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Name: Gary Storer

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Tape: 53

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Tape FLHP0119

03:01:04

Q:

Okay. Um, the first question is always the hardest, right? Could you just give us your name and spell it just to make sure we have it right?

A:

Sure. Gary, G-A-R-Y Storer, S-T-O-R-E-R.

Q:

Great and you can talk to me like we're just havin' a regular conversation, just try to ignore that big black thing there. (A: Okay. (smiles) okay.) Sometimes it's not all that easy. Ah, first of all, can you give us some personal information background on yourself. Um, you know, where were you born? How did you come to this area? Those kinds of things.

03:01:28

A:

Uh, I was born in uh, in Clermont County, and lived in Williamsburg, Ohio, which is about 30 miles east of Cincinnati. And um, basically the way I, I came to the west side of town, was I had uh, been offered a teaching job here in the northwest school district. So um, I, I left Clermont County to come to the west side of uh, Cincinnati here in, in uh, Hamilton County to teach, and that was 26 years ago, it had been.

03:02:02

Q:

So during your teaching experiences, while you were teaching in Northwest's school system, um, how did your students react to Fernald?

A:

Well, the, the little bit of discussing I did of it, you know, you'd put feelers out every once in a while, like I may have uh, a picture of the site or something like that. I was surprised at the number of students that I had that, that worked at the site, that parents worked at the site. And so that was, that was rather interesting, but they uh, they knew something was there, but they weren't exactly sure, and rumors um, basically, overtook their thoughts.

03:02:40

A:

You know, and they kind of knew it was radioactive, and I don't know, Fernald it was, it was a overreaction type of thing, and that, that they knew somethin' was harmful, not exactly what. And always the glow jokes, and those type of things, that we are, that we, out here are pretty much used to by now.

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Q:

So what kinds of myths or legend, legends were passed around the school about Fernald?

03:03:04

A:

Oh, just uh, well if you live near there, you'll glow. And, and those type of comments. I didn't, I didn't hear a whole lot more than that. And I did teach driver's ed and I had one of my routes came out through here. And uh, our Fernald signs, they would read that, and there were all kind of comments coming from the back, that uh, "Oh, let's get outta here!" or "Speed up!" or that type o' things, those comments.

03:03:30

A:

But I never did say that I lived right over here. I never, I never disclosed where I lived, due to the fact that what it might cause for me you know, and family, so. (Comment: Wow) Yeah, you don't wanna be labeled, oh now that guy lives near Fernald so let's stay away from him. Or you know, that type o' thing, so I, I never did disclose that, but, but they, they, they were aware of what Fernald was and what had occurred here. The high school people did.

03:04:00

Q:

So 26 years ago, they were still at the height of production and it was the Cold War era. Um, how were your students, and how were you personally reacting to the Cold War and the threat and what was goin' on then?

A:

Well um, 26 years ago, my students were totally unaware, of, of any, any activity that I was, that I was associated with out here. Um, my reaction was, would have, would have been at the time, just new to this area, I, I didn't know what the Fernald plant was myself. I knew what, I knew it existed.

03:04:41

A:

As a matter of fact, when we moved to the area, my wife Barb went there to, to apply for an interview and applied for work. And not really knowing exactly what the site, or what the plant produced.

Q:

Wow. So um, when did you find out what, what Fernald was all about?

03:05:03

A:

Probably the uh, in '84. I would say when, when I realized the seriousness of what was located there, and um, this was after the dust collector leak in Plant 9, that would have been December 10th of um, 1980, 5 I believe '84. And that's when I realized the seriousness of what was, what was there.

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03:05:31

A:

And I think probably along with realizing the seriousness of what was there, realizing the embarrassment of not knowing uh, what was there and being a public official, I felt like I should, should have known. But uh, there was no way for me to have known, because of the high level of secrecy and, and the limited clearances that were given to the site.

03:05:57

Q:

Tell us how you became a trustee.

03:06:01

A:

Uh, when I moved to this area, um, I've always kind of been involved in the community type things, like back in Williamsburg, I was involved with the fire department and life squad, and, and helping people, and that type o' thing. I wanted to continue that on, so when Barb and I and, and Chris our son, and, and Amy moved here, this was in 1979, I felt a need to, to get involved with the community somehow.

03:06:32

A:

So that was my first uh, connection with community involvement was fire department and life squad. And I did that for a number of years, but I, I was approached about running for public office, which I never really had an interest in doing at the time, I had never really done that. And, I just didn't know whether I could do it or not. So in 1980, in 1983 this uh, was when I decided to well, go ahead and try to run and see what would happen.

(Train whistle blowing in background)

03:07:06

A:

And, and I been a trustee ever since. Which is, I'm in my 16th year now, my fourth term. And that was the year after, after Amy was born. She was born in '82, so, then in '83 I became trustee.

Q:

So you were pretty much a new trustee just when all this stuff started happening with the dust collector.

A:

Right, I had one, one year in 1983 was, was basically, a pretty normal I, I think year as, as far as trustee. Doing things as far as road maintenance and nothing out of the ordinary and so forth. And when '84 came, that, that was the end of the normal-type trustee I think.

03:07:53

A:

Because '84 was a very turbulent year in that uh, that's when the dust collector leaked and I realized that, that what was located over there was something, no one was aware of what was going on and, and I realized the seriousness of, and danger involved and what was going on there at the site.

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03:08:15

Q:

So what was that month of December like for you?

A:

Oh, I'll always remember the month of December, uh, that particular month is uh, is one that probably um, (pauses) has had an effect on me that, that has never gone away. I think uh, one where it has scarred me, but also, I think it's also, sort of like branded me in a, in a, in the effect that it's caused me to be dedicated to the cause of the cleanup of the site because it was such a terrible event.

03:08:57

A:

Once the truth started coming out about uh, what had been produced and the dangers involved there. I think it caused me to, to be very dedicated to that cause, and other environmental issues that threaten this township, too. But it was a very traumatic time. It I, was sort of like we didn't have a Christmas, because we were always being interviewed, and meetings. And the meetings were rough.

03:09:23

A:

Uh, the meetings, uh, when DOE and, and National Lead at the time, the public demanded that they have some public meetings. Those meetings were real turbulent. And um, and man-, much of the public, many people in the public thought the trustees were hiding something. And uh, that, that was a hard time because I knew that we weren't. Uh, we were just like everyone else in the township.

03:09:49

A:

And I think that the truth is known now. That we didn't know, that we were just like everybody else. All the other citizens and. So I'm, I'm glad that we're all together on that now. Because it was a terrible thing thinking that we, we held secrets and so forth. And, and um, and with my wife working, working at the site, it was even more reason why I would want it safer.

03:10:15

A:

And uh, so it was, it was a tough time. It was a tough time for our family in wondering if we made a wrong decision in where we chose to live. And wondered if we endangered our kids, and a lot of these cancers attack young cells more so than, you know, older adults. So we, we, we probably live with guilt of that and tried to make the best of it, but those were tough years.

03:10:43

Q:

And was it a direct result of that that you uh, helped the community get the emergency siren system and fire departments and.

A:

Uh, yes. Um, as I've said, I've always been involved with emergency services, and the, the tornado that, that tore through Crosby Township um, I'm tryin' to think o' the year that that was. It was la-,

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early '90s or late '80s I'm not, I'm havin' trouble with the date right now. We saw a need uh, to, to warn the public, and this was when the siren system uh, the idea was born.

03:11:26

A:

And I uh, played a pretty, uh, you know, a pretty important part in tryin' to get that off the ground. We met a, Westinghouse by the way, was the operator of the site at the time. And Pete Kelly, who was the head of public relations, and many people are, are very pretty good friends with Pete, and he was, he became very close to this community.

03:11:50

A:

And um, Irene Lewis, who was the Butler County Director of the EMA, or a lot of old timers remember that as the Civil Defense. But ah, we thought a very, very major ah, important need to get tied in with Dearborn County ah, with their warning system, so, so we would have advanced warning. Not only if a leak occurred at the site, a radioactive leak occurred at the site, but if, if there were weather related disasters and we were able to get that off the ground.

03:12:25

A:

A lot of organizations, ah we were all together on this and I guess it shows what a community can do when they all believe in one particular ah, one particular thing and ah, that was a success. That ah, we hang our hats on very proudly. And its, it's proved to be very effective, so.

Q:

Tell us a little bit about the process of having to ah, get the ah emergency siren systems in?

03:12:56

A:

Well, at the time Westinghouse had installed the siren system ah, just, just because of the danger or the chance of some type of radioactive leak. I think organizations like the trustees and FRESH had pretty much demanded that we need to know if there is a danger. And through the emergency planning this group is now called the Cooperative ah, Planning and Training Committee.

03:13:29

A:

Ah, this, this committee is the one that is made up of a civil defense, it's made up of the Sheriff departments from Butler County and Hamilton County. It's also made up of many, many officials ah, from the plant, ah fire chiefs and so forth. So, these are the people that are all involved in, in emergency planning.

03:13:55

A:

And ah, it evolved out of that committee basically that we need some type of weather system and, and the question came up, can we tie it in with the Westinghouse system, siren system that existed for, on

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site emergencies. It was a long drawn out battle ah because some, some agencies wanted it, some didn't. Some questioned ah, if there's a tornado in Dearborn County does Hamilton County really need to know about it.

03:14:25

A:

Or people in eastern Hamilton County ah, if that's the location of the tornado is it really necessary that the people in the western portion know about it. So there were a lot of, a lot of bridges to cross there ah, but basically that's where, that's where the idea began. And ah, we were able to accomplish that and Butler County ah had, EMA had a lot of concerns about it.

03:14:52

A:

Because things going on in Hamilton County don't necessarily, you know, concern them, but ah, we were able to convince those folks and, and Westinghouse and DOE. We were able to get the funding together and ah, this is, this is really important. Ah, I'll never forget when the tornado went through New Baltimore ah, a man over there, when we went over to help with the cleanup after it ah, he lived in a mobile home but he had a shelter underground ah, by his mobile home.

03:15:28

A:

And I had gone over there after the tornado and he showed me where he hide and his wife always kidded him and ah, what are you digging that hole for? It was a hole that was probably about 6 feet long, and about five feet deep and it had a bench in it with a lid that you pull down over. And she always kidded him and ridiculed him about having this.

03:15:51

A:

And ah, she was in there the night that the tornado went over. I'll never forget their mobile home rolled over the top of this, and they watched it. Had a little screen probably about an inch raised area where you could look out at ground level from the ah, from the little dug out area and he watched the mobile home roll over the top of where they were.

03:16:15

A:

And ah, he saved their lives. It was kind of a neat story. But ah, lot, a lot of stories like that where people pulled together and helped and Westinghouse was unforgettable in that. They had tarps, and supplied manpower and things like this. So I really look back with fond memories at Westinghouse and Pete Kelly and those people that helped get this siren system installed.

03:16:39

A:

Pete Kelly went to war with Irene Lewis, and she was a tremendous lady, but she was very stubborn in some ways, where if she would think something wouldn't work, she wasn't going to change her mind until she was sure it would work. And ah, things like this are uncertain, but it has worked out to be very helpful and save many lives, I think.

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03:17:03

A:

And that organization also had many table tops, table top emergency exercises where Butler County and Hamilton County work together. Ah that difficult because they're on two different radio frequencies. And, ah, with the site you've got Butler County and Hamilton County and then the site.

03:17:23

A:

So we've learned a lot and we've learned to communicate during an emergency crisis. We've come a long way, we've grown up due to the table tops and a lot of these things that have happened, committees.

03:17:36

Q:

Great! And one of the reasons that you became a trustee was to preserve farmland. Is that one of the reasons?

A:

Preserve farmland – I look at Crosby Township as being, I've always thought of it as being quietly progressive. I ah, I don't want it to grow too fast. And I don't talk to too many people out here who do. They seem to agree on that.

03:18:03

A:

I like to have the farmland, the open spaces, and some of those are dwindling because as we end this century many of the other townships, Harrison, Colerain, are basically collapsing in on us. Because of the need of open land and places to develop and so forth.

03:18:26

A:

So, some of that's happening, but it's, we're trying to keep it at a minimum rate so we don't lose too much, too quickly. Ah, and as far as the Cross-County connector from Colerain Township to Harrison, the trustees, as this point, have united to be against that. We don't see a need for it. And we feel like that would change the face of our township too much, too rapidly. But ah, those are some of the things that are going on right now. So.

03:19:02

Q:

I'd like to see that farmland preserved too (laughter).

A:

Right! Well, the individual farmer is an endangered species and there are a number of them here. And ah, I guess their maybe their futures are uncertain like maybe the futures of a lot of us are uncertain but ah, maybe their kids don't want to assume the responsibility of the farm.

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03:19:29

A:

But I feel like we need to do our part in trying to at least preserve the land for them to at least, so they'll have that decision to make. Whether to stay in it or to get out. (Comment: Great!) And, basically where I'm from, back in Williamsburg, that's farmland too, so, these communities where I'm from, Crosby Township reminds me a lot of where I came from.

03:19:52

A:

And ah, they had a landfill there, ah, a dangerous, hazardous wasteland fill. They fought over the years, so I just basically moved from one hazardous waste dumpsite to another. And uh, so, I have uh, basically have a lot of similarities in where I came from here in Crosby township.

Q:

Great, well, uh, let's talk a little bit more about um, your involvement with uh, um, Fernald during those crazy years (both laughing) '84. Um, you were receiving, I mean Fernald in general was receiving a lot of uh, um, media attention, and Donahue came to town. Can you tell us a little bit about the show? And what they were hoping to accomplish? And did they contact you and interview you first, or what happened with that?

03:20:50

A:

Um, I received an invitation. Um, I got on all the mailing lists I, I could because I thought I was obligated to do that as a public official. Um, but I did receive an invitation to, to attend uh, and uh, my wife and I both went uh, this was just to attend in the audience. I was not one of the uh, people on the, on the program, I was just seated in the audience with other residents.

03:21:17

A:

And uh, I think the, the purpose at the time was to just get national attention. And uh, Mr. Donahue did, did that very well. It was, I think he had one of the top-rated talk shows at the time. And I remember um, um, Senator Glenn, John Glenn was one of the people on the panel. And uh, also uh, Mr. Gene Brannum who was uh, with the uh, the union there of the workers on site.

03:21:49

A:

So I think um, much of this was to uh, still squeeze out some of the truth, and make Senator Glenn aware of, of how the public had been, uh deceived, and what dangers they were. And it did that very effectively, and of course, Phil also allowed uh, the audience to ask always, always promoted audience participation. And uh, so a number of us in the uh, in the audience were able to ask questions.

03:22:14

A:

And, and that was a, that was sort of a, not to, not to try to be funny or anything, with Senator Glenn, but it was sort of a launching uh, pad to, to get national attention. Um, of, of this catastrophe that had occurred, and what was going on at the Fernald site.

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03:22:36

A:

Uh, however you, you risk when you do that, I, I think uh, being a resident here, you open yourself up for ridicule and, and that type of thing. Well, "Where do you live?" and "Well, Fernald." and "Oh, yeah. That's the place where you glow," and all those types of those things.

03:22:52

But, but it's one of those types of things you have to go through in order to get uh, uh, national attention and funding and so forth from, from the government who was responsible for much of what went on. And uh, I, I see that as a turning point as I look back on it. Because Senator Glenn became involved in it at that point.

03:23:14

And uh, and I think it made the public uh, more aware of what was goin' on over there, too.

Q:

So when you would go to these meetings, what types of questions were people asking you specifically?

03:23:28

A:

I got very few questions. In the earlier years, I, I was asked um, why we were covering up um, the you know, and things like, "Why, your wife works there," um, so uh, they, they used that as a tool since she works there, they were, uh that I would be covering up for what was going on there. And uh, that was pretty easy to respond to. I mean when you have a family member working there, you, you certainly would want it s-, want it safe.

03:24:04

A:

Safer perhaps than perhaps anybody else, you know, so. But those were the types of questions, they were, they were pretty abusive questions really. Uh, I feel like they hit below the belt, but uh, I, I understand that of human behavior too, that when people don't know answers, they're gonna attack.

03:24:223

A:

And as a public official, you gotta be strong enough to um, to stand up to that and understand where it's coming from, and I did and I, and um, I think now people realize that, that I wasn't hiding anything. I was in the same boat they were in. I wasn't being told what was going on either, and, or the hazards that existed there.

03:24:47

Q:

Looking back on that situation, like in hindsight, (A: Um-hmm.) how do you feel about National Lead?

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A:

Well I'll compare that uh, to the first interview I had in '84. Uh, this was near Christmas when the TV cameras came out to our home and requested an interview, and um, I was asked that same question about how do I feel about NLO, uh, National Lead of Ohio.

03:25:16

A:

And being new as trustee, and not, and, and the dust collector had just leaked, I felt uh, very strong toward them as far as, I felt they were an up-and-up company. They had no reason to lie or deceive. And, and here again, you gotta stop and think that we didn't really know what was going on over there. Um, nobody had had access to the plant to go see what was going on.

03:25:43

A:

Many of the workers over there, in particular my wife, uh, didn't, had no idea really about what was goin' on in the production area. So I, I felt, I felt like they were a good upstanding, uh, company. And as soon as I made that statement, it went on air, then all the truths began coming out about the radioactive leaks, and the dangers, and this type of thing.

03:26:12

A:

So I felt rather embarrassed about that statement, but nevertheless, I felt like I was in the same boat as everybody else, uh, where we trusted that company and, and figured they weren't doing anything hazardous.

03:26:25

A:

I might say also that uh, the next year in '85, the trustees were the first group to take, the first public or group from the public, to take a tour of the site, uh, in '85, and we've done that every year since. So we just uh, recently in March I think it was this year, took our fourteenth tour, fourteenth year tour, of the site.

03:26:48

A:

We've toured it every year to kind of monitor progress, cleanup progress and, and that type of thing. So it's been an interesting 14 years, and we hope that will continue uh, until it's time of final closure. So th-, there, there's been good come outta that.

03:27:07

A:

But I felt rather, I felt strongly toward them, and I have a lot of bitterness you know, that, that you get over, but I mean when you talk about it in a session like this, it's uh, it's, it brings up a lot o', a lot o' sore spots that uh, that yak felt like, you believed in the company, and you trusted the company and they deceived uh, you know, our trust. And many of the residents' trust, so.

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03:27:33

Q:

Wow, fourteen years of tours. How has Fernald changed in the last fourteen years?

A:

The site? The site, I remember when our first tour, I couldn't believe the, the, the structures looked so old, and um, and I felt like I was looking at something that had a lot of secrets to tell, uh, one of those early tours. You know, like they were, we were only hearing so little, but I felt like the buildings if they could talk, uh, could just occupy your time and just um, tell us so much.

03:28:17

A:

And so much of that has come out now. Uh, and I remember the big waste piles. Uh, oh, and I, and things like copper. And, and things that looked good to me, but they were classified as waste, and I didn't really, I didn't really grasp that concept because I'm a big believer in recycling, and a big pile of copper, oh, I, I just can't, probably 300 feet tall, just, was just unbelievable to me that that was waste.

03:28:53

A:

And I just, but I, I've seen a lot of that be eliminated with FRESH, and other public meetings, we, we've have encouraged them to recycle as much as they can uh, before these things are disposed of. And, and lot of, lot of characterization, waste characterization, a lot of these things have been shipped off site. So those are the things that I've seen.

03:29:17

A:

And I've seen a lot of things happen for the positive to protect the aquifer and clean that. So, it's been an interesting fourteen years, and, and I think a lot o' that's happening because other groups are taking tours now and keeping up on the progress, so.

03:29:34

Q:

And we'll get more into some cleanup stuff here in a minute. We're gonna change tapes right now, so.

A:

Okay.

Tape FLHP0120

04:01:07

Q:

So your role as a trustee, how has it changed now that the site's being cleaned up?

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A:

(Pauses) It's probably taking, taken a less aggressive role. I, I guess I can start out by saying how is it similar, Um, I still represent the people, and the community, but how has it changed? Uh, the early years, we were probably, expected to be more aggressive, with demands and, and that type of thing. I always tried to always keep a visible presence at all the meetings.

04:01:51

A:

Um, and, and at times, ask questions, uh, but I, I think that's probably how our role has changed. That generally is a little bit different than my style. I uh, try not to make demands and so forth, but uh, always ask questions that, that will require the truth. Um, but I think probably in the earlier years, we were expected to, to uh, to be very uh, aggressive. And at times we had, we had to be that.

04:02:31

A:

But that, that's not so much the case any more, just a presence and uh, be sure to get the information and to have it broken down where the people in the public, the average citizen can understand the data and the information that's coming forward to them. So I feel more or less like an interpreter today, to be sure the information is understandable, and to ask questions, but it, it's just not as aggressive.

04:02:57

A:

And it's not as, um, I guess there's a little bit more level of trust. In the beginning, there was no level of trust. Quite a bit of hatred and bitterness, which I'm sure a lot of that's still there, but it's, it's toned down quite a bit now.

04:03:15

Q:

And how do you think, that uh, well let's first start with, we'll go through the different contractors. How's that? Let's start with NLO, how do you think that um, they dealt with the public?

04:03:29

A:

I don't think they did. I think that was one of the problems uh, which, which bred a lot of rumors about the site. A lot of rumors that um, that probably still have not been addressed, uh, but I don't think they had the public relations at all. I think it was very secretive, and I, I think that's probably that's, that's what we've spent a number of years getting over.

04:03:59

A:

Um, is just the, the secrecy that was bred at the time, and, and the people have uh, learned to mistrust the government, and, and the contractors over there. Um, so, that, that's been a very, that, that's caused a lot of bitterness and scarring I think with the citizens in this community. Um, I don't even think anybody could get access to the plant during the operation years.

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04:04:29

A:

Um, clearances I know, even for employees, if they were hired, it may take two, three, four, months uh, to acquire a clearance. And this is even for an employee over there. Our ambulance had a lot of difficulty, if we were called on site for a hear-, heart attack, for example. Um, they had to be escorted, and many times, they were, our squad saw it as, as harassment almost to the level of that just to get on site just to give, to give emergency care.

04:05:08

A:

So um, I, I don't think, to uh, to address your question, I just don't think they cared about public relations, and we, we've felt the effects of that even today.

Q:

How about Westinghouse?

04:05:25

A:

When Westinghouse came in, there was a lot of change in personnel. And um, probably at that point, people were relieved to see that. Because obviously, we felt that we had been wronged by a lot of the people that were there with NLO. And uh, Westinghouse was sort of a breath of fresh air, however, they, they came into a hornet's nest. And I'll give 'em credit for the up front people.

04:05:55

A:

Um, stood up to the public, and tried to address their questions. And I guess the shell began to crack, so to speak, because they became more open with the public, and the public began to develop a trust with, with the company. The company did have a public relations staff, and um, I think basically, that was the beginning of the positive years.

04:06:30

A:

If I were to look at any of this as positive, I, I think things began to improve with Westinghouse. And I think with the tornado that tore through the township and the Harrison area, Westinghouse supplied many materials, money and personnel and many man-hours to help clean up and I think that helped draw them a little closer to the community.

04:06:56

A:

They also had many workshops where you could go and learn about the cleanup effort. And uh, basically cleanup didn't begin with Westinghouse, I, I guess the actual clean up didn't it was just a matter of finding out what was on site.

04:07:10

A:

They were walking into this area and not knowing what hazards existed. So a lot of this was basically trying to seal the K-65 silos, which one of those were uh, was one of those was beginning to leak

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radon, levels were high and uh, mechanical devices were used for the clay base to seal that. And uh, they basically were the ones, I think, that were uh, to find out what hazards existed there.

04:07:43

A:

And contingency plans were developed on how to retrieve the waste and then what to do with it and so forth. So, Westinghouse, I feel, did very good about Westinghouse. Uh, I don't think money was wasted. Uh, work seemed to be very efficient. They just seemed to get along with the public, uh, had a pretty good public relations staff and uh, with our, with our community. And they recognized the public officials always asked for our input and uh, we really appreciated that.

04:08:17

Q:

And how about Fluor Daniel Fernald?

A:

When Fluor Daniel Fernald came on site, things were, I think, perceived from the public as we were losing many of the people we had learned to trust. And uh, here comes a whole new group of people. And it was very difficult for us because our contact people were now gone and we had to develop new relations and so forth.

04:08:48

A:

Uh, however, Fluor Daniel has, has been able to uh, even be accepted by the public I think, just as Westinghouse, maybe more so. They've had many public meetings, they have clean up briefings, they're uh, very open to questions. There's a phone line that you can call with questions and so forth.

04:09:11

A:

Uh, so I think their role has somewhat changed, was different than Westinghouse's. I feel like Westinghouse served their purpose well and Fluor Daniel is doing the same. However, I do have a little bit of concern that it seems to take Fluor Daniel a little bit longer to uh, to accomplish some of their goals and meet deadlines and so forth.

04:09:412

A:

However, I'm sure that actually carrying them out, the cleanup procedure is different and a little bit more time consuming than what it is than maybe Westinghouse's role of developing a plan. Carrying out the plan can sometimes require a little bit more time and uh, maybe meeting schedule deadlines and so forth.

04:10:02

A:

But, uh, I think they've got a good relationship with FRESH; and the community, so I'll hand it to them, a job well done. They are continuing to get things cleaned up and shipments are being made, and they listen well to the public.

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04:10:23

Q:

And during all these years that you've been a trustee, what, what have been, has been your contact with site workers? Do you know site workers, I mean besides your wife, of course (laughter)?

04:10:35

A:

Well, I know um, I know a few of the, and have served on committees with some of the site workers. Um, and, and I serve on the um, Health Effects Subcommittee. And many of, many of the public who uh, at one time were site workers come there and express their health concerns and the health problems they're having now.

04:10:59

A:

So I know some of those folks through that committee. Um, that would be my contact with those former workers. And you really feel sorry for them because this is a community where the uh, the, the people that worked there did their job. Many of them didn't know how their particular, uh job fit into the scheme, or the uh, the overall production, of what was being produced.

04:11:28

A:

They didn't know how it fit into the whole production scheme. They just did their job. They didn't ask questions. They came in on time, left on time, and worked hard at what they did. And many of 'em didn't realize uh, the many hazards that existed. I've watched um, a film, "*Fernald: The Early Years*" I think uh, ther-, there's a film that exists out on video tape about Fernald, the early production years.

04:11:54

A:

And many of those folks that were working with green salt and that type of thing didn't have any um, any uh, respiratory protection. Uh, many of them didn't wear gloves or any protective gear, or anything at all, because they didn't realize the hazard that existed. I'm sure that OSHA probably has nightmares every time that they see that.

04:12:16

A:

But I'm sure that's what caused a lot of lung cancer and, and leukemia and, and these cancers that we're seeing uh, surface today, due to just work conditions. But those are, they are the sad, many, many sad stories to uh, and that, that would be my relationship with those workers, and, and any health, anything health-related as far as exams or treatments for those types of things, uh we try to get those for, for those folks.

04:12:51

Q:

And back in the earlier years, were there times when you knew more than the site workers did because you were a trustee?

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A:

(Grins) Well, if I'm at liberty to say so, yes. And I, that, that, that's kind of a weird thing to, to tell somebody something that, that I've heard, uh, tell a, a site worker, or uh, and they, they're not aware of it. Which concerned me, it basically told me that communication's lacking somewhere. I mean, that, that's the problem that was occurring there with the workers.

04:13:25

A:

They, they just didn't know the dangers that they were involved in, and I, I wonder if that's still the case in, in some, in some cases. Now that hasn't occurred recently, but um, but it has a number of times that I would hear something, and I would receive a phone call and be informed about it, and, and an employee was unaware of it.

04:13:45

A:

But you gotta stop and think too, that that's a large site. Um, is it really necessary for somebody in a, in the admin-, administration building to know something that occurred in the production area, or vice versa? Um, unless, unless it was a site emergency, they would, they would know about that.

04:14:04

A:

But um, so you know, um, those, those events did occur, but what magnitude, what impact they had, I'm not sure. I don't know that I'm at liberty to say.

04:14:20

Q:

Uh, let's see. What other um, organizations, I know you're active in quite a few. Can you tell us some of the other organizations and what they do that you, you work with now?

A:

Well, I work with the uh, and have worked from the beginning of this committee uh, the Emergency uh, Planning and Training Committee. That's the one that uh, developed emergency plans uh, for um, for an incident on site. Uh, that committee still meets, uh, and that, that's the committee that developed tabletops, exercises, and, and I'll have to say that it's a real education.

04:15:01

A:

Because when I got involved in these committees, I didn't know what a tabletop exercise was, and they're very, very beneficial. And uh, where all the involved emergency personnel, from the highway patrol, sheriff's department, fire chiefs, uh, air care, uh, all these personnel are at a table, and they explain what their role is, what they're doing, and so forth, in, in case of an incident.

04:15:29

A:

And then some of these full, full exercises, uh, rather than being at a table, uh, the exercise would take place on site, where, maybe, I think the last incident was a truck leaving had a collision with a car on Willey Road. Truck leaving uh, was carrying hazardous waste, so agencies from Hamilton County and Butler County had to respond, and, and on site would respond, and it was a very beneficial committee.

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04:15:59

A:

Um, these committee still meet, uh, this committee still meets, uh, however our future is uncertain, because at what level, uh, is emergency planning gonna be a factor here in the future?

04:16:13

A:

Another committee that I've served on a number of years was the, is the Community Reuse Organization, the CRO organization where we are, um, deciding on future use of the uh, of the site. And basically, um, the equipment and so forth that will be left over, how the community can, can utilize this.

04:16:39

A:

Uh, and, and in this committee, we have addressed the Native American remains. Uh, perhaps having a burial site for those. Uh, we've also um, heard from the Crosby Township Society Historical Society, uh, we're trying to preserve the living history, which is what we're doing now and the equivalent and so forth that, that was used in the war effort.

04:17:03

A:

And um, and you have to stop and realize that that site played a very important role in the war, in the war effort. So along with all the negative uh, it did serve, serve a purpose, and serve it well. But um, during my term, it's all been on seeking the truth about what went on there and cleanup. But a lot of the, of the work of the CRO is trying to decide on the future use.

04:17:28

A:

And also worker transition. What're we gonna do with the workers once the plant closes down? I also um, have been very involved, I'm not a committee member of the uh, of the uh, Citizens Advisory Board. In the early years, uh, I, I attended their meetings, but I was not a member of that board; we did have a trustees on the board.

04:17:50

A:

And I'll say that that's, that's been very comforting. Usually these committees and boards have been wise enough to, to have one of our public officials or one of the trustees on the boards. Um, so I, I do appreciate that. But the, the early years of that, I attended many of the, their meetings and they're still in existence today.

04:18:10

A:

Um, I serve on the uh, uh, the uh, Health Effects Subcommittee. And on that committee, we examine uh, oh the, radioactive um, effects on the human body, and the, and the cancers that develop, the effects of radiation on the body. And we've looked at other sites from around the United States and compared their data with ours. And much of our data is missing.

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04:18:40

A:

And how do you figure out data for uh, information that's missing? But we have a, we are addressed by a lot of doctors and people like that. So tho-, those are just a few of the, the committees. I go to the update meetings, the uh, the uh, the update meetings, the cleanup update meetings, and then and so forth, that, a lot of the most of the public meetings.

04:19:04

A:

So, that, that's my involvement. As a matter of fact, since '84, that seems to be about all I've, you know, that seems to be a majority of what I do is attend the, the uh, somethin' to do with the, with the site and the cleanup.

04:19:19

Q:

So how many meetings a week do you usually attend? Or a month. Let's say monthly. 'Cause they're usually monthly meetings aren't they?

A:

Well, in the beginning of my term in '83, I made a pledge to the people of Crosby Township to write an article, and I've entitled that *Crosby Corner*. And I've probably written over 200, well over 200 now. I write that at the end of every month, tellin' about what I did as a trustee. It's just to improve the communication between the trustees and the citizens.

04:19:50

A:

And probably um, in an average month probably, um, maybe ten meetings that, that deal, are you talking about with Fernald type issues? Probably is anywhere from five to ten meetings. Something related, related to that.

Q:

That's a lot of work.

04:20:11

A:

It's a lot of meetings, and it's a lot of listening, and it's a lot of learning. And um, you know, I, I'd have to look back for accuracy on, on those, but some meetings, some weeks of course are heavier than others. Uh, but I'll be done with this interview and then, then I'll be going to a cleanup meeting here uh, this evening.

04:20:30

A:

So, I don't know if you would call this a meeting, but it's things that relate to Fernald in one way or the other. And uh, and the article that I write, it's uh, it, it takes a lot of work to write down and communicate with the public, but I think the public appreciates it. And um, it's a way of them keeping informed without putting in the time you know, of the long meetings.

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04:21:00

Q:

So you're sort of the conduit between Fernald and the community.

A:

I, I think uh, myself and the other trustees, uh, are that's probably a good way to look at it, yeah.

04:21:13

Q:

I think a lot of people don't quite understand what trustees do, and that, you know, a lot of people don't even realize that trustees are elected officials.

A:

Right and um, yeah, and as, as time goes on, they're required to do more. I've also given updates. Uh, I just gave our fourth community update, uh, through the ICRC which is the Inter Community uh, Cable Regulatory Commission. Uh, on the cable network I go on television there and give an update on what's been going on with uh, Fernald plant and what other things are going on in the community.

04:21:49

A:

So those, it seems to be more and more every year. And I'm sure uh, (smile) when you interview uh, my wife, she'll, she'll verify, uh, she'll verify the time involved that (laughs) that I've put in with the Fernald related meetings.

04:22:06

A:

Five to ten meetings a month is a lot. That's a lot. Um, you had mentioned meeting with the CRO, and the Community Reuse Organization of course, um, what would you personally like to see done with that land?

A:

(Pauses and sighs) Well, early on in the um, beginning of um, the um, Citizens Advisory Board, in its conception, I remember when they hired their consultant, um, I think his name is S-, Sargo, I'm not sure. Do you recall his name? Anyway, it was shortly after that, um, they showed slides of disposal cells around the United States. And I thought, "What is this, and why are we being shown this?"

04:23:04

A:

Well, I know now. So I kind of feel like that was already predetermined, and I don't like the idea of the disposal cell. I think it's first of all in the wrong location. Which I voiced my opposition at the meeting. I felt uh, that if there was going to be a disposal cell, um, of that magnitude, it should be located over an area that was already in jeopardy anyway, and that would have been the dispo-, the uh, production area.

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04:23:30

A:

The disposal cell is located over a clean area. So I, I've been opposed to it but you know I'm just a trustee and, and ah, not really the final say on this disposal cell. That, that is, your question was what do I want to see, that's, that's one thing I don't want to see so I would like to. I guess in the other areas I ah, I like ah very much the idea of the Native American ah remains ah burial ah ground being, being there as perhaps ah a national tribute to Native Americans.

04:24:09

A:

And I understand that all tribes would have remains buried there and this would be a national monument I think for those folks. And I think it would be a national attraction. It might draw people into this area where normally they would fear coming into this area. And ah, it was kind of neat when they put in the water line um, for Phase I of the ah the plume area where water was supplied to the public there.

04:24:33

A:

Uh, they hit one of the burial grounds there on 128 and I was able to and, and to go over and watch some of the excavation and some of those bones. And Joe Schomaker has made many presentations to the ah, to our public explaining, you know the history of those Native Americans and ah. That's one thing I would like to see them, perhaps a museum in their tribute.

04:25:06

A:

Ah, I think probably a green space of some type. Ah, I'm not really, I'm not really sure I, I think probably that's, that's one thing I would be for but other ideas right now we're just listening on the CRO to other ideas. Ah, something maybe that would generate tax dollars for our community. So, but that's basically, as far as I can go with that right now.

04:25:38

Q:

Let's talk a little bit about the water issue and the contamination in the aquifer and ah, how that was a lot of controversy too. Can you tell me how you dealt with that whole issue when it happened and since then.

A:

The contamination of the aquifer?

Q:

Hmm, and just the water issue, putting in the public water supply and the bottled water that the ah, DOE was supplying people, those types of things.

04:26:05

A:

Well this was one of the demands of the public ah, the bottled water. Ah, that until safe water was supply was installed ah, these people that were impacted directly ah wanted to have a water supply and

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there really wasn't much resistance to that, that I recall. Um, I wasn't one of those ah, we weren't one of those families that needed bottled water. We used cistern water at the time, so um, we didn't have to experience the ground contamination.

04:26:37

A:

Um, I remember there was a lot of resistance from ah DOE and, and the officials to put in a water supply. There was a lot of money involved in it and the township petitioned for a water supply, so we got a number of signatures required in order to, to get the attent-, the attention of the county commissioners.

04:27:02

A:

Ah, Warren Strunk Jr. and myself met with commissioner ah, Beckwith, who is now a ah, one of the circuit judges I believe in the state, how is from the Harrison area by the way. But we met with her and ah, and got her attention as far as the need of a water supply and I think at the time that probably perked up the attent-, the attention of the commissioners to the need of a water supply and, and what had happened to the existing supply.

04:27:35

A:

There's still a lot of resistance as far as funding and how much the public is going to contribute because the public felt like they had been wronged. And felt like they deserved to have a free water supply put in without any financial or monetary contribution at all. So there were a number of public meetings, here again, heated public meetings.

04:27:57

A:

And ah, I pretty well have learned to ah, to ah, adapt to heated meetings because it just seemed like at the time all meetings were just gonna be a very stressful ah, heated, heated event. Ah, even trying to run one of those meetings where we ah, we had a Jim Kelie from the public works department and the meetings were so heated and loud and uncontrollable that it just ended up in shouting and they were very difficult to even, to even ah, even control.

04:28:33

A:

But nevertheless funding was worked out and Phase I was ah, the folks that were endangered of the plume, of the contaminated plume, that would have been south of the site did receive public water supply. But, and they did have to pay, I forget what the amount was on the initial frontage but ah, they had to pay, had to pay that.

04:29:00

Q:

Great, we're gonna take another break here real quick and change tapes.

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TAPE FLHP0121

05:01:03

Q:

Okay that's it. Um – how did the process years and the cleanup years, how did that differ in your opinion?

A:

Ah, I think basically I would, I would compare that to night and day. I think the process years, I look back as very stressful, very turbulent. When you're trying to seek the truth that's, that's a difficult situation to be in when you don't know what the truth is. Um, and I feel like I am responsible to, to get answers for the community since I represent the community.

05:01:47

A:

So it, it ah, it was a pretty ah tough time for me and my family. I would leave nervous ah to go to a meeting, 'cause many of those early years, processing years, I was blamed or the trustees were blamed for covering up something which we had no more idea than them what was occurring ah, at the site. And I would come back, you know, pretty worn, pretty ragged and pretty angry and upset ah, so those were tough times.

05:02:19

A:

Ah, as I look back on it, ah, and here again it's kind of like um, you've got to realize that the plant did serve a very valid and very ah, vital role in the war effort. So on one hand if you believe in that, which I do and what, what did occurred ah, during World War II. And then on the other hand you gotta, you gotta take the, the, the negative side and try to make those things that occurred like the dumping and the, you gotta turn all that around, so.

05:03:02

A:

Um, it's kind of a Catch-22 situation. The clean up years um – are a little more, a little less stressful um, because now you're focused, I did teach science so, um, that, that is an area where I kind of feel comfortable in because that's when I can use some of my knowledge and science to and, I understand a lot of these processes and procedures and ah, elements.

05:03:34

A:

When elements combine what they produce and some of the chemical reactions and things that are, that are going on there so, um, they've been less turbulent because they are focused on the positive, toward a positive end and I think that's, cleanup and, and make a cleaner site. So they kind of, they're different from day and night for me and what I, what I've experienced.

05:03:59

Q:

So you're still teaching now?

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A:
Yes.

Q:
And attending five to ten meetings a month.

05:04:03

A:
Well, I've, I don't want to inflate that too much. Some, sometimes, I would say probably five easy sometimes there are more than that. Ah, but in those early years, there it just seemed like it was almost every night. I've kind of averaged that out over the years, but it just seems like there was a meeting or a workshop ah, almost every night. And then I try to attend the FRESH ah, meetings, ah you know, but generally there are other meetings those nights.

05:04:31

A:
Generally you have to pick and choose what meetings, because there may be two or three meetings on one night so you just have to prioritize.

Q:
How does that take a toll on your personal life?

05:04:42

A:
Well, ah, I can't say that it hasn't, it's, it's caused um, it's caused ah, some difficult times. I feel like sometimes I, you know haven't enjoyed, or been able to enjoy some of things that ah, that our daughter's involved in, in school or some. Uh, because I'm either going to a meeting or coming from a meeting, uh, or have to cut something short.

05:05:15

A:
Um, and it's, it's caused communication problems sometimes. So it's, it's, I can understand when a Congressman or Senator or something steps down because of family reasons, because it is stressful on the family and uh, and uh, does demand a lot of time. Um, but uh, I, I think uh, with my wife's help uh, and so forth, I think we've been able to balance that out pretty well.

05:05:47

A:
And it's something we've kind of grown together to expect, and I think they realize I attend these meetings to try to make it better for them and the other citizens in the township. (Comment: Great) And I think we'll survive (they both laugh).

05:06:05

Q:
Um, I want to get into a little bit about uh, being a resident. That's um, kinda, I kinda covered that already. Uh, since, how far are you away from the plant right here?

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05:06:26

A:

I'd say about a mile. We're within the mile. Uh, about a mile radius, from the plant. And Paddy's Run Creek runs, borders our property on the east side.

Q:

When um, you finally understood what was going on over at Fernald and everything, did you have worries about being so close to the plant?

05:06:48

A:

Sure. Sure, we had, we had worries and probably still do. We wonder if uh, you know, we're gonna be diagnosed with cancer, or some of our skin you know, irritations are due to living close to the site, or just sun uh, irritations and so forth. Yeah, you, you, you know, when you live this close, you have health concerns. And you live with a little bit of guilt.

05:07:19

A:

You hope you didn't pick the wrong place to live and it has some adverse effect on your kids. So, there are, there are a number of health concerns. Because there were things like um, the aquarium that I, that I maintain here. I've, in the early years, I put rocks in from the creek and uh, because they were pretty and kinda neat and so forth. And it would take a toll on the fish; the fish would die.

05:07:45

A:

And um, you know, that coulda been me balancing the aquarium, but I always did that before I put in the fish. And I, you don't know if that's due to the other sites, the other plants that at the time were dumping into the creek also. Um, but when you start seeing things like that occur, uh, and then you begin to worry and have a lot of concern.

05:08:11

A:

At one time, we used to hear a lot of frogs here at night, and all of a sudden, it just seemed like for a number of years there weren't any at all. Uh, some of those have come back, but those, those cause health concerns. I felt very comforted that when they came out and did animal studies, they did a bout-, bat population study.

05:08:33

A:

Uh, they set up in a, in the creek here on Paddy's Run and, to see if they were still in the area. And their population looked like it was stable. And so, it was nice to see that the creeks and things and rivers were being monitored, on a regular basis. So those gave comfort to us. But there, I don't know that those health concerns ever leave, will ever leave.

05:09:04

Q:

So Fernald being where it is, how would you estimate that it's changed the surrounding communities?

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05:09:16

A:

Well, I think it's, it's changed the communities, um, it's strange that you said "communities" because uh, where I teach probably um, as the crow flies, it's probably only about two miles to the plant, and the people that I teach think that this is uh, the Fernald plant doesn't relate to them at all. And I from time to time tell 'em that you're not that far away at all.

05:09:43

A:

So it's kinda funny that other communities think they're very, they're far away, but they're not. I think it's made the communities uh, distrust the government, even more so maybe than before (chuckling). And I don't exactly know how that can change.

05:10:03

A:

Uh, I think it's also made the communities more environmentally aware, and sensitive to things that can harm uh them and the environment. So those are two, two of the things that I would uh, say has come from the site.

Q:

Great, um, do you have anything to add? Is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to cover?

A:

No. Really, I can't think of anything, can you?

05:10:45

Q:

Okay, we're gonna do something we call nat sound; natural sound. And then we need to shoot those two little questions for the other project too, so. Uh, if we could have quiet on the set for about thirty seconds, this is nat sound.