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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

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Date Interviewed: 06/08/99 Date Transcribed: 08/24/99 Tape: 32 Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0032

19:01:01
Q:
I'm ready if you're ready.

Cameraman: Tape's going round and round.

Q:
Okay, first of all, this is the hardest question we always ask everybody. If you could give us your name and spell it, so we know we have it right.

A:
(Laughing) First name's Jesse J-E-S-S-E, last name's Sosby S-O-S-B-Y.

19:01:16
Q:
Great, and ah, if you could give us some background first of all, um, ah, your pre-Fernald years. First of all, where were you born, where'd you go to school, just a brief history (okay) of your life before Fernald.

A:
I was born in Detroit Michigan, I graduated from Lawrenceburg High School. After ah, high school, I moved to Cleveland Ohio. From Cleveland Ohio, I went to United States Army. Served in German, Guam, Hawaii, and Vietnam.

19:01:44
Cameraman: We're getting a whole bunch of interference.

Q:
Are we?

Cameraman: Let's do that again.

Q:
(Laughing)

A:
That's a keeper.

19:01:50
Q:
Okay, we're going to go back to that question.

A:
Okay.

Q:
Ah, if you could tell us a little bit of background for yourself pre-Fernald.

19:01:56
A:
Pre-Fernald, I graduated from Lawrenceburg High School. From Lawrenceburg High School I went to Cleveland Ohio. Cleveland Ohio I went into the ah, United States Army. I served in German, was ah in Guam for a while, Hawaii, then I went to Vietnam, and came home.

19:02:15
Q:
Where did you work when you got back from Vietnam?

A:
Ah, started right at, when I first got back went to Mobile Chemical down at Paddy's Run. Was there for seven and a half years.

19:02:30
Q:
Great, and what did you do there?

A:
Was a chemical operator. We made ah phosphoric acid, and food grade acid for ah food products for Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola.

19:02:41
Q:
Great, and ah, then when did you come to Fernald?

A:
Ah, third day of March 1982.

Q:
And how long have you been here?

A:
About 17 years.

19:02:55
Q:
Okay. Um, how did you get your job here?

A:
Ah, while I was at Mobile Chemical, I come out and put my application in at Fernald. Time would go by, and I wasn't called and I'd come back. I kept trying, just kept puttin' it in until one day they called me. That's how I got here.

Q:
And tell me about the day that you were interviewed.

19:03:19
A:
The day I was, I was interviewed by Paul Ball, ah, they said he would have to run a security check on me, if I was accepted, which I was. And ah, I didn't think that would take much, or take very long to do since I had a secret clearance in the military. But ah, secret clearance didn't matter. They still had to run that background check before they would let me start work.

Q:
Tell me a little bit about that background check. Who did they talk to?

19:03:50
A:
They talked to ah, just about everybody that they could; high school teachers, neighbors, friends, ah I don't believe they talked with relatives. They talked with people of ah, places where I've worked before. Ah, they did a throu-, from what I understand they done a real thorough background check. It took about three months before I actually started work.

19:04:17
Q:
And ah, did you get any feedback from people who the FBI talked to?

A:
No ma'am.

Q:
Nobody came to see you and say, "hey what are doing?" (laughing)

A:
(laughing) No ma'am, no one came to me and asked me about it and no one said anything to me, but ah, the security people told me, said, "We'll know you, we'll know you just about time, from the time you first hiccup." And from what I understand that's about the way it was.

Q:
And ah, once you started here at Fernald, what kind of training did you get?

19:04:57
A:
That was one of the most interesting things about it, since I've been here at Fernald, it's, it's all been interesting and intriguing to me. But before I was even on, allowed to go on the processing side, for eight hours a day for two weeks, I went to training. Ah, I got the basic education, the high school diploma, but I wasn't into chemistry. I didn't, I wasn't that, that course.

19:05:22
A:
They talked, taught about a neutrons, protons, electrons, and for a person that's had a general education and not a college background, ah it's, it's fascinating. Because you're talking about something that's intangible. They taught the reaction of it, the radiation reaction, ah even then they taught ALARA and ah this is something that's intangible. You can't see it, but you know that it's there, and you know that it has ah, effects and that it is energy. So to me, it was, it was ah, fascinating.

Q:
Good, and ah, can you tell me a little bit about your different jobs that you did while you were at Fernald?

19:06:08
A:
Ah, I started in Plant 5 as a chemical operator. I ran the Rockwell furnaces, ah de-lidding, ah first started on break-out. Ah, break-out, each one of the jobs, a lot of the jobs in, in Plant 5 was the team concept. Highly skilled team concept and ah, the break-out, east break-out I believe was a five man job.

19:06:34
A:
And we looked out for each other. If one person got behind, or if one person got lax, they automatically jumped in and helped, helped him get caught up, so they job could be complete. I started with ah one, one of the sections of the job called the pit. And it was to ah, as the pot was broke out, and the derby was broke out, it came down what they call a grizzly.

19:06:59
A:
We cleaned the grizzly, or cleaned the, the ah derby and broke the slag up so it went down into the crusher and we, that was reused to line the pots and ah, the process just started over again.

Q:
Wow, and you, once you left Plant 5, where did you go from there?

19:07:20
A:
Plant 5, I went to ah Plant 1. Ah, storage, after Plant 1 I went to the RCRA warehouse, and ah Bob Hinsley and I were together in the ah, RCRA warehouses, Building 79. I was there for two or three years and after that I was offered supervision in, I was offered supervision in the ah RCRA system.

Q:
Great, and ah, let's see. I don't want to get into that yet. Um, while you were working here, were you able to, well, what did you tell your friends and family? Were you able to talk about your job at all?

A:
No ma'am. I didn't tell them anything. I didn't tell them what I was doing. Security was pretty strong at that time, ah I just ah, you just couldn't do it. People who would work beside each other in the same plants, you didn't visit a plant like you can today, or like you did after security was relaxed.

19:08:33
A:
Within a coup-, first couple of months I was here, one of the supervisors ah, inst-, instructed me to go across the street to the stores to pick up some kind of a, something, I don't even remember what it was. Before I left Plant 5, I went to his office, he gave me a pass, it was my name, badge number, his signature and the time I left that building.

19:08:56
A:
I took it over to Building 12, they recorded the time that I got there, the time that I left, I walked across back, back across the street to get back to his office, he recorded the time that I got there. And we're only talkin' a distance across the street, but you had to have, it was that kind of security even then.

Q:
So tell me about getting escorted to go to different places during that time.

19:09:22
A:
If you'd, if you had to leave the building, or if you had to go from one end of the site to another, you was escorted either by security or you was escorted by an approved escort. And that's the only way you was suppose to be out on the streets and moving around.

Q:
Wow, times have changed.

A:
Yes ma'am they have. They certainly have.

19:09:44
Q:
Um, I have a whole list of unusual (Interviewee laughing) and funny things that happened to you while you were here at work. And I'm just gonna ask, give you the basics so you can tell me the story. How's that?

A:
Alright.

Q:
Okay, ah, first thing she has in the list is ah, plant security during investigation of dust collector problems.

19:10:10
A:
Yes ma'am. Ah, I don't remember the years that it happened, but there was a lot of radioactive material that went through the stacks and was scattered across the countryside, well not across the countryside, but in, in the immediate area. And ah, there was quite an investigation about it.

19:10:26
A:
My supervisor, they was doing the investigation on the dust collectors, they had 'em shut down and they was torn apart and they was investigating 'em. My supervisor assigned me to one of the dust collectors to keep everybody and, that wasn't involved in that investigation away from 'em. No matter who they was, or what they said their purpose was, if they weren't on the list they could not get any ways close to that dust collector.

19:10:56
A:
I wasn't a security officer, but that was in-plant security. They didn't want anything, they was investigating it and they didn't want to take any chances on something being done to the dust collector that might influence the truth of what actually happened. That, that was one of 'em.

Q:
Wow, and the next on the list, she has worker in the lunchroom that wanted your chair.

19:11:21
A:
(Laughing) Yeah, a ah, those people were, the people there were, developed routines. They'd been here for quite a while and they, the routine was they would eat in a certain place. I hadn't been here but maybe six or seven weeks and ah I didn't know it, and everybody respected that area, or that, that routine. But I didn't know it.

19:11:43
A:
I went up to the cafeteria and I, I sat down to eat. Gentleman came over and he stood there and looked at me. I got kind of self-conscious and I looked at him and I says, "ah, can I help you?" He said, "Yeah, you're sitting in my chair. I've been sittin' in that chair for 10 years." Okay, so I got up and left. (Laughing)

19:12:12
A:
Ah, even in the showers, at that time there was like a curtain of water, when you came from the process side to the clean side, you took three showers a day, or two showers I should say. One for lunch, and one when you went home. But there was a curtain of shower, of water that you had to go through just to get to the showers, to get to the drying room.

19:12:36
A:
You could not leave the process side without getting wet. There were certain showers that certain people took a shower in and you just didn't do that. That's just the way it was. And you accepted it and went on. There's nothing wrong with that.

Q:
Anybody ever try to skip the showers?

A:
Oh yes. I've heard stories of people walkin' through that curtain of water with umbrellas ah, I've heard stories of 'em shimmying up against the wall as close to the wall as they could to keep from getting wet. Some would take towels and try to run through it quickly. But nine times out of ten it just didn't work.

19:13:20
A:
My self, I figured why not. I don't want to take this home with me, and I don't want to pollute my house or my family or contaminate either one of 'em. So, take the shower? Yes. Definite.

Q:
Umbrellas, I love that. Ah, speaking a little bit about the cafeteria, can you tell us about the cafeteria and the overtime meal tickets.

19:13:46
A:
Overtime meal tickets, I can't remember the time period that was involved, whether it was 2 hours or 4 hours, if you worked over. But you would get a meal ticket in addition to your overtime pay. And if you worked three or four days over during a week, what a lot of guys would do, would save those up and then go eat lunch for nothing.

19:14:09
A:
I think, I forget whether it was $1.50 or a $1.75 a meal ticket, but the food was, was really cheap and a lot of times it was good food. It was cooked fresh everyday and in the earlier years they had three chow lines, or three serving lines. The food was so good, I've heard from the older people, that people would come in on their off shift just to eat in the cafeteria. It was so good.

19:14:40
A:
If you worked, say you worked third shift and got off at 8 o'clock in the morning, you could call over and say I'm getting off third shift, I'd like to have this for breakfast. And within in five minutes after you got there, it was cooked and ready to go. It was ready for you to eat. It was, they had their own bakery, their bakers, they had, it was a self-contained.

19:15:02
A:
Fernald at first was a city in its self. It had its medical department, its security or police department, the cobblers took care of the shoes. They even had their own jail. So it was a small city in itself, and the cafeteria was part of it.

Q:
That is neat. I've never heard anybody put it that way before.

A:
Oh, it was, it was uniquely different, for sure.

Q:
Wow, and then ah, the next list on the list she says ah, man at the bottom of the F machine, green salt.

A:
It was uniquely different but it wasn't perfect. Very few things in life are perfect. There were accidents and at that time, the knowledge that we had at that time, we knew that radioactive material was nothing to, nothing to mess with, nothing to fool with. But even still there was accidents.

19:16:05
A:
Ah, there's one operation was the top F and the bottom F. And that's where the green salt was mixed and it was lowered, or put into the pots and then it went through the rest of the process. It was a timed

job, by that I mean, the bottom F op-, machine operator and the top F operator worked together as a team and sometimes there, something would happen.

19:16:29
A:
Acc-, an accident would happen. The bottom man, the bottom F machine operator would get covered up with green salt. From head to foot. I've seen it happen, so's a lot of other people. I don't know if they'll mention it or not, but it, it did happen. And you could trace, almost trace that bottom F machine operator from Plant 5 to the Services Building, by his steps. Because he left green steps going over to the Service Building to shower. And that's the bottom F machine green salt (laughing).

19:17:07
Q:
Oh man. Ah, she says the process of green salt to Rockwells.

A:
Okay, what she's talking about there, we start at the bottom F, bottom and top F machine where it was mixed and put into the furnace pots. The furnace pot then went to the capping and lidding station. The cap was put on it, well the powdery cap was put on it, then the furnace lid was or the pot lid was put on it, on top of it and bolted down.

19:17:40
A:
From the capping and lidding station it went to the Rockwells, from the Rock-, after the chemical reaction took place in the Rockwells, the ah, the pot fired and the derby begin to form, and it was taken Rockwell furnaces to the air wells. The Rockwell pots were approximately an inch thick of steel. And those pots would turn cherry red.

19:18:05
A:
To keep from warping the pot they would put 'em in the air well, which would begin to take some of that heat away, but from the air well, it went into the water well, which shocked the insides of that, of that pot or the slag. It kind of broke it up. From the ah, water well it went up to the east break-out, where it was broke out of the pot.

19:18:28
A:
If you didn't, if you left it in the air well too long, where it completely cooled down, the ah reamer operator had a horrible time trying to get it, get it to come out. And sometimes when it did come out it looked like a giant popsicle. (Chuckles) That was not fun. Then it took a jackhammer and sledge hammer to break the slag up and to separate the slag from the derby and, and take it on through the process. It was, it was a skilled operation.

19:19:02
Q:
And sometimes there was blow-outs on the Rockwell furnaces?

A:
Yes ma'am. That's another one of the jobs that I did, I was Rock-, a Rockwell operator, Rockwell furnace operator. Ah, there's two types of blow-out, a top blow-out and a bottom blow-out. What

would happen, when the amble was canted just a little bit where the liner didn't com-, form a complete lining inside the pot, you left a little bit of bare metal. And when the, when the ah, pot fired, or when the chemical reaction took place, if it was cantered it would put a hole in the bottom of the pot, and that was a bottom blow-out.

19:19:44
A:
If the cap was too thin on the top, or if it wasn't, it wasn't ah, done right, and when it fired it would come out the top. The top blow-out was the worst, from a operators view point, because you usually had molten uranium metal that was squirtin' out of the top of the furnace. It got interesting.

Q:
What would you guys do when that happened?

19:20:08
A:
Depending on how bad it was, ah, a lot of times a top blow-out it just destroyed the furnace and there was nothing, nothing you could do and nothing that you did do, that could be done. I've seen 'em where they was squirt all the way out the top of the furnace and one time it was, it looked like a qeyser that was coming out of the top and running down the sides of the furnace.

19:20:31
A:
Down the ah, the ah grating and the matting on the, on the floor. Myself and two other operators grabbed fire extinguishers and put the fire out. We had too, we had no choice, because the molten metal was headin' towards the, towards the control panel, and if it had hit the control panel it would have knocked the whole system out. So, we beat the fire department there. We took care of the fire.

Q:
Man, and ah what about the ponds out by the silos?

19:21:09
A:
The ponds, again this is hearsay, 'cause I've, I've seen the ponds but I didn't see the fish that was in them. But from what I understand they, they had large, quite a bit of fish out there. And they were there for the purpose to see what the radiation effect would have on wildlife. Ah, over a chronic period of, chronic exposure, a small dose over a long period of time. I believe they were studied to see what effect if any radiation would have on the fish.

Q:
I remember doing my first helicopter aerials and looking down in there and seeing those fish (laughing)

A:
You've seen them then?

Q:
Yeah.

A:
Okay. Okay.

Q:
Ah, um, Plant 6 basement staff meetings.

19:21:58
A:
Plant 6 basement staff meetings. Use to we would have our weekly safety meetings in Plant 6 basement. It's on the ah, where we went in was on the northwest side of Plant 6. When you first went down the steps, there was like a room, an opening like, and especially in, in weather like this we looked forward to it cause it was underground, it was better than air-conditioning.

19:22:26
A:
Extremely cool. But if you went to the east side of that room, it was honey-, there were honeycombs, corridors that led almost all the back from the north side of 6 to the east or to the south end of 6. And there were little, littler rooms, but there were hallways, it was honeycombed. And these rooms were caged, they had wire cages across them, and I've seen several boxes in there marked Civil Defense.

19:22:57
A:
The, underneath Plant 6 was a bombout, was a bomb shelter. From what I've been told that ah, when they that poured it was a continuous pour. Those walls are approximately 2-feet thick, and a continuous pour is the strongest pour that's, that you can possibly get. When they started pouring they didn't stop, when they started pouring concrete they didn't stop until it was done. So it's, unique.

19:23:24
Q:
What would they use that bomb shelter for?

A:
We used it then for safety meetings. Ah, it's original intention or purpose was just that, a bomb shelter. At one time the air space, no plane could fly over this, this area. It was restricted air space.

Q:
Wow, so, did you ever go under the rolling mill?

19:23:48
A:
Oh, I imagine I was under there, yes ma'am.

Q:
Now, what's under the rolling mill?

A:
Those, those tunnels, that's, I couldn't say for sure that I was under it, but I, I would say looking back on it now, that I was under the rolling mill and probably didn't know it at the time.

19:24:09
Q:
Great, okay ah, how about salt bath in Plant 6 and apple cores?

A
(Laughing) salt bath, telling tales out of school. Was, the salt baths is where they heated treated the ingots, and even in shut down, when they shut down for the weekends, or shut down at the end of the shift. There was still enough heat, such high intensity heat, you were not supposed to eat anything on the process side.

19:24:43
A:
There was, you could smoke, but, but nothing that you could take into your mouth for contamination. Chewing gum or anything of that nature. But it's been said that some people would take apples over there, they, and in order to get rid of the apple core, they would pitch it up into the salt bath tank. Which was pretty effective.

A:
But the only problem was, that there was enough moisture in that apple core, that when it hit that hot salt it would react and it would put salt on top, on the roof of Plant 6. It would go off like a shotgun. Like a very large shotgun. So, it took care of the apple core, but they lost a little salt in the process, too (laughing).

19:25:29
Q:
And tell me about cigarette butts next to the Rockwell furnace.

A:
That was Mr. Paul Ball. He would, plant, Paul Ball was plant superintendent. He would come in an hour before the shift began, at that time I think the shift was 8 to 4:30. But Paul would come in an hour before the shift began, and he would, he would walk every floor of Plant 5, looking for, I can only summarize that he was looking for housekeeping issues, he was looking for safety issues.

19:26:02
A:
I really don't know what he was looking for. But to have, and again you could smoke anywhere you wanted to in Plant 5 at that time. And the habit was, a lot of the operators would take and throw their cigarette butts up against the control panel. He would come in and ah, to say he was ah unhappy with the situation is an understatement.

19:26:25
A:
He would have the operators stop and do housekeeping, clean those cigarette butts up and just raise nine kinds of Cain. He said "This," he said "this looks like a pig sty. Clean this place up. Clean it up." So that's, that's the cigarette butts (laughing) in the Rockwell furnaces. Myself, I had another way of dealing with it. The furnace pots fired at, depleted, fired at 1400 degrees, and then got hotter.

19:26:54
A:
So, one day it occurred to me that if I took my cigarette butt and threw it up on top of that fired Rockwell furnace pot, that I was gonna cremate that cigarette butt. Which it did, which means I didn't have to sweep the floor. And it worked rather well. Paul was happy, I was happy.

Q:
What was it like working in Plant 5 on a day like today, when it's in the 90's?

19:27:22
A:
Plant 5, production area had no heating system. Let-, there was some heating systems, in the, in the corners of the building, but not relatively to speak of. The building was heated by the Rockwell furnaces and by the re-melt area. In the dead of winter it would be toasty warm. So, on a day today, like today, you've got temperatures in excess of 90 degrees it would be somewhere between 105 to 110 degrees inside Plant, Plant 5.

19:27:54
A:
If you managed to get from the Services Building to Plant 5 without being soaked in sweat from perspiration on a day like today, 10 minutes after you was in Plant 5 there wasn't a dry stitch on you, nowhere. We didn't have any heat in the winter, we didn't need it. So longs as Rockwell furnaces were runnin', long as re-melt was runnin', we were toasty warm.

19:28:19
A:
There was no insulation in the walls either. These plants were designed to be built down south, in a much warmer climate. Where there's more, less constant temperature. For some reason, somehow, they got built in Ohio. And they didn't change the insulation plans, there was none.

Q:
Great, okay, we're gonna switch tapes here.

A:
Okay.

Q:
We've only got 30 minutes on a load. So, you're doin' gre-.

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20:01:11
Q:
Ah, while they were in process time, ah, how did you feel working at Fernald? Generally?

A:
I was, to say I took pride in my work, I did. Ah, (clears throat) knowing what, the history of this plant before I came here, and knowing that we produced the highest quality, the finest uranium metal, metal in the world. Ah, you was proud of your work, because you knew with what you was doing, there was none other. You were the best. You were the very best.

20:01:55
A:
Ah, there were problems. There were production problems. And then the operators and the engineers, they worked real close together, trying to solve those problems. Because, the engineers were looking at it from a technical viewpoint, but the operators were looking at it as a practical viewpoint and we didn't know exactly where the, where the problem was at.

19:02:21
A:
But we knew that if we talked and told each other what we were trying to, what we were experiencing, and the problems that we were having, then maybe that would be a line to solv-, to, to solving whatever the problem was. Ah, we took pride in our work and we had a good feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day.

20:02:44
A:
East breakout, we broke out 100 derbies every day. A hundred derbies in eight hours. It's not 8 hours of actual work, because you take away break-time and lunchtime, we was here 8 ½ hours. But at the end of the shift, we had 100 derbies broke out. Almost each and every day. And that, and that, you worked and you worked hard. But, you felt like you got something done.

Q:
That's great. And ah, how did your role change when they shifted into clean-up mode?

20:03:30
A:
When they, they shifted into clean-up mode, they shut Plant 5 down in mid stream. We were in full production. And it was, it was so drastic that is was kind of like a shock. Because it was, it was the same as you'd go home at night and ah, turn the lights out with a flip of a switch. That's how quick they shut down, when it came that time.

20:03:57
A:
My role changed, at shut-, when they shut down I was a saw sharpener, I sharpened blades for the ah east and west saw and for Plant 6. And all production stopped. Ah, you felt lost, you didn't. You came in, in the morning, and you went to a job assignment you figured you was gonna do something as far as production was concerned and instead you started doin' clean-up.

20:04:24
A:
You were an operator, you was a ah, a chemical operator. You was used to makin' ah, decisions and calculations and ah, watching the process, and knowing the process, how it ran and learning more about the process. But the process stopped. I mean there was no more production. You felt out of place. You felt displaced. And at the end of the day you looked around like, what did we get done today? What did I do today? And the answer always came back the same - very little. Very little.

20:05:09
Q:
Tell me about the day they flipped the switch. What was that like, I mean when the, when the, did they shut the whole plant down at once?

A:
Yes ma'am I believe they did. Again, I was in Plant 5, so I can only speak for, for ah Plant 5. But like I said it's the same, it's literally the same as going home and turnin' the switch off on your lights. There was still material in the systems, there was, the furnaces were runnin', the re-melt was, was runnin'. Ah, when they started to clean out the systems in Plant 5, one of the problems that they had, was they still had ingots that were in ah, re-melt furnaces

20:05:51
A:
Ah, they still had material in lines going back to ah, to the jolters, that they would use for pot linings, and that's, that's how quick they shut it down. It just ah, like I say, it was like turnin' a light switch off. One second you're there, going full streng-, full tilt, the next second, your not doin' anything. You're dead in the water.

20:06:19
Q:
So when you came in that day and there wasn't the noise of the jolters, the noise of the machinery running, what was that like?

A:
We use to shutdown for two weeks for shutdown every year for maintenance and clean-up. And a lot of times, ah when you hear the jolters goin' 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, and the reamers runnin', you can hear it all over site. You would often wonder - wonder what it would be like if they weren't running.

20:06:50
A:
How quiet, how nice it would be if they weren't running. And ah, when they shut it down, day after day after day you didn't hear it. And then those days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, and now it's turned into years. And ah, it's kind of sad, really. Lot of, I've talked with a lot of the people that I knows been here almost as long as I have, and some longer, and the same statement keeps coming out.

20:07:17
A:
What I wouldn't give to hear that reamer run just one more time, or to hear those jolters just once more. Because it goes back to that, that feeling of accomplishment, that feeling of, of knowing you were producing the, you had something to do with the production of the fine-, the finest quality of a product in the world. Excuse me, (wiping the back of neck) had a bug crawling up my back.

20:07:44
Q:
Ah, along those same lines, during the process years, how do you think Fernald helped America meet it's goal?

A:
If it wasn't for Fernald, I wonder where this country would be. 'Cause this was the base product for I believe Little Tom and Big Boy. This is where it all started. And ah, would we have the freedoms that

we have today? Would we be able to do the things that we do today? If it wasn't for the security and for the intensity and the knowledge and the history that's in this place, would our children be able to do want they want to do? What we want them to do?

20:08:38
A:
Parents, we all want our children to have a better life than I, than we had. What to give them more than we had, and would we be able to do that? I can't say. But I think if it wasn't for Fernald, I don't think we would.

Q:
That's great, ah how did your military training carry over into your mission at Fernald?

A:
(Chuckles) Military training, they taught me in the military that ah, how does it go – no mission too small, no sacrifice too great. You will get the job done. When Paul Ball hired me, he told me at the end of the inter-, at the end of the interview he says "Well," he says ah, "I'm gonna hire you as a chemical operator." I told him I'd do the best job I can.

20:09:36
A:
My father and the military, I got it from my father, but the military instilled it in me, it doesn't matter what you do, you do the best that you can at whatever the job is, you do the best that you can. The military said you not only do the job the best that you can, you will complete the job on time if not ahead of schedule.

20;09:57
A:
It carried into my civilian life. You give a 100 percent, you've, when you take the job you've made an agreement and the agreement is to do the best that you can for the amount of time that you are supposed to do and for the amount of money that you are supposed to draw. So therefore you get military, you will do it, you will complete it. That's it.

Q:
Great, let's see. See if there's anything. Um, what's your job now, what are you doing now?

A:
I'm with the ah Implementation Conduct of Operations group. What we do now is, we work hand in hand with the task order group. The task order will naturally write the task order and we'll go out into the field to make sure that the task order agrees with the applicable procedures. We'll make sure that the people in the field are doing ah, the job as the task order is wrote and if there is a conflict between the procedure and the con-, the task order we work to make those two compatible.

20:11:15
A:
Ah, if the task order calls for steps 1 through 5, and you go out and you talk to the people and they say yeah, it's 1 through 5, but it shouldn't be 1-2-3-4-5, it should be 1-5-4-3-2-1, or something like that

nature, we say fine. If that's how it works, if it works safely, efficiently, and if by procedural guidelines, but the sequencing is just a little out of step.

20:11:41
A:
We come back and talk to Larry Shockley and said, you know we need to, need to get this fixed cause it's not really the way it should be done. He revises it, we take it back out there. It's done quicker, easier, simpler and safer. That's it.

Q:
And how do you feel about the clean-up generally? How's it going right now?

A:
Clean-up is right on schedule. It's right on schedule. They're doing a good job out there, doing a fantastic job, not saying there isn't problems out there, because there are. But they're on schedule. And I keep thinking about the impact that this is going to have on the surrounding communities when Fernald finally does leave, which we are going to.

20:12:29
A:
And I don't think the people in the ah, for lack of better terminology, the civilian world, outside of Fernald really believe that this place is gonna be shut down. That it's gonna go back to the natural state. They're still under the concept that it'll be here forever. Forever's a long time. And I don't see that in the future. I see Fernald back to a natural state.

Q:
And what would you personally like to see this land used for that the plant sits on right now?

20;13:08
A:
I haven't given that a great deal of thought. But I would like to just see it go back to the way , to the way our Native Americans had it. It was virgin land then, let's put it back to as close to virgin land as possible. It will never be virgin land, I know that. But it'll be, at least it will have the appearance of it, maybe ah, ah natural habitat, a park. But not a park where it's, it's crisscrossed with, with highways, and, and all that, just a, back to nature.

Q:
Great, let's see. Got that. Let's go check through my list here and see if there's anything else here I need to get you on. Um, sort of go into the future a little bit, you know we make a joke around here all the time, that there's gonna be somebody here to turn off the lights and shut the door.

A:
Um-hmm. Yes ma'am.

20:14:20
Q:
The day that this place is gone and we all walk away from here, just sort of project yourself into that position. How will that affect you emotionally?

A:
I'll be looking back on a era of history, that I was part of. Just a little cog in the wheel. But at least I was a part of history. It's gonna be, it will be sad. But at the same time, it's like a two way street, it's kind of like a mixed breed. It's gonna be sad, but at the same time, yeah I worked at Fernald. I'm not ashamed of it. Matter of fact I'm kind of proud of it. But it's an era that's gonna come to an end.

20:15:15
A:
You can reflect on the history for so long, and on the past for so long, but then you've got to move ahead. You can benefit from what you've learned in the past, not only privately, you never can tell, there might be another DOE facility that might need something that I've learned here.

Q:
Great, and ah, when you started here in 1982, ah, the Cold War was sort of at a peak at that point. Um, can you tell me sort of the typical Fernald worker's view of the Russian threat and the Cold War in general?

20:16:02
A:
Well, no ma'am, I can't really. Speaking only for myself, if they made the mistake of, they made the mistake in World War II, and if they want to go down the same path, we was ready for 'em again. The Cold War could turn hot very quickly ah, but they didn't want to make that same mistake twice. That's.

Q:
And in the '60's and '70's especially ah, you fought in Vietnam?

A:
Yes ma'am.

20:16:45
Q:
And you were fighting at that time the Communist regime.

A:
Yes ma'am.

Q:
How did that change your attitude towards ah, the Cold War?

A:
I didn't give that any thought at that time, ma'am. I was trying to stay alive. And I was ah squad leader, so not only was I trying to keep myself alive, but I had other men depending on my decisions. Ah, that's one of the things that I told Bob Gardner when he, when he offered me supervisor. I said "No thank you." I said I've had that position of responsibility before, and I didn't want it again.

20:17:31
A:
Because I took supervisor in the same likeness as squad leader. Not to the degree of seriousness in life or death, but it could turn that way quickly. And ah, he talked me into it. Took him two weeks to do

it, but he talked me into it. He never would give up. And I've been happy in that role. Been good times, been bad times, it's like anything else. But ah, as far as my having an impact on me with the Cold War, Vietnam. Vietnam veteran didn't think of the Cold War, he thought about staying alive.

20:18:13
A:
He thought about coming home. He thought about ah, like we use to say, real hamburgers, and round doorknobs.

Q:
Great, well let's see if I got everything here. Um, how pure was the uranium that we processed here at Fernald?

20:18:42
A:
Purest in the world. It didn't' get any better. I've seen pictures of the analyses , of when, when we cut the ingots in Plant 5, we did, they did what called cropped. The impurities would come to the top and we would cut the impurities off and then we cut a sample of it. You can tell by, by the fibers, if you take a look at the x-rays of the, of the metal. How close they are, how they run, how pure it is. We had the purest in the world. The very best.

Q:
That's great, and ah, how efficient was the operation to using all the metal?

20:19:27
A:
Very efficient. There was nothing lost. If anything very, very little. Again going back to cropping ingots, the turnings from the saws was kept and drummed. Then it was sent to Plant 6 and made what they called briquettes. It was brought back to Plant 5 and re-melted. Ah, in the breakout, the material, the slag was ground again, sent back to the ah, jolters. Because there was still uranium even in that slag, or in that ground slag.

20:20:03
A:
When they put it to green salt in there, it drew not only from the green salt but it drew from the uranium that was still inside that slag. So there was very, very little lost at all. Even when they sampled, they would bore sample the ah, ingots and the turnings from the drill was swept and put aside and made briquettes and then re-melted again. There was nothing lost, here at Fernald.

Q:
I interviewed Bob Kispert, and he said if this was a pork plant, we used everything but the squeal.

A:
Exactly. That's the same thought that went through my mind, I just didn't say it. The only thing that left was the squeal. The only that that was lost.

20:20:45
Q:
I loved it. Is ah, oh I know what I was gonna ask you. Um, something that she wrote down here, the panic button.

A:
(Chuckles) The panic button. Plant 5, there was several places in Plant 5, there was a red button about, about 2 ½ - 3 inches in diameter. In case of a blow-out or any other thing that endangered any operation, or any part of Plant 5, all the operators, well everyone had the right and the authority to hit what we called the panic button. That was a plant evacuation button.

20:21:39
A
Siren would go off, everybody left the plant. It was unique to Plant 5, again I say it was unique, because I was in Plant 5 I, I don't know how the other plants were. But there were no questions asked. If there was something happened, we hit the panic button and got outside. Every-, the whole plant, empty. You shut down your operation or left it in a safe configuration, but you was outside on the roadway and the supervisor's was out there takin' a head count and a personnel count.

20:22:13
A:
And that, that was, it was used rather well. But it wasn't used foolishly. That's why it worked. If that, if someone hit that panic button, there was something wrong. There was either a blow-out, ah there was something wrong somewhere. And everybody was out quickly.

Q:
And how about security. What kinds of like side arms did they carry? Those kinds of things.

20:22:42
A:
Um, I believe they carried .357 magnums. At first they carried .38 police specials. They took ah, antiterrorist training, they took ah, night fires. They used the same course that the ah, Ohio State Police use for their night firing. They had to qualify with a side arm once a year. They had to qualif-, they had to pass a special physical once a year. Again they had their own jails, and I know for a fact that they had their own Thompson sub-machine guns.

20:23:19
A:
Ah, I have heard, I haven't seen that in the very early years, they had machine gun towers in all four corners of the ah, parking lot. They meant business. We've had several bomb scares, ah, I think they took their antiterrorist training in the south, somewhere in ah, Alabama or Georgia. But I'm not sure. That, that's, that would be hearsay at best.

Q:
Great is there anything you'd like to add, anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to talk about?

20:24:00
A:
No ma'am, other than the fact that this place will, will shut down. And I'm, hopefully I'll be retired by then. But I'm concerned about the ah, financial impact it's gonna have on surrounding communities, like Ross, Harrison and other, other small communities, relatively small communities. Again people are under the concept that this place will never go away, and it will. It will. It's got to. That's all.

Q:
Good. Okay we're gonna get a little bit of what we call nat sound, so if we can have as quite as we can on the set. This is nat sound.