the people that you had put on the list. And ah, it was a little bit scary being a young ah, individual just coming out of high school. I'd never been through anything like that, that they wanted to know all about me, all my history and ah, and just about anything that had happened in my life, they wanted it on there; on the questionnaire.

05:07:06

A:

And it was a little inquisitive to ya, that you thought, well what's this all about, that little ah, apprehension I guess you could put it. That they're gonna be going through what I done and maybe some of this I wanted to hide and I didn't (laughing) want 'em to know about (laughing). As a young individual you do dumb things (laughing).

Q:

Did you ever get any feedback from the people you had on your list about what, what the interviews from the FBI were like?

05:07:40

A:

No I didn't. And I never inquired I left that alone. I figured once I got through the door that was the important thing, so everybody must have said some positive things or I wouldn't have got in that, through the door. So, I left it alone, that didn't interest me on what they had said (chuckles).

05:08:00

Q:

Now as far as the Q clearance goes too it's kind of interesting um, um, what kind of ah, what kind of consequences did they tell you about in case you did talk about things?

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05:08:13

A:

After I got the security clearance ah, they made us aware that, you know, there'd be no talking about what you do here in the facility. Whatever your job assignment was that, that was to stay on the job and not to go out the door when you left each day. And they kind of hung that security clearance over ya, as a threat with employment.

05:08:34

A:

If ah, they suspected or ah, ah, could prove that you were doing an activity like that you could lose your security clearance. If you lost your clearance well you lost your job. So it was important to each and every one of us to maintain that security clearance so that we could keep our employment. 'Cause employment was the number one interest in everyone one of us mind.

05:09:05

Q:

So the government kind of used the Q clearance as a tool?

A:

Under the Security Act, they used that as a tool to ah; you could lose your job. So it made ya follow the line and say, "hey, I know nothing." And it all stayed here when you left.

05:09:24

Q:

And how about the handbills that they posted around site?

A:

There was quite a few posters ah, posted throughout the facilities and, and all the plants out there with a threat of imprisonment or a fine. So it kept you on your toes, I, you'd see the signs, after you'd seen 'em once, you knew about where they were always located. But it was always a little reminder that it was hanging over your head, if you wished to talk (chuckles).

05:09:54

Q:

So when you were communicating with your friends and family about your job, did they ever ask and what was your answer to them if they did?

A:

I never really talked about my job other than I worked here and ah, just left it, in generics, anything that was asked it was, "oh well, I don't care to talk about it," or "I'm not supposed to." And I responded to that a few times that I was told not to pass that information and then in the early days I didn't know anything anyway. I never was in a position to know anything, I mean you was still learning as you went along and.

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05:10:34

Q:

So how much did you know about the process when we first got here? Did you know that there was radioactive material on site or anything like that?

A:

I really didn't. I just knew there was material being made here. I didn't know what it was for, I didn't, I didn't understand ah, I knew, I was told that it was uranium but nobody explained to me what uranium was. It was a metal, I understood that but what it was used for and why and I never understood that. Didn't really care, I mean it was, it wasn't of an interest to me.

05:11:09

Q:

We'll let this guy go by real quick (vehicle passing by). So you started out as a transportation laborer, can you tell us what your responsibilities for that first job were?

A:

Ah, it was loading trucks ah, unloading trucks and loading trucks as shipments came in and came out. Ah, we would help the drivers with the skids and it was just routine work to ah, odds and ends. All the banding, the strapping, those activities the laborers took care of for the, the shipments going in and out of the facility. It was interesting. I enjoyed it.

05:11:49

Q:

And what was coming in and out at that time?

A:

It'd be products that was used in the process of ah, any type of, your limes, your nickelites, all the materials. And going out we had shipments of uranium going out in the trucks. And we'd put the banding down in the trucks and then the drivers would load 'em, we'd band the material down; of the ingots that was coming and going.

05:12:17

Q:

Now just for research purposes, what year did you start?

A:

1968.

Q:

Okay, good. Ah, can you tell us a little about shipping uranium. That's kind of an interesting thing because it's so heavy. Um, tell us a little bit about how those trucks were set up so that that heavy metal wouldn't tip the cars over or anything.

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05:12:39

A:

Well the trucks were laid out with a banding that was nailed to the floor and the spacing on the trucks so that the truck was loading properly to the 5th wheel and also to the ah, axles in the back. And we'd put a limited number; the spacing had to be right when they went in the truck and it was all laid out and just nailed to the floor. And then when the material was laid in, we'd band it down.

05:13:05

Q:

And how much material would go out in a given shipment?

A:

All, you've asked me a very difficult question. That would all be regulated by how much material was needed at the time. Shipments could increase or decrease at that time.

05:13:24

Q:

And how did they track the material? Was there a tracking system set up somehow?

A:

Not that I'm aware of, but I'm, I'm sure that there was, but that's kind of a, little bit of hindsight. Back then I didn't really care how they tracked it. Ah, that was my aspect of it too, my job and that's all I needed so, yeah I assume there was a tracking so that they knew where everything was at a given time.

05:13:53

Q:

Now how did you lift those boxes? Were they slugs that were going out mostly or just all the different material?

A:

Some of 'em were ingots and they were put on a ah, a metal carrier. It was like a skid that they'd lay on and the fork trucks would handle all of the material and they just place 'em for us and then we'd band 'em down as a laborer.

05:14:15

Q:

Great, great, now after you were a transportation laborer you moved into a utility job. Can you tell us about that a little bit and why you went there?

A:

The reason I went there, I ah, was in the wrong department to get into an apprenticeship program. My, after I got into the facility I realized that they had a apprenticeship program which ah, gave me an

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opportunity to become a craftsman. And I had a high interest in that and the money interested me tremendously.

05:14:46

A:

I seen an opportunity to make more money and I thought well why not. So I was in the wrong department to get in a progression line to get into the apprentice program; so there was some postings, I bid on 'em. I got moved over so that I could ah get in the chain and I got in the proper chain so that I could go on and be an apprentice. And that's where my interest lay.

A:

I did do that. Went through a 4-year apprenticeship program here, ah became a millwright and have that, and have been since at this facility, so.

05:15:22

Q:

Now you mentioned you got into the utility worker, and we'll go into the millwright responsibilities in a second. What were your responsibilities as a utility worker while you were going through your apprenticeship program?

A:

Well, the utility worker was the cafeteria and we had a cafeteria here on site that ah, had employees that ah, prepared the meals for the employees that was working here. They'd go to the cafeteria and get their meals and we had the dishes and I worked as a utility employee and that was ah, maintaining the dish room and ah, dishwasher and taking care of all the dishes. And ah, some of the activities of cleaning the tables off after each meal and enjoyed it tremendously.

05:16:09

Q:

And ah, why you're in the, working in the cafeteria too, did you have a lot of opportunity to learn more about what was going on in the facility just by talking to people and stuff?

A:

Not really, um, in the cafeteria it was on the clean side, considered the clean side of the facility and ah, it seemed more laid back in that arena than it did in the process side of the facility. After I left the cafeteria and come back out into the process area again, that's when you gained the knowledge of being in the different buildings and different facilities that you started to piece together what the activities was.

05:16:56

Q:

So tell us a little bit um, now about your, your responsibilities as a journeyman millwright? What exactly did you do and I know you worked in all the plants?

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A:

I covered every plant, machine repair, fabrication ah, repair of any of the equipment out there that broke down. Ah, and we had some very anti-, antiquated equipment in the facility so it was a challenge to fix any piece of it for the simple reason that most the time parts were unavailable.

05:17:27

A:

Ah, our machine shop had to make the parts and it, it created a challenge to all the craftsman and there was some quality work done to keep those antiquated equipment running and come up with a quality product that, that we did so. It was ah quite extensive of the activities that went on as a millwright out there, and you learnt more each day as you went along and seen different things and acquired more information.

(Tape ends and begins again)

05:18:01

(Both laughing).

(Cameraman: we are rolling)

A:

I even forgot what I said, so I may answer it different again.

Q:

Oh it might be a little different, that's good. Yeah, if you could tell us a little bit about your responsibilities um, as a journeyman millwright.

05:18:15

A:

Machine repair, ah, throughout the facilities, fabrication ah. The fabrication was ah, an interesting point, being able to build things out of raw material and, and put something together that when you got done you said you really had something there.

A:

You made it with your hands and I really enjoyed the fabrication side of it, but there was a lot of activities, you know that the millwright done and you learnt throughout. And with the antiquated equipment that we had ah, we had to make most of our parts, so our machine shop repair in the facility made those parts and they had to be precision parts that would fit all the proper ways as the old one did. So it was a challenge to make everything work and keep it ah, a running properly.

05:19:07

Q:

Wow, so what was the, what was the most unusual job you ever had to pull off ah, in the fabrication?

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A:

Boy, you've asked me a very difficult one here. Now to pull one out, I, I think one of the most interesting things that I got involved in was ah, the repair of the pits. Ah, out at ah K-65. They got rubber-lined pit out there and they had cracks in the pits. And we had to rubberize, and I had never done anything like that and putting big patches on 40, 50-foot patches maybe 70, 80-foot long.

05:19:51

A:

Handling all the rubber and the glue and getting it glued down. That was very interesting. It was something that I had never seen or done, and it was an interesting concept to see that and be part of it.

Q:

So were the pits full of ah, waste at that time or was there, was there material actually in it?

A:

There was material in the bottom of 'em. They were pumped off so that we could go in and patch the rubber and then it was cleaned after it was pumped off and then the patches put on. Then filled back up again, so it was different.

05:20:27

Q:

Where did they store the waste when they pumped that off?

A:

I don't know whether they really stored it ah, I think they pumped it, and when they pumped it, it went down Paddy's Run and right down the river.

05:20:42

Q:

Wow, um, so while you were working in those waste pits ah, had you been aware that they were out there before?

A:

Yes, I been there a few times just as ah, making passes through there, but didn't really know what, what was in 'em or what the ah, what they were for. I just knew that's where we threw stuff that we didn't want. Garbage dump.

Q:

So what kind of material was that area?

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05:21:16

A:

Anything that ah, was of no interest and by-products of the processes. After they ran the process we'd end up with some by-products, those by-products that were of no value were dumped into those pits.

Q:

Wow, um, let's see. Tell us a little bit about how you got involved ah, with the union.

A:

Well ah, the involvement with the union was an elderly gentleman that ah, had been the president of the council here for a number of years and when I hired in here there wasn't too many young people in the facility. And he was ah, an old timer himself and he kept telling me he said, "you've got to get involved because you're a young person and you're gonna be here for a while.

05:22:16

A:

And you need to get involved to start helping with some of these activities." And I was quite evasive in that arena. It didn't really interest me at that time and as time went on he pulled me in a little piece at a time and a little piece at a time and over the years I got totally involved. Hold, held all the offices and the council and um, now it's become a way of life.

Q:

And what was his name?

A:

John Taylor.

05:22:48

Q:

Um, so since then (chuckles) you've held just about every position in the union.

A:

Yes I have.

Q:

Can you tell us about ah, ah, that type of involvement? What are your responsibilities as a, as a first as a trustee and then on the other, other positions?

A:

Well, with each of the positions, every assignment is different in the union. I started out as a trustee because that was a, more of a menial position that ah, took care of the books and audited the books and make sure that everything was ah, ah, in order so that there was no question about the monies of the union. They were all copacetic all the way through.

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05:23:30

A:

And then, then as you move up the chain, you bequire, acquire a few more responsibilities and uh, the responsibilities all differ but they were with significance of representing the membership. And wh-, when ya have a number of membership, you have to represent the people equally so that whatever was addressed it applied to all so that people were treated equal.

05:24:01

Q:

Boy, that was a loud one (all chuckle). It is the day of loudness, now that the cicadas are going (laughing). Somebody shut up those cicadas! Um, now you had mentioned equality on site, and is that something that the union was really uh, doing a lot of fighting for at the time was making sure that people were treated equally?

A:

That was our ultimate goal was to keep people treated equal in all the uh, classifications that we have under the council and the unions, and it was just to, to say to everyone, you know, we're all the same.

05:24:38

Q:

And what is the name of the union?

A:

It's Fernald Atomic Trades and Labor Council.

05:24:45

Q:

And are you aware of how much uh, uh, I mean as far as the history of the union, when was it formed, and those types of things?

A:

It was before my time. It was in the early '50s, I believe '50, '52 arena when the uh, charter was uh, ratified for the membership here. Just general knowledge. I don't go back to the early days of when it was started.

05:25:16

Q:

Good, good. Now uh, some of the um, things that you had to address as uh, a union person, of course were safety issues. Can you tell us a little bit about how that's changed through the years?

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05:25:30

A:

In, in 1985 was the most significant change. And we as a union um, got involved with our internationals to bring in some health physicists. And, and help us with some o' the uh, the terminology and the material that we were handling. We were unaware of what we were handling and the health effects associated with it.

05:25:54

A:

And once we got a health physicist involved uh, we went into extensive negotiations and, and health in safety language. It was very beneficial. We got a lot o' knowledge out of it. And then the uh, after that, the pendulum really swung. It went from one extreme to the other extreme. Once we were aware of it, then it, it kept increasing as we went along.

05:26:20

A:

And today, it's went to the far extreme for the activities we performed under production, to see it now without the materials here. With the uh, requirements of the dress-out, the respirators, and it, it really went a long ways.

05:26:44

Q:

So in those early years, you know, you were speaking a little bit about uh, PPE and such. Um, how was it different in 1968, '69, '70, uh, as, as the years progressed, how did, how did PPE change?

A:

Well in the, in the early '60s, uh, only thing that was required was white coveralls. Uh, no respirators, uh, white coveralls, no glasses. There was no concern over safety glasses. They were available if you wanted 'em, and most o' the time, that was because you needed 'em as, as either uh, bifocals or because you wore glasses. But if you didn't need glasses, you didn't need any in here.

05:27:25

A:

Uh, it was um; kind o' loose-leafed uh, on the requirements. Nothing was required other than take a shower twice a day, and that wasn't too hard to comply with. And you could go wherever you wanted whenever you wanted it out there in the facility, so. There was no interest in movin' from building to building, whether you needed to be there or not as there is today, um, you could go however.

05:28:01

Q:

So um, there was safety equipment available in those early days, and was it required?

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A:

There was no requirements um, respirators were limited, but they were supplied. And no requirement to ever wear a respirator unless you wished to do it. And sometimes you couldn't even find 'em if you wanted one.

05:28:28

Q:

So what uh, what was the driver for the union to change their agreement in '85?

A:

We just seen that, that there were some health effects that was affecting our people. And we felt that they needed to be in respirators and have protective clothing on some o' the substances that we were dealing with out there. So that was our driver to protect our people.

05:28:53

A:

We, we had seen some people sick, and we had seen some people, uh, pass away over the years that we couldn't say that that's what done it to 'em, but we assumed that had something to do with it. And the more knowledge we gained, then we became aware that yeah, it could of had a big part into it.

Q:

Great, we're gonna take a break and change tapes. We only get 30 minutes on a tape.

Tape FLHP0189

06:01:06

Q:

So tell us a little bit about how the agreement changed in 1985. What were the old ways that transitioned into the new ways?

A:

Well, we changed our health and safety language. And, and we went from about half a page of health and safety language to 10 or 12 pages, so it got extensive uh, requirements by the company so that we could acquire information. And the information was, you know, the activities are goin' on, we wanna be well or, be able to acquire whatever it might be that you're doin', so that we could do a little research in the arena and get help if we needed it, so.

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06:01:49

A:

That's where we expanded it, to protect our workers so if there was an activity come along, they had the right to refuse the work. And then we would get involved and, and either uh, figure it all out why they had a concern. What the concern was and a resolution between us and the company.

06:02:12

Q:

So what were some of the major problems that the union saw that needed addressing at that certain time?

A:

Well, I, I think what, what we were lookin' at were the hazards of the job was that people were told to do things without being able to question what they were doin', and why they were doin' it. So in that arena, it give us a opportunity to, to get the people involved, the company to, involved to explain to the employee, what, where's and the why's and what the effects was.

06:02:44

A:

And this is the proper equipment you need to do that activity. And it'll protect you and the activity'll get done properly.

06:02:54

Q:

Did the company have any objections to uh, a lot of the language, or a lot of the uh, things you were putting out there?

A:

We were going through a uh, change of contractors at that time, when that negotiations. NLO was leaving, NLO, NLO, NL Industries was leaving at that time, and a new contractor was comin' on board. So there was little animosities by NL uh, I guess they felt that we were attacking 'em quite heavily.

06:03:29

A:

Which we were, because they had had the facility for a number o' years, and we felt that they had done some, some very harmful things to people without makin' 'em aware of what they were doin', so. The new contractor come on board didn't have a problem with it. Started workin' with us, and it was quite effective for us.

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Q:

Now you had mentioned before about some of the health affects that you saw in some o' the workers, and um, can you tell us a little bit about that?

A:

Well, I seen employees with, with different health problems, with kidney problems, liver problems, cancers, and it always alarmed you to see those activities, that you know, here's somebody that you worked around and the next thing ya knew, they were sick, and ya wondered why. But ya couldn't say that the job was related or it was unrelated, we really didn't know.

06:04:26

A:

And that's where our interests lay, to try and tie some o' that together that the employees were bein' affected. And it was through neglect on the company's behalf, not to, at least furnish some proper equipment so that couldn't occur to 'em.

06:04:47

Q:

And how did the government handle that? It was the Atomic Energy Commission at the time?

A:

It was the AEC, The Atomic Energy Commission, and they seemed very uh, interested in *not* tellin' us anything. Their objective was to deny any of the allegations that we came forward with, that, that those things didn't happen. And over a period of time, that did turn around, and the DOE has been more than cooperative and open over the, the last 10 to 15 years.

06:05:26

A:

That the information has been readily available, and they do, don't do anything until they ask. So, it's been beneficial, to get, to get a heads-up before it occurs rather than after the fact and tryin' to figure it out.

06:05:43

Q:

Do you think that the Atomic Energy Commission knew the effects of this type of material on people?

A:

They done a lot o' health studies. And we always questioned those health studies because they never completed 'em. If they'd a completed 'em, they'd a had to been published. If they would of published, I think we would of seen a lot o' things that would've got our undivided attention, by goin' through some o' their documentations.

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06:06:07

A:

But when they weren't completed, they were just kind o' shuffled back and stuck on the shelves so. Yeah, I think they knew a whole lot more 'n what they really wanted to tell people.

06:06:20

Q:

Well. And if you could go back 30 or 40, 50 years, and tell the AEC anything, in light of the knowledge that you have now, um, what would you tell them?

06:06:33

A:

Be more up front and honest with people. Make people aware o' what you're doin', and why you're doin' it. Cooperation would of been altogether different at that time.

06:06:46

Q:

Good. Now in 1986, the workers filed a class-action lawsuit. Can you tell us a little bit um, about your involvement with that?

A:

I got involved in that and uh, it was uh, the class-action suit because of all the, um, the sickness and the um, the health problems that we've seen in all our employees. We associated it with a uh, a cancer. And different cancers in the, in the body. And our documentation showed that our employees had had some o' those diseases in, in high numbers.

06:07:28

A:

So we did uh, get involved. We were successful in our lawsuit. It was very beneficial. Uh, we learned a lot more than what we ever dreamed of when we were going through that process. And it's, it's been a learning curve for all of us, the lawsuit, which now we have medical monitoring for all of our employees that were Cold War Veterans and had been involved in that, for the rest o' their lives.

06:07:57

A:

So it gives them a tracking device and also gives some uh, assistance, if they need it.

Q:

Great and what was the atmosphere on site during those years, that the class-action lawsuit was, and how long did it last?

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A:

Well, the period o' time that we were goin' through the class-action suit, I think the, the people were quite concerned of what the effects of the class-action suit could have in relationship to their employment? Could it get the facility shut down?

06:08:34

A:

Could it uh, change the facility in a manner where unemployment and the people be unemployed out of it. So yeah, there was a lot o' questions in people's minds, and a lot o' difference in opinion. But as the suit went on down the road and got to the resolution stage, people realized it was to their benefit, and there had been things done to them that they weren't aware of.

06:09:00

A:

So, it all surfaced as a very positive, there were some negatives out front with it. But as time went on, it got a lot better.

06:09:11

Q:

And uh, what were some of the major settlements that came from that? Um, how did they decide um, how much each person got and those types of things?

A:

It went by years of service, and uh, with a dollar amount for each year of service. It depended on when your employment had started and whether you were still active, whether you were retired. It just went on years of service and a dollar amount on years of service.

06:09:44

Q:

Did you think the settlements were fair?

A:

Yes I do. Uh, you know, I, I think ever one of us come in here with intentions of you know, employment, and that was our concern and so. We weren't aware of what we were doin', but at least they acknowledged they had done something wrong, they had affected our health on some of us.

06:10:09

A:

Maybe not all of us, but the people were affected and that was a, an avenue to say, "hey, we done wrong. Here's ya something for the wrong done to ya."

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06:10:22

Q:

Good. Okay. And um, have you been following at all any of the uh, news from Paducah?

A:

A little. Uh, there, there's an interest in that area. Because a lot of that material did come through here, with, was shipments in and out of this facility. And yes, we're, we're takin' a high interest in, on, the uh, activities that're goin' on there at Paducah.

06:10:50

Q:

What's your reaction to how the uh, folks are just finding out now that they were working with plutonium?

06:10:59

A:

It's really repulsive. Uh, they should of been told many, many years ago, rather than find it out at this later date.

Q:

Does it seem familiar?

A:

Yes. Very. Very familiar. Typical. Typical.

06:11:19

Q:

Now does this union at all appear uh, in the Cincinnati area, do they have um, any ties to unions in other uh, parts of the DOE complex?

A:

Yes we do. Uh, we communicate with all of our brothers and sisters in, in all the facilities, whether or not they're metal trades councils, uh, any of 'em that's in negotiations, they contact us. And we do the same thing with them, so that if there's been any activities goin' on that uh, we can get our arms around and work together, we try and pass that information back and forth to each other so that it benefits all of our members.

06:12:00

Q:

And uh, how, how does that put you in contact with some of the other sites and some of their interesting cleanup problems?

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A:

Well, I think we're kind of light years ahead here at Fernald, and we've been almost the uh, test case throughout the industry. 'Cause this is the first site that's, that's really got into a uh, cleanup with a closure. With uh, the materials and getting the facility back to where it was when they originally started, and, and getting it tore down, so.

06:12:34

A:

They're usually asking us questions more about the activities a goin' on because they see it comin' their way, and they're tryin' to get prepared for when it comes to their door, so. I think we're the, the test case if you could (chuckling) put it as such. As we go along, we learn, too.

06:12:56

Q:

What do you think are some of the major challenges here at Fernald that're gonna be comin' up here in the next few years?

06:13:03

A:

The closure is gonna be the uh, the biggest challenge that we see as a, a membership that's gonna face our people. 'Cause we know that our jobs 're gonna go away, and, and people 're gonna be uh, laid off. And, it's a, it's a great challenge to, to try and help people, to get 'em employment prior to that day when there is no employment for 'em here, and it's, it's really a big challenge.

06:13:36

Q:

Before we get into too much of the future Fernald, I'd like to address is the um, transition between the Westinghouse years and when Fluor Daniel came in. Can you address that whole transitional period just a little bit?

A:

Well when uh, Westinghouse was leaving the facility, and Fluor Daniel's uh, was awarded the contract for the facility, Fluor approached us as a union and, and told us that we were uh, going uh, to be in the unemployment line shortly thereafter. And, their direction was to eliminate the in-house people, and, and use subcontractors to get this activity under way.

06:14:25

A:

And, and we ended up in a little fuss-fight arena over that. And institutional memory with our people. They were the ones that handled the material. They made the product, we knew what it was, we knew where it went, where it was disposed of or, or what it was all about, the contaminations. It took a little convincing, but we have successfully hung in here and doin' some o' those activities of the cleanup.

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06:15:00

A:

So that it's been beneficial for both, the government and the contractor, and it's helpful with our employment for another period of time.

06:14:14

Q:

Now the site went out of production in 1989. What was it like the day they threw the switch?

A:

Really, when, when that transfer took place, we had already stopped production. That was just an official uh, notification to say, "we have stopped production." We were in the uh, the mode of cleanin' up, or reconfiguring the material to uh, store it on what we had in the facility for a, for a number of years, prior to the official closing.

06:15:55

A:

So the closing didn't come to us as a, a big shock because we had prior been closed. We hadn't made any, but we were cleanin' up, getting rid o' some of it, storing it. See, it wasn't that difficult for us; it was what was gonna happen after that.

Q:

And people were mainly worried about losing their job at that point.

A:

Correct. That's.

06:16:22

Q:

Wow. Um, tell us about the transitioning into the cleanup years. After Fluor Daniel did come in and there was sort of an acceleration of cleanup.

A:

Yes.

Q:

Can you tell us a little bit about that and how the union played a part in that?

06:16:42

A:

Well, as the uh, when Fluor first came in, they had a different concept of, of way of doin' business, and they were under the conception that within 2 years they'd have the facility tore down and uh, they'd be out of here. So, DOE played a lot o', a big role in that activity with Fluor.

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06:17:07

A:

I, I don't think that they had really uh, done a lot o' business with DOE to understand the, the rules and the regulations which we were aware of that ya just don't go do anything unless the proper paperwork's there. So, it was a learning curve for 'em. They learnt well; they're doin' an excellent job, and the cleanup process is movin' on down the path. And there's some very good positives in it.

06:17:38

Q:

What're some of the major triumphs that we've had in the last couple of years with cleanup?

A:

I'd say the Plant 7 uh, episode uh, (chuckling) was one of the most trying that, that we had all seen. That was our first time to implode a building, and we ended up with it still standing after the implosion, so. It was some trying times (laughs).

06:18:09

Q:

What were the major problems associated with the fact that Plant 7 didn't go down?

A:

I don't think that everything was uh, really looked at the way it should a-been, but that's a perception on my behalf. Uh, most o' these buildings were, were built to withstand a air-raid, and uh, just blow the sides of 'em, and the superstructure would still be there. So I don't think they really done their engineering um, aspect o' things before they tried to implode it.

06:18:45

A:

Uh, afterwards, they learnt that they were built quite rugged to withstand it, so we loaded it a little bit heavier after that (chuckling).

Q:

(Laughing) Plant 4 went down (snaps fingers).

A:

Oh, just like that (shaking his head and both laughing).

Q:

Oh, gosh. Um, which leads me to uh, you said that it was would survive an air raid. Were you ever aware of the fact that maybe Fernald was a target?

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A:

Yes, I was. Uh, it was pretty evident in a lot of the training. Um, they would make us aware of those things that, that there could be an air raid uh, by, by foreign aircraft. And we had a bomb shelter here on site, uh, located in Plant 6 down in the basement where there was uh, food and rations for a number of people. So yeah, it was pretty evident that that could occur.

06:19:48

Q:

And, you worked here really at the height of the Cold War, too. It was like directly, not too many years after the Cuban missile crisis that you started here.

A:

Correct.

Q:

And there was a, much more of an escalation of um, stockpiling nuclear weapons.

06:20:02

A:

Yes.

Q:

Um, what was the typical American's mindset at that time towards the Cold War?

A:

Well, I think we were, we were all um, dedicated to the flag, that's what it was all about. And um, we said, "hey, we're gonna get that product out there to, to defend our people." And that's what it was all about. And that was, it was a true dedication to the, to the history of our country. Freedom. That's what it was all about.

06:20:35

Q:

And how did Fernald? Wait, I'm gonna wait for this truck, too. This is an important question.

(Tape pauses and restarts)

06:20:42

Q:

I know RIMIA. I watch what they do out there. (Off camera: Rolling, rolling, rolling.) How did Fernald contribute to America's goals at that time?

A:

How did Fernald what?

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Q:

How, how was Fernald such an important part of the chain, for ah, America's goals, we were talking about defense.

A:

Well, they needed uranium for the, the process to get into the nuclear field for their warheads and their, their activities they were using for the nuclear fields, so. Fernald played a big role. It was the only facility that was makin' the uranium, uh, high quality uranium. So it played a, a number one role with the DOE facilities.

06:21:36

Q:

Great and um, some of, they've talked a little bit about around here lately in the last couple of years, I guess it's the term Cold War Warrior. How do you feel about being referred to as a Cold War Warrior?

06:21:53

A:

I take at it as a um, it's just like being a veteran of the uh, wars. Uh, you know, after ya served in the military, I see this aspect of things that it carried right into that arena and, and being a Cold War Veteran, yeah, I'm proud of it. Uh, to be apart of that activity that defended our country and produced the material so that we have our freedom yet today. It, it's an honor.

06:22:

Q:

Great um, of the physical things here on site, what do you think are gonna be ah, Fernald's greatest challenges in the next couple of years?

A:

In the, in the next couple of years, um, things're gonna have to move swiftly. There's a lot of buildings yet to come down, and, and a lot of material to get out of the facility. We've had difficulties getting that material out of here because of the shipping regulations, and the uh, routing, and ah, the materials itself. Where they go, and what's to be done with 'em.

06:23:22

A:

So there's quite a challenge to get those out of the facility, so that you can go ahead and clean up the, what's left. And until those get out of here, the challenge is big, because of moving it across the country to where it goes, or to be reprocessed, or to be disposed of.

06:23:45

Q:

And how about ah, he's moving out.

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(Off camera: yeah, oh, I believe it)

(Tape pauses: vehicle passes)

Q:

Okay. Some of the major challenges, what're some of the major, major challenges?

A:

(Sighs) Getting some of the buildings down, um, and the contamination, that whether or not it can go into the cell. There may be some, some other materials out here that, as we get into the tabulation of it, that can't end up in the cell, and what they do with it can be a major challenge before it's over with.

06:24:31

Q:

And what're some of the environmental issues wrapped up in this whole cleanup?

06:24:38

A:

So that we don't end up a-leaving the facility with um, environmental insults that as, has acquired, or has happened to the facility, get it all cleaned up. Get it positioned where it should be, and located where it should be.

06:24:59

A:

Um, that's gonna be quite a challenge because there is so much stuff in the pits that now we're just getting up and running with those, and the challenges're gonna come out of that as they go along. They'll probably find things that they never dreamed could be there (nods head and grins).

06:25:23

Q:

Do you know some things that're in there that?

A:

Just, uh, I, I seen stuff that was put in there that was, it just, "what do we do with it" arena. I mean, nobody knew what to do, and it was, "well, go throw it in the pits." That was an accepted practice, so. Nothing significant jumps out at me that you know, I know that's in there? It was just that anything that nobody knew what to do with, "well, go dump it in the pit."

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06:25:53

A:

Well, we know that when they go to dig that up, there's gonna be people scratching their head saying, "what's this, and where did it come from?" It just got dumped in the pit, so. It'll have to be taken care of when it comes out of there (laughs) umm!

06:26:13

Q:

That's a big job.

A:

Big job.

Q:

Oh, let's see, um. How has the ah, communication between management and the workers and the union, how has that changed through the years?

A:

It has gone to where it's been an open communication line. Management and labor have worked diligently together for the same goal was to get the facility cleaned up. It's been an open atmosphere where information was passed. Uh, privy to just about every activity that's going on, it's not a problem. If, if you, if you're inquisitive about something, you'll be made totally aware about it.

06:27:02

A:

And, the openness is the important part. Excellent by DOE and Fluor Daniel's. I mean, the people that we have here in the facility are excellent communicators.

Q:

Great, and ah, we were talking a little bit earlier about ah; some of the ways that uh, um, they're trying to help people sort of post-Fernald find employment. What're some of the ways that the company and the unions are working with the present workers?

06:27:39

A:

At the present time, we've uh, we've got the Fluor Daniel's uh, certification program, which we've offered our crafts, uh, as a voluntary thing. And Fluor Daniel's has uh, made an offer if we take the certification, that we could have preferential hiring at any of their facilities where Fluor Daniel's has doing an activity. Uh, there, they're a big company; they're doing it throughout the world.

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06:28:07

A:

So, we could go to the top of the list. If, if we left here, we could walk out and say, “hey, I, I’m Fluor Daniel certified.” We could have first opportunities at those jobs. So, we see it as a big asset for our employees. Another thing we’re doing with our, our CDL training here, we’re giving people an opportunity to um, get trained and qualified to go on for another field.

06:28:33

A:

If, if they wish to change fields when they leave, they may be doing a, an activity here, but this gives ‘em an app-, ah, uh, an opportunity to gain some more knowledge, uh, some certification. And also a uh, CDL license where they could go out and get employment real quick. So, it’s all pluses to help people for the transition after Fernald.

06:29:00

Q:

Do you know of any success stories, with, within that program?

A:

We haven’t at the time, because we haven’t encouraged people to leave. I mean, we’re telling ‘em, “it’s gonna happen to ya. Get prepared.” But we’re not going out saying, “hey, you need to run on out and hunt you a job.” Uh, there’s been a few people that have left, uh, that just acquired other, other positions ah, within the, within the community here, so.

06:29:28

A:

I, I don’t wanna take credit for those, it’s just a hiring thing that’s going on, so.

Q:

Good, how much time do we have? I just have.

(Cameraman: and we’re rolling)

06:29:44

Q:

They’re tearing this place down pretty quickly. What would you like to see done with this land?

A:

Well, I believe somewhat just like the uh, the Indians. Uh, they were the first ones here, and it ought to be put back to just the way nature created it. Uh, maybe some of it used for, of other activities. But for the history, it should be cleaned up and put back as a, as an arena for, for people to enjoy and say, “that was here. Now it’s gone and its back to the original state.”

Q:

Great.