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Transcript

Name: Tim Sisson

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Tape FLHP0151

11:01:01

A:

The famous uh, planes here at Delhi (chuckles).

Q:

Ah, we've had to deal with that for three months now.

A:

Yeah, yeah.

(Cameraman: We're rolling)

11:01:11

Q:

Okay, um, first of all, if you could give us your name and spell it, just to make sure we have it right.

A:

Full name, or what I use as my name?

Q:

What you use.

A:

What I use. Uh, Tim Sisson, T-I-M S-I-S-S-O-N.

11:01:23

Q:

Great! And if you could give us a little background, um, well, first of all, a little bit about your dad, (chuckles) and then also where you lived as a child, and um, where you were educated, and what you're doing now. Family stuff.

A:

Hmm, well, let's see, I, I lived in uh, Addyston, Ohio, as a child. I mean my entire, the entire childhood that I can remember. Uh, they tell me that during the war, that we lived in Florida for maybe a year, because Dad was stationed down there, but I don't remember that; I was just one or two years old. Uh, Dad was just Dad, I guess, you know, he was a fine person.

11:02:01

A:

I mean he went off to work every day, and came back at night and we had dinner. Uh, he loved his garden, you know, he really loved his garden. Um, just kind of around you know, as a positive

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influence. Um, I just, I remember uh, you know, being a child, as a pleasant time, you know, the period of time when he was working in Fernald.

11:02:26

A:

Uh, you know, I didn't have any you know, big problems or anything with the school, and had my activities. I, you know, I loved the, the woods then as, as I do now, the natural areas. There were always woods um, woods I could go to just almost out my door, front door you know, just go and hike and walk. Um, you know, just as long as I wanted to. So that was, that was a big part o' my childhood.

11:02:53

A:

And my dad was, was a big influence on that. He um, he got very involved in the Boy Scouts, uh, and, and I was in the Boy Scouts, and my brother was in the Boy Scouts, and so we went camping together, and went on hikes together, and you know, did all those kind o' things together. Uh, the family camped a couple times together, but our big outing was to go to Michigan every, uh, every year on vacation.

11:03:19

A:

Dad, I don't know if he talked about that, but that was a big deal. That, that was a real big deal. We went to northern Michigan for two weeks, from the time I was maybe five or six until I was eighteen and just didn't go with 'em. But we went to the same place for two weeks every year. It was (laughs) it was a nice place, it was in the woods, we did a lot o' hiking, fishing, swimming.

11:03:40

A:

Um, it would of been nice to go someplace else once in a while, but uh, but that was pleasant. So the outdoors was a big part of our, of our life, and it always was. Is that enough? Or you want more on that?

(Both laugh)

11:03:54

Q:

Um, when your dad was working at Fernald, how old were you?

A:

Well, let's see. I was eleven when he started workin' out there. And um, he quit workin' out there, uh, oh, I can't remember the exact year. I was probably late teens or something. No, I, I would've been up in my twenties I guess. But I, I'm not really as clear about that at all because I was you know, away home and just wasn't as, as involved in the family and watching the years and everything.

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11:04:28

A:

I, I know when it happened, I know when he went out to Diamond Oaks, or Great Oaks for example. Uh, you know 20's somewhere. Bugs are (laughs) are visiting me.

(Both laugh)

11:04:37

Q:

Oh, I know (laughs). Yeah, they like to do that. One flew up my pant leg a minute ago. Whew! Um, tell us about some of your earliest memories of your dad working at Fernald. Uh, specifically film badge.

A:

Right, he always had a film badge, I mean when he left um, home to go to work, he always had his film badge on, and, and had it on when he got back. I guess I would have put it on after I got there, you know, or as I was driving in the gate. But he put it on before he, before he left home, and uh, I remember discussions about the film badge, like it never got exposed, so that was good.

11:05:23

A:

You know, so he didn't, he didn't get that amount of radiation that at that time they considered a danger. Um, I, I remember that he worked in a laboratory. He um, he would, he didn't talk about details very much, but I know it was some kind of laboratory. He was supervisor in a laboratory. And um, he was involved in some projects that involved travel.

11:05:49

A:

He went to Hanford, Washington, the Hanford site. I think he went to Savannah River, so he did some travel in that respect um. Uh, he went to a convention every year, for several years, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Convention, conference, technical conference, and uh, actually took me along on that one, one of his trips, which was really interesting. You know, it was really a high point.

11:06:14

A:

I was 17 or 18 then. And uh, spent the week down there. Somehow he arranged it with the school you know, that I could take off and go to Baton Rouge, but uh, I you know, walked around the campus, LSU, uh, when he was at the conference during the day. And then we went into New Orleans a couple of evenings, so that was, that was a real interesting trip. So I knew he went to conferences like that.

11:06:36

A:

Um, he didn't talk too much about what kind o' work he did there. Uh, he talked about the people, I remember him talkin' about some o' the people that he worked with there. I remember one conflict he had in particular with someone else there. Uh, I'm not sure if it was a rivalry or what it was you know, but there was some kind o' conflict with somebody else there that was brought up.

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11:07:00

A:

Um, uh, he was in sports. He was on the golf team that was a big thing. He probably talked about golf and uh, and the softball team more than the work he did. You know, in fact I'm sure he did. Um, you know, he really loved golf, and played on the golf team, and the golf tournament. I think he won the tournament up there, at least once or a couple times. You know, the Fernald champion.

11:07:26

A:

Uh, he was a good golfer. Uh, and I actually went with him a few times and played golf. And there were other people from Fernald around at a golf, golf course up near Hamilton. Potter's Field or Potter's Park or something. Uh, so that, that was really more of what he talked about than his work itself, he really didn't talk about the work that, that much.

Q:

Great. (To cameraman: Do you wanna pause and fix the leg?)

11:07:56

Q:

Cue. All right, um. Uh, your dad was going to school at the same time that he was workin' on, at Fernald, too.

A:

Right. Right.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about that.

11:08:11

A:

I, I remember that he used to do problems or projects for school, and it involved um, uh, writing out uh, chemical formulas, the uh, the, the organic uh, compounds, all the little lines and the Cs, and the Hs, and the, and the Os and so forth. I was fascinated by that you know. I'd look at them. You know, he went to school, and that was just part of what he did, you know, a couple of evenings.

11:08:44

A:

Uh, it didn't seem to be real intrusive, as far as him being tied up at it a lot. I mean, he still had time for his garden and play golf, and be around the house. Um, the school mighta had some connection to work. See, that was kind o' fuzzy. I mean his work was chemistry-oriented, and the school was chemistry-oriented. So there, I mighta been seeing some kind o' things related to work, I don't know.

11:09:09

A:

You know, they just all looked the same to me. Uh, then he went through and got another degree, and he was real proud o' that.

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Q:

Great, and uh, did you know anything about the projects he was working on at work at all?

11:09:25

A:

I heard names, I, I remember one name, moving big, moving bed reactor. I remember that name, and I think he went to Hanford um, site, as part of that project. He, he didn't talk any details or any specifics, you know. And I, I knew some o' the, you know, some o' the fundamentals I guess. 'Cause I was interested in science, and you know, became an engineer.

11:09:48

A:

So uh, you know, he talked to me about some o' the fun, fundamentals, the different isotopes of uranium, and oh, you had to separate the U-238 and the U-235, those kind of things. Uh, just in, in very general terms. Um, he didn't talk too much about what they did at Fernald, you know, how they separated what or what happened to it.

11:10:10

A:

The term green salt was mentioned, and I really didn't know what that was, you know. That was a compound that had uranium in it. Uh, um, so um, so yeah, he did talk some about you know, the details and the compounds in general terms, uh, but not real specific. Yea, yea, it didn't make a big deal about it was secret or anything. He didn't say, "oh I can't talk about that because it's classified." He just didn't talk about it, ya know. And we didn't press him, I mean we didn't really care. Ya know, we weren't that concerned about it.

Q:

Were you ever really aware that he was working on uh, projects that were uh, in support of America's defense?

A:

Yes, yes, I mean there was that connection. That uh, uranium was used in atomic bombs and somehow that what he was doing was related to that. Uh, that uh, but as far as exact connection, or what phase or what part of that process Fernald was involved in – never really got into that detail. I mean I knew that uranium ore was mined, I knew that Fernald was somehow involved in the processing of it, and ultimately there were bombs and there were fuel rods that went in power plants, but I didn't really know how Fernald fit into all that.

Q:

Great! Um, did your dad ever mention, or did he ever discuss, or how much did he discuss any kind of danger of toxicity, toxicity issues?

11:11:52

A:

Wells, uh, certainly with respect to the film badges, yeah. I mean he didn't want the film badge to be exposed. So, so there was that radiation danger that, that he talked about. I don't remember him

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talking about tox-, toxicity. You know, I don't remember that being mentioned. Uh, he might have you know, talking about plutonium, he might have mentioned something about toxicity.

11:12:09:15

A:

But I don't remember that as an issue. And the uranium, radioactivity, it was just something that you were careful. Whatever he did in the lab, you know, they were careful and he never got his film badge exposed, so he felt that uh, as far as I can remember, that uh, he was safe. You know, that uh, that he was never uh, in any situation where, where he was exposed to a lot o' radiation, that he considered dangerous. I don't remember that coming up, no.

11:12:47

Q:

Looking back on it now uh, years later, uh, do you ever, I mean, how do you feel about having, him having worked there?

A:

Well, now I, I know you know, a lot more about what Fernald did and how they did it. And I uh, there's two parts to that question, I mean the, the, the activity as a, as a contributor to our, uh, I don't know if it's called our defense effort, but our deterrent effort. Uh, you know, that's, that was important.

11:13:25

A:

I mean that was part of our, our national policy, and uh, so I, you know, I wouldn't question that. Uh, you know, I guess that had to be done at the time. But the way they did it and how they were not careful in siting the plant. You know, on a major aquifer. On, on you know, doing more to minimize or eliminate hopefully, the area emissions. You know, all the um, atomic dust, debris, whatever that got out.

11:13:55

A:

Uh, the uh, water contamination, contamination of the aquifer. You know, I, I certainly wish they had done more to, to prevent that. I think that was very careless of National Lead and Fernald, to, to permit the extensive uh, you know, uh, release of radioactivity that they permitted. Uh, I don't know that he was ever involved in anything that could've affected that.

11:14:20

A:

He certainly wasn't involved in the siting. You know, he started work there after it was a going operation. Um, the air emissions, water pollution, uh, water contamination. I, I don't know. I mean his lab was a self-contained building, and I don't know that they really had any, you know, that was really relevant to the emissions thing. Maybe I was wrong. See, I don't know all the details there.

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11:14:43

A:

But um, but certainly he was around the plant and knew it what was going on around the plant, and could've reported, could've had input on that aspect of it. Apparently, nobody really considered that to be as serious as we do now. You know, all the tons of uranium that aren't accounted for, where did they go? Did they go out in the air into people's houses and farms and you know.

11:15:08

A:

I, so I, I wish they had, had um, in general, been more careful about the release of radioactivity. And uh, and uh, if he could have had an impact, I wish he would've. You know.

Q:

Great, and uh, if you could tell us a little bit about your um, your involvement with the environment in subsequent years?

11:15:28

A:

I, I always enjoyed the outdoors, as I mentioned before. You know, I was always out uh, playing in the woods. Out, uh, you know, out hiking for hours at a time, at a, what we would consider a very young age, just off on my own in the woods for hours, you know. And, and Mom and Dad just, "Okay, well, Tim's off (chuckles) in the woods again." You know, uh, when I was you know, less than 10-years-old.

11:15:52

A:

So I always enjoyed that. Um, and I appreciated natural things. Uh, you know, I enjoyed seeing natural things. Um, uh, and as I got older uh, when I had some, some free time after um, you know, a lot of constraints in modern life, uh, I joined some environmental organizations. And um, my uh, my attitude or my, my interests in that pretty much polarized as a result of that.

11:16:23

A:

Uh, the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, uh, Nature Conservancy, you know, I'm members in all of those. I, I help all of them. And I became quite active in conservation issues and environmental issues. Um, uh, oh, helping with political campaigns to further environmental goals. Uh, helping with issues in, you know, the township here where I live in western Hamilton County.

11:16:50

A:

Uh, to promote or, or preserve our natural areas, our green space. I think that's very important. I would hate to see uh, this area for example, become like, um, like what, uh, West Chester. You know, just all cut up, not much green space, just houses everywhere. Um, uh, western Ham-, Clermont County.

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11:17:14

A:

You know, I would like to see us preserve more of our green space in western Hamilton County. Uh, and not just green space, but the quality of the green space. I'm real active with uh, Miami Whitewater Forest in the recreation of the prairies and wetlands out there. I'm very active in their projects in bringing other people out there uh, for um, projects out there involving the prairies and wetlands.

11:17:37

A:

So uh, that has evolved into a very strong part of my live. Uh, my, what you're looking at behind me is a natural area that was a yard; it was a lawn when I moved into this house. And now it's a real nice little nature area, trees and native plants. I've brought in a lot of native plants that weren't here before. Uh, there's a lot more birds around, uh, so it's, I've done my little part even here where I live.

11:18:04

A:

Um, and, and I, you know, I hope that the interest in Fernald will maybe make people more interested in protecting the environment, in keeping nice things. Uh, Fernald was once a beautiful, natural area. I'm sure there were patches of prairie out there that was heavily forested. Uh, and uh, I would like to see a lot of the site returned to that state.

11:18:20

A:

I mean, that would be, you know a major, you know, a major recommendation of mine is to, is to, is to re-, you know, let it go back, or help it go back to a, a natural state out there. Prairies, wetlands, natural forests, all o' those.

11:18:48

Q:

What're some o' the political issues that you face when working with the park and working with um, um, continuing green space, like in regards to tax space and those types of things?

A:

(Laughs) Yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, western Hamilton County has in the past been blessed with, I say "blessed," with a um, uh, minimal sewer system, wastewater treatment system. And that really did constrain development in the hills and valleys, uh, Miami Township, uh, uh, Crosby Township, Harrison Township, Greene Township.

11:19:30

A:

Uh, there is a major push now to put um, uh, public sewers through all those areas. Um, MSD has a major program to do that, which is very much um, favored by our, our current political institutions in Hamilton County, you know, primarily the county commissioners. And that is opening up huge areas to development that were real nice, natural areas. And not just development, but dense development.

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11:20:03

A:

You know, where before, maybe you would just have five-acre plots or one acre at the minimum. Um, but now I mean, they're cutting 'em up into typical subdivision, like, like West Chester in Hamilton County, I'm sorry, Clermont County. And uh, I think that's really a shame. And you know, I think that this western Hamilton County organization that's tryin' to preserve a lot o' that green space is on the right track.

11:20:26

A:

I would hope that, that we can preserve some o' that and so it doesn't all get developed. So there, the political element is extremely important. You know, the zoning situation, the extension of MSD treatment plants, treatment uh, uh, what, facilities, into, into western Hamilton County is so politically motivated. And then um, in, you mentioned Miami Whitewater.

11:20:58

A:

Well, the, there are um, there are people in Miami, Crosby Township where Miami Whitewater is, who want to constrain a development of that park. I mean there's been some real strong activity to try to keep Miami Whitewater from expanding more land area, taking land away from the "tax space" as you mentioned.

11:21:17

A:

Uh, which, which I think as a shame, to think only of the value of land or property as "tax space". I mean the natural resource they have out there at Miami Whitewater is just priceless, really and what they're doing with it. Ah, John Cline, that whole organization is just doing a tremendous job at Miami Whitewater.

11:21:37

A:

Ah, and ah, I've been helping with that for years out there. So ah, again it's politics I, I think you know, I can't swear to this, but I think the township trustees out there in Crosby Township are very much against the expansion of Miami Whitewater and have filed lawsuits and so forth. Zoning restrictions and all that, and I, I think that's really a shame. That they can't appreciate the value of what that can be out there.

11:22:03

A:

Ah, I would hope that in the future there could be more ah, growth of Miami Whitewater as a natural area, maybe some, potential for business to develop around Miami Whitewater, bike rentals, restaurants, food supplies whatever. So there is an im-, an economic benefit to Miami Whitewater. I think that, that could happen.

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11:22:03

Q:

Great, and ah, how involved are you ah, within that same area with ah, Fernald public meetings? Do you ever attend any of those meetings or have you ever in the past?

A:

I, I attended one Fernald public meeting, yeah, that's all I attended.

Q:

Tell us about that. Tell us about how it all worked.

11:22:47

A:

Well, it seemed pretty rancorous as I remember (laughing). Yeah, there was some pretty strong words flying on both sides and this was many years ago, I went to that meeting. Ah, it was probably in the '80's and it was just very contentious atmosphere. And I, I wasn't quite sure what was gonna happen you know, (laughing) and who was right. I mean, there was many extreme view points on both sides that I, I don't know. That's my main memory is just very, very contentious.

Q:

And why did you choose to go to that meeting? What was the issue or?

11:23:24

A:

Ah, the, the Sierra Club ah, in Cincinnati, what's called the Miami Group of the Sierra Club in Cincinnati, has, has had some interest in Fernald, and some involvement. We had a speaker from Fernald at one of our main meetings and ah, we've, you know we've, I've actually ah, organized trips out there, you know, sponsored by the Sierra Club to tour Fernald.

11:23:48

A:

And so as part of our overall interest in Fernald, I, I went to one of those public meetings. I was very involved in the conservation committee at the time and so it was just part of my; I was going to meetings all over the place for a while (chuckles) lots of meetings.

11:24:05

Q:

And what was your impression of the site when you took tours?

A:

Well um, the site, what I saw seemed to be very well organized. I mean, frankly, I mean I saw the warehouses that they were building to store materials in. I saw the containers that they were developing to pack everything in. Ah, low level atomic waste ah, is what they were talking to us about primarily.

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11:24:34

A:

Ah, so I was, I was impressed at how careful they were to collect everything and seal it up and store it. Ah, it seemed like it was all being handled ah, fairly well. I mean, 'course when they bring somebody in from the tour, from the environmental organization they're gonna show them the good things (laughing). That's for sure, ah but what we saw was, was positive.

11:25:01

Q:

Let's go back in time just a little bit. And in the mid-80's, about '84, '85 there were a series of dust collector releases in Plant 9, ah, there was a lot of media attention, both locally and nationally, and how did you as someone who was concerned about the environment how did you react to that whole situation?

11:25:21

A:

That was before I really got involved in environmental activities. Yeah, see I ah, I really started gettin' involved in 'em in '87, '88 ah, through the present time. So that was really before I had that, that awareness, ah, I, I remember the issue, but I wasn't that involved at the time.

Q:

Looking back on that whole situation, how do you feel about it now?

A:

Well, you know, I for quite a while as a professional I was involved in ah, pollution control, pollution minimization ah, and you know, I've worked with dust collectors and ah, all that kind of equipment and, and, and I know accidents can happen. I mean I've seen 'em happen in industrial sites and other industries ah, again it seems to me that perhaps they just weren't as, as sensitive to the type of material that they were dealing with.

A:

11:26:30

I mean, an industry that's dealing with aluminum oxide dust. I mean, certainly that is a problem but you don't have to be, you know, tremendously concerned about it but when you're talking about uranium dust ah, it seems like they should've taken a little extra care to prevent that kind of thing from happening. And it goes back to what I was saying in general about the Fernald site when my Dad was there.

11:26:54

A:

To, to do more, to, to minimize or eliminate you know, releases into the air and water of, of radioactive material.

Q:

Let's talk a little bit about the Cold War. Ah, your Dad was working there pretty much at the height of the Cold War, (Comment – Right) and ah, what was the typical American's view point and what was your view point about the Cold War at that time?

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11:27:20

A:

Well, I mean we were scared to death, you know. We went through the Cuban Missile Crisis and we thought we might get bombed, you know, any day. So, it, it was a very frightening time. It was a very frightening time. It was always this specter hanging over ya, you know, that there might suddenly be an exchange of missiles between us and Russia, you know. And it would wipe out most of both our countries.

11:27:47

A:

You know, so that was, that was extremely scary ah, you know, the fact that we had to have this, we thought we had to have this nuclear deterrent ah, it was, it was just part of daily life. I mean you just, you just considered that as much as daily life as, as I guess we consider now, there's you know there's, there's problems with the Middle East and there's problems with Northern Ireland. I know, they're just there.

11:28:17

A:

You know, and you don't think about what, what that means as far as could I do something or, or it's just, it's just there, you know. And you're worried about it, you're concerned about it, you're scared about it, I don't remember thinking that my father's work was a main contributor to that.

A:

I mean, I knew, you know the logical connection you know of helping to produce uranium that ultimately was part of our ah, our nuclear deterrent, but I didn't, I didn't think strongly of, oh yeah, my Dad's contributing to keeping the Russians from bombing us. I mean, we just didn't think that way, you know. But certainly the Cold War was ah, was a huge aspect of our lives. I mean it was a very scary thing to be concerned about.

11:29:09

Q:

Great, we're gonna take a break and change tapes.

A:

Okay.

Q:

We only have a 30-minute load.

TAPE FLHP0152

12:01:01

Q:

All right, keep rolling here, great. We were discussing the Cold War (Comment – right, right) and you were telling me a little bit during the break about ah, stockpiling and those types of things and what the major targets were in your area.

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12:01:13

A:

Right, we ah, we had a cache of can goods in the basement ah, just ah you know, in case there was a big missile exchange we'd go down in the basement and huddle there for a while. Ah, we didn't think any further than that I guess, you know, as far as what we'd do about the cloud of atomic radiation that came over and whether we'd breathe that. I don't remember us having gas masks or anything like that.

12:01:37

A:

But, we did think in terms of going into the basement as at least being able to eat for a while. Ah, yeah, the ground zero or the targets in the area, well I, at the time I remember thinking that the GE Plant. Ah, because they made jet engines would be a major target and I don't think that was close enough to us for us to be involved in the immediate destruction or total annihilation.

12:02:06

A:

Ah, Fernald was, is, was another ah, target, potential target, and again that was pretty far away from our house. So we didn't think in terms of just being obliterated instantly but in, in terms of fallout and surviving for a while, we did think in terms of that, yeah, and staying in the basement.

12:02:28

Q:

Did they ever talk much about the Cold War in your school?

A:

In the school. Well, we, we had current affairs, you know we had current affairs and we did ah, we were touching on that ah just periodically. See when I was in school, now let me make sure I get this sorted out from ah, from after school like in the mid-50's to late-50's and high school. Ah, there was ah, well just before that was Korea so we went through the Korean conflict.

12:03:09

A:

Then up through that time into the '60's there was ah, the ber-, big Berlin Crisis, help me out when was the big Berlin airlift which was (Comment - '62) '62. Yeah, right, so I remember that real clearly I mean that was a ah, a ah, you know, a huge event. I remember talking about that in college when I was in college.

12:03:31

A:

Ah, the Berlin Airlift, the crisis there, how that could have escalated into something worse. And then as a matter of fact ah, I traveled in Europe extensively in '71 and ah, I went to Berlin. It was one of the most moving experiences when I was in Europe, I guess one of my most moving experiences actually going to Communist, through Communist East Germany and going into Berlin. And I saw the Cold War first hand.

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12:04:01

A:

I mean I went to check point Charlie and I was searched and I had my passport disappear for a while, as they checked me out. And ah, drove my Volkswagen van into Berlin and saw the Berlin Wall and that was a real moving experience, I'll tell ya.

Q:

When you were there, boy that's a whole thing there, (Comment – yeah) when you were there, ah, what are some of the things that you saw that ah, brought home the Cold War and the whole Iron Curtain, the idea of the Iron Curtain, bring that home to you?

12:04:38

A:

The tremendous contrast between West Berlin and East Berlin. I mean I was in West Berlin and it was a ah, it was a vibrant city. I mean certainly it was constrained and it was surrounded by Communist ah, East Germany, but still it was a vibrant city with restaurants, with traffic, with people bustling around. With tourist ah, ah you know the Brandenburg Gate was a tremendous tourist site and we'd go up there, and it was just like going to a tourist site in London almost.

12:05:11

A:

But then you'd, you'd look ah, through some kind of openings, I'm not sure, I don't remember real clearly how I looked through, but you could look into East Berlin. And it was gray, it was somber, I mean it was absolutely the opposite. It was such a tremendous contrast. Ah, there were no people bustling around, there were no traffic all zipping around. I mean, there were people kind of scurrying, kind of huddled almost, you know, and gray clothes. What a difference, what a tremendous difference.

12:05:46

A:

We saw the, the ah, East German Police with their machine guns standing up there pointing their machine guns at us, you know and at the ah space, you know the fenced off space, you know along the Berlin Wall. Ah, that was one heck of an experience, I'll tell ya. I was so glad when I was back in West Germany (laughing). I felt like a huge weight had lifted off my shoulders.

12:06:15

Q:

And how did that change for or how did it underline your feeling about what America's role was in the world during the Cold War?

A:

Well to see it first hand like that, to see that graphic example the Cold War was, was just a huge validation for me. I mean, I saw what Communism was, you know and it was bad. It was really bad. I mean if anybody in that time period needed any kind of a, what validation that, that democracy was better than Communism, that was it. All you had to do was visit, you know. I say a Communist country, but boy visit East Germany, East Berlin and you would see you know what it was all about.

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12:07:02

A:

I mean, Communism was not, was not a good life. Communist was a terrible life, Communism was not government by the people, I mean it was a total dictatorial state. And not just dictatorial but, but very, what, very negative dictatorial. I mean dictator's, kings et cetera you know, you can have a very benevolent dictator but that was a very malignant or malicious dictatorship.

12:07:29

A:

Uh, so it, you know, when I came back, I was, boy I was really proud I was an American. I was just all pumped up. You know, buy American, you know, support America, you know, that definitely was. I worked in the defense industry; I worked at uh, Cincinnati Milacron helping to build machines.

12:07:50

A:

Machine tools that were used to make airplanes and jet engines. I then worked at GE helping to build jet engines myself, or manufacture the parts for jet engines. So it was, it was a uh, you know, just a tremendous input as far as feeling good about being an American and good about our side of the Cold War you know.

12:08:13

Q:

And how did that whole experience in relation to your dad working at Fernald, did that change your opinion or did it, how did it make you feel about that?

12:08:20

A:

It, it didn't. I, I never felt bad about him working at Fernald. No, so it, it didn't really impact that at all. There wasn't really a strong connection. No. I, I, you know, going a little deeper into that question though, I, I really had more of a connection uh, uh, with him because of his experience in World War II. You know, he was in World War II just about the whole time, you know, the entire length of the conflict.

12:08:51

A:

He was out in the South Pacific uh, he was uh, I guess you wouldn't call it direct conflict although his plane was shot at by Zeros a few times, so he was in conflict and was actually shot at. But he was part of the whole effort out there to defeat the Japanese. And so I felt more of a connection with him because of that and proud of him because of what he did out there.

12:09:15

Q:

Great! Great! Wow that was a whole thing I didn't know about (laughter).

A:

Oh really?

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12:09:21

Q:

Yeah, I didn't know that you had gone to Germany. Um, well, in '89, '90 the wall came down, uh, what was your reaction to that?

A:

Oh I was really glad. I mean I was really glad that that had all, you know, that that whole, that whole era was, was being put behind us. You know, Romania, Hungary, Poland, German, I mean, I just thought that was just one of the most tremendous things in my lifetime. Was to see Communism crumble like that.

12:09:53

A:

I, I, I know, its hard, I mean Russia is having a tremendously difficult time now. Uh, I hope they stick with it, I hope that they do eventually uh, uh, you know, develop a uh, a uh, democratic state uh, you know it's tough for the Russians. I mean they've never experienced Democracy. I mean they came from the Czars to the Communists and boy there's, there's not really much difference.

12:10:21

A:

(Laughing) So, I, I, I was really glad to see all of that. You know I watched it on the uh, the news, you know, very closely.

12:10:30

Q:

That was a neat time. I almost jumped a plane (both laughing) almost. Now I wish I had.

A:

Yeah. Yeah, I know. Well, it was, it was interesting seeing places that I had been in. You know, I was at the Berlin Wall. And, and I saw those same places that people with picks and whatever they could get, uh, rip it down and pull the blocks down. So that was, that was, you know, especially interesting to me because I was there you know. Saw it in it's heyday.

12:11:01

Q:

That's great. Um, how do you feel about the work that's going on at Fernald right now?

A:

Well, (sighs) it's, it's, the intent is good. I mean I think that the Fernald site should be cleaned up. It should be, as I mentioned before, um, converted back to a natural state. That's what I would like to see. I think that um, that it's been done very inefficiently. I, it seems to me there have been a lot uh, there's been a lot of mismanagement.

12:11:40

A:

There's been a lot of, of um, complexity that just doesn't need to be there. You know, I've talked to people that have worked there. I've talked to people that do work there. You know, I follow the

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newspapers, I, I know some of the technical aspect of it because I was an environmental professional for, for several years. I just think that it's a shame that it's costing as much as it is.

12:12:04

A:

That it's taking as long as it is. That it's as complicated as it is out there. Uh, you know, the goal is definitely uh, worthwhile, I mean they should clean it up. But boy, the way they're goin' about it, gee, there must be, must be a better way (laughs). There just must be a better way.

12:12:24

Q:

Some of the major issues uh, they're having at Fernald right now, one of them is the water issue. Can you address that a little bit?

12:12:28

A:

Yeah. Well, I've talked to a few people who, you know, who have, who have pretty good knowledge of that, and have read the newspaper accounts, and this whole issue of the aquifer, and tryin' to clean up the aquifer. I've heard experts say that that is a tremendous boondoggle. Is that, boy, to pump out that water down there that's polluted, to try to pump out all the, the radioactive particles.

12:12:55

A:

Just, it just can't be done you know, in realistic terms. I mean you can pump billions o' gallons for hundreds o' years, and it's still gonna be down there. It's still going to uh, percolate out uh, you know, into whatever it's gonna go into. I mean that aquifer is gonna flow and you're not gonna stop it. So, you know, so the water issue seems real.

12:13:18

A:

Ah! Boy, I don't know, I don't know how the decision was made to do that. Maybe there's politics involved, you know, but it doesn't seem like it's technically valid to me. Pumping the water then into the Great Miami River, I'm kind of ambivalent on that. I mean its such a tremendously low concentration, it; it's probably not that big a deal.

12:13:43

A:

But, but spending all o' that money to try to pump it out o' the ground, I just, boy I wonder about that (chuckles).

12:13:50

Q:

How about shipping waste out to the western states?

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A:

Well, you gotta do something with it. Okay, and from what I read most of it is low-level. Uh, it's um, you know, its, its not tremendously dangerous; it's alpha-particle radiation. What're ya gonna do? Are you gonna store it all there on site and just have these huge buildings that you've got to maintain forever?

12:14:16

A:

Uh, are you gonna take it to another site where, it, I don't think it's gonna be as hard to maintain it? You know, the weather out in the southwest, I mean there's not the tornadoes, there's not the freezing and thawing to cause buildings to deteriorate. So, it, it seems to me that that's a viable solution.

12:14:34

A:

I mean, I think that they're gonna be able to ship it without any catastrophic wreck, even if stuff would be strewn around, it, it, from what I read and hear, it's not that dangerous a material anyway, you know, that they're shipping out there. They're not shipping plutonium out there in railroad cars from what I hear.

12:14:57

A:

So that, that seems to be a viable solution. I mean, I, you know, I'm a nimby, I wouldn't want the stuff stored in my back yard. But I mean, Nevada, there's huge back yards out there, and, and the site that they've chosen, it, it seems workable to me. I've talked again to experts, one hydrology expert in particular in Yucca Mountain. And it seems totally safe.

12:15:23

A:

I mean, he's a professor at U.C. and a consultant, and it seems totally safe, you know. There's, it's virtually no way that can get flooded and that it's gonna release radiation. That's, that's what I hear knowledgeable people saying.

12:15:39

Q:

How do you feel about the storage facility that's being built on site right now?

A:

I don't know much about it. You know, I don't. I mean there's certainly waste out there, what is there, thorium? There's some thorium out there; there's plutonium. (Sighs) I mean, boy, that stuff is tough to ship you know. That's some nasty stuff. And so I, I, y-, it, it looks like storing the, the really nasty toxic stuff out there probably is the best solution.

12:16:07

A:

As far as where they're putting it, the kind of facility, I, I really don't know that much about it to, to really comment. I haven't heard any details about it, or that much.

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Q:
How about the silos?

12:16:19

A:
Well, the silos, you mean the ones that're deteriorating and? Yeah, well, they gotta do something about that. I mean they can't let that go, they're leaking. They're, they're all cracked and everything. And they've got some nasty stuff in 'em, so they've, they've got to do something about it.

12:16:35

A:
I mean, I don't know whether encapsulating the silos, uh, rippin' it all out and putting it in some other facility is the best solution. I, I don't really know much about what they're planning, you know, or what their options are, but they certainly have to do something to prevent that from escaping. Yeah.

12:16:55

Q:
And they are tearing buildings down pretty quickly at Fernald, and soon, and I know we talked a little bit about this before. What would you like to see done with that land?

12:17:06

(Laughs) I'd like to see deer running all over that land. 'Course there's a lot o' deer running all over that land now. You know, I'd like to see it, the possibility, of bison out there. You know, bison are native to our area. I, I'd like to see bison out there. I'd like to see it managed as a really nice natural area.

12:17:29

A:
And by managed, I mean keeping the alien plants out so it ov-, isn't overrun by ambient honeysuckle, and garlic mustard, things like that. Um, uh, more of a natural area than a park. Maybe some very rustic trails that people could, could walk on, but I wouldn't wanna see paved paths, you know, all through it.

12:17:53

A:
And the, you know, very quote civilized facilities like that. I'd like to see it truly as a natural area. Yeah, I think we need more of that kind of area around, you know. You, you need, you need those islands of natural space for, for species to, to be maintained. You know, we're all fragmented now, we're all cut up into a little bit o' woods here, and a little bit o' woods there, and a little bit o' woods there.

12:18:20

A:
And that just isn't workable, you know, for a sustainable environment. So that's what I'd like to see, a big area, out there, very natural.

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12:18:32

Q:

And um, how do you feel about the preservation of the history of Fernald?

A:

Well, it, it seems to me they're doin' a pretty good jo-, job out there. I know Joe Schomaker, I've, I've talked to him several times. He's very knowledgeable. It, it seems to me that that's one of the real pluses out there. Um, uh, I, I, it seems to me that they are doing a good job finding the sites, preserving the sites.

12:18:59

A:

Um, uh, uh, that seems to be from, from what I've learned, is more, is one of the more efficient sides of the operation of doing a good job there. And I, and I think they should. You know, I think the site is um, rich in, in geological um, materials or sites, and I, you know, I'm glad to see them doing that.

12:19:22

A:

Not just the um, Native Americans, I assume there are pioneer sites out there, too. I haven't heard as much about them, but I'd like to see them preserved as well.

12:19:34

Q:

And how about preserving the Cold War history? The actual um, things that happened on the site during the Cold War.

A:

I'm not as into that. You know? (Laughs) That was, that was a bad time, and we've got all kinds of records and documentation. Um, it, you know, I wouldn't, I wouldn't wanna see all of it totally obliterated, but I'm, I'm really not as interested in preserving a whole bunch of artifacts or buildings or something to, to remind us of the Cold War. I'd just as soon forget about the Cold War, myself.

12:20:10

(Chuckles) You know? I mean, I, I do like history, I love history, you know. And as I was mentioning to you earlier I've, I was recently in Great Britain, and visited many, many historical sites. I think some o' that should be preserved, some of the Fernald era, facilities, but uh, I uh, I think you could go overboard, you know.

12:20:32

Q:

Are uh, are you on the medical monitoring program?

A:

No.

Q:

You're not?

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A:
No.

Q:
Okay. I wasn't sure. I know your father is. I'm not sure you were.

A:
Yeah.

12:20:44

Q:
Is there anything that you wanted to cover that we didn't cover?

A:
Well, this history project itself. What we're doing today. I, I think that's a very important activity. And when I heard about it, I uh, I heard about it from a friend of mine, Jim Innis. Who is, who is part of the committee that was involved in setting this up, and I, you know, I volunteered right away to be part of it if they thought that was appropriate.

12:21:09

A:
I think that's really good to uh, document the people that were out there. In their own words, their own images, uh, I, I uh, visited a site in Kentucky uh, a few years back, it's called the Blue Heron Village. It was an old coal-mining town on the big south fork of the Cumberland in Southern Kentucky.

12:21:31

A:
And uh, you know, it came and went, you know, they mined their coal and they kind of, they kind of took what they could out of the land and then, then left. But somebody had the foresight to go back and uh collect photographs, pictures that were taken during the mining days and the little pioneer settlement there, interview people about their uh, their activities, their life, and there's a museum there now at Blue Heron that has these pictures exhibited.

12:21:58

A:
It has uh, I don't remember any videos or movies, uh, but lots of written statements by people of what their life was like. And that was extremely, extremely valuable I thought to give us that little picture, that little window, that history of those people and their lives. And that's what I see this you know, is another snapshot of the lives of people in that uh, era. So I'm, I'm really uh, really compliment you for doing this.

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12:22:29

Q:

Well thanks! Is there anything else you wanted to add?

A:

Can't think of anything else. No. No.

12:22:37

Q:

We're gonna do now what we call nat sound right now. That just means that we need quiet on the set for about 30 seconds. This is nat sound.