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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Chantee West

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17:01:02

(Cameraperson: We're rolling)

Q:

First question is always the hardest. If you could give us your name and spell it, just to make sure we have it right.

17:01:10

A:

No. It's Chantee West. C-H-A-N-T-E-E.

Q:

Great and uh, if you could just give us a little bit of background, how long have you been in the area just a little bit of information of where you were born, where you went to school um, some information about your family.

17:01:28

A:

Well I was born in actually Hamilton Ohio, but I grew up in Dayton Ohio. We moved there when I was four and I attended elementary and high school there and then I moved to North Carolina where I spent several years, my ex-husband was in the service. Then I came back to Ohio in '84 and I came back to Dayton then I migrated on down to, back to Hamilton and now I'm in Cincinnati.

17:01:56

Q:

Great and ah, how did you get your job at Fernald?

A:

Well, I knew someone who um, worked here and they told me that Fernald was hiring so I came in and I put in an application. And I came in for my interview and then about two weeks after my interview I got a letter declining me. They didn't actually hire me then.

17:02:19

A:

Then when I got that letter, I sat down I wrote an eight page letter and directed it to the Human Resources department ah, explaining my dissatisfaction with being turned down and just basically asking for a chance to show that I can be an asset to the company. Then two weeks after that, I got hired, so, and I came in, in August of '86 and I've been here every since.

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Q:

And what was their reason for turning you down in the first time?

A:

Well, they basically said that I was um, not skilled and my reply to that was, how much skill did you need to be a laborer that's really an unskilled position. So to me it wasn't justified in telling me I was unskilled. So, and I, I actually asked 'em a question, "Where can you go to school to become a laborer?" (Laughs) So, they said a lot o' people read that letter. It kind of made 'em think, so, I'm glad. I've enjoyed workin' here (chuckles).

17:03:23

Q:

That's great. "Where can you go get a job? Where can you go to school to be a laborer at Fernald?" That was a great question. How much did you know about the process when you first got here?

A:

I didn't know a lot at all. Just by what I had heard and from the person that I knew who worked here. And they told me that they were, it was a uranium poccus-, processing plant. And back then I really didn't know what uranium was.

17:03:49

A:

But I, when I hired in, I hired in as a maintenance laborer. And then through the course of my training, and bein' on site, I started to learn exactly what you know, uranium was and what we did here. But previously I just you know, had bits and pieces, but I wasn't quite sure.

17:04:07

Q:

What was it like your first day? Tell us a little bit about your, actually, tell us a little bit about your interview. Who interviewed you and what kinds of questions did they ask you?

A:

Well, I interviewed with Ron Merley, and the questions he asked me, was I familiar with different type of mowing equipment? Had I, had I ever done man, manual labor work? And basically touched on some o' the jobs that I had previously that may pertain to the job that I was applying for.

17:04:33

A:

And he asked me, had, how, was I in cold weather, that they did a lot of outside work, and was I capable, did I feel that I was capable of handling that. And I told him, "Yeah." And just basically little things like that. It was more pertaining to the equipment that we ran, as far as the lawn mowers and weed-eaters, and things like that.

17:04:53

A:

And at the time when I first hired in, when he mentioned like the weed-eaters, quite frankly, I didn't know what a weed was (chuckles). Believe I'm an expert now (laughs). So, but that was it.

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17:05:08

Q:

So tell us about those early years in 1986 um, when you first started, what kind of work were you doing when you first got here?

17:05:15

A:

Well, when I first started here, it was only eleven laborers. I mean that's a lot more now, but the site wasn't as big. As a matter of fact, the Health & Safety Building, it was very, very small, it was no elevators, it was nowhere near as big as it is now. And we basically kept the grounds, did all the moving of furniture.

17:05:37

A:

I also worked with uh, mason assisting, as far as layin' concrete and uh, doin' blacktopping and mowing grass, and um, assisting craft personnel like the pipefitters. We would get down in holes and dig, and uh, I helped the welders like carry their tools, and things like. I've worked with every craft here, on site.

17:06:01

A:

We also did a lot o' work on the backside o' the fence, as far as um, when pipeline broke, you know, we would be called in to dig. Or uh, when it comes to um, we also worked in Plant 5, diggin', I mean replacin' the brick in the Rockwell furnaces.

17:06:22

A:

With the mason, whenever they, the Rockwell furnaces burnt out, you always had to replace the brick in 'em, and I would assist the mason with mixin' the mortar and uh, replacin' the fire bricks inside the, the furnaces. We had a variety of jobs we would do that would take us from the clean side as it was called back then to the dirty side.

17:06:45

Q:

Tell us a little bit about the Rockwell furnaces. What were they used for mainly?

A:

Well, they were, used over, in the furnaces. I'm not quite, sure, I know it was used like to cook the you, the ingots. You know, they would put the ingots inside the furnaces and heat 'em to a certain temperature. And mold 'em and, and cook 'em and bring 'em out. So that's what the furnaces were for. They would go so long and then they would just burn out.

17:07:13

A:

The bricks would get old and they wouldn't you, able to be used anymore, so we would take the furnaces out and take out all of the old brick and then put new firebrick back in and put it back in service.

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17:07:27

Q:

Was that a scary job because they were so hot, or?

A:

Well, no because we were on, in um, we had protective clothing on and we also had air supply respirators that we would wear. Because I used to have to stand on this little um, ladder while the mason actually went.

17:07:44

A:

The Rockwell furnaces would be sittin' up on bricks, and you had to actually go up underneath and go inside of it, to put the brick in. And I would stand on the ladder and get the brick and hand it over to the mason, and he would put the mortar and he would set the brick.

Q:

Wow and how often did you have to do that?

A:

Well, it was several of us who did it. Um, I think they would burn out, they would last so. They had quite a few over in Plant 5. So they w-, I, to be sure how long they last, I don't know, but we were continuously over there replacin' the bricks. It was either myself or other laborers who were assistin' the masons, because at the time we had two masons, and they both worked on the Rockwell furnaces at different periods.

17:08:33

Q:

So it was pretty frequent you had to take those out?

A:

Yeah. It was pretty frequent.

Q:

Being a craft person, how many other women were a craft person?

A:

Back in the early years, there were none. When I first started here, there were no female craft personnel back then. That's changed a lot. We have some now, but, and I think they didn't come until the early '90s. But in the '80s, there were no, when I started until the '90s, there were no female craft personnel on site at all.

17:09:07

Q:

Tell us about being the only woman doing that. What was that like?

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A:

Oh, bein' the laborer? Well, we had a, we had a couple more laborers, but who were female, and I'm talkin' about journeymen. Journeymen are people like electricians and things like that, there were none, but there were some female laborers on site. It was myself and a few other uh, in the general labor group.

17:09:28

A:

It wasn't really hard, because we had other uh, ladies who worked out here, but they were like chemical operators back then. But now we don't have chemical operators, we have HAZWATs. But um, it was a few women back then, but as far as women, a lot o' women in upper management, we didn't have that either.

17:09:46

A:

So it really has changed, and women have really progressed. And I'm speakin' personally because I've come a long way since I started here.

Q:

As a laborer, you probably had to lift a lot, and carry a lot o' stuff. Did you ever hear comments from a lot o' the men like, "Oh, let me help you with that," or (stops, chuckling).

A:

Well, yeah, the, the men, they would assist you, but me personally, I at least wanted the opportunity to be able to try and do it myself because I felt that I was getting' paid the same as they were. So you know, I wanted to get in there. But they would assist you if we felt that we couldn't handle it. But it was not too much that me and another laborer at the time, um, it wasn't too much that we couldn't handle.

17:10:35

A:

I mean I remember one time over in Plant 6, we actually moved a fire safe, and it was not unloaded. It took everything we had, I mean we was actually sittin' on the floor. You know, pushin' like this, (pushing down on armrests) tryin' to push this safe. And we, we only had to move it a couple inches, but we felt so proud that we didn't go get no help.

17:10:55

A:

We actually moved this fire safe in Plant 6, without, with no assistance. So we was like on cloud now, nine all day because we did a major accomplishment. We were proud.

17:11:09

Q:

That's great. Um, do you ever get teased much?

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A:

Well, no. I mean the guys are pretty, I mean they were pretty respectful. They were, they were nice, I mean we had a great bunch o' people workin' in the labor shop at the time. We all assisted one another. We had a lots, we had lots of fun back then. It's just changed a lot, but we had a good time.

17:11:35

A:

I mean, don't get me wrong. I do enjoy my job now. I, I think it's great that I've been given the opportunity to, to come this far within this company. But back then, workin' as a laborer, I mean I really, that was, those were my funniest years. I mean we used to, we did (laughing) a lot o' crazy things. I don't mean unsafe things, but we just had a lot o' fun. We really enjoyed our job.

17:11:59

Q:

Like what kind of crazy but not unsafe things did you do (laughs)?

A:

Well, one time (laughs) one time, it was a hot, summer day and I had just come in from mowing the grass, and I walked into the break room. At that time we were over in Building 46. I walked into the break room, and um, they had just put a new water fountain in there. And we had like a spigot that was in, that came from, out from the wall. Uh, and it had a little knob on it.

17:12:24

A:

We didn't use it, it went to the old fire, uh, to the old um, water fountain, so it wasn't really in use but water was still supplied to it. So it was a laborer sittin' in the break room, the only one sittin' in there. So I walked in I got a drink o' water, and I spoke to him and I started to go out the door. Well, I couldn't get out the door and I looked up; another laborer was holding the door shut.

17:12:46

A:

So, and I looked over at the water fountain and there stood the other laborer. He just took that spigot and (chuckling) pointed it straight at me. And he just (pushes fist down) put that uh, spigot on full blast.

17:12:57

A:

And I just stood there, I couldn't go anywhere, I mean I was soakin' wet from head to toe, just drenched. And everybody got a good kick out o' that, but it was I mean, it was welcome because I was really hot. But I mean that was one o' the funniest incidents we had besides one other one, but it was good times, good times.

17:13:18

Q:

Water fights. Okay, but see, what you don't know is that I know what the other one is (laughing). Uh. Tell us about the new Hustler.

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A:

Oh, boy (laughs). Well, we had just got a brand new Hustler in, and I was given the task to go out over in the Six-Plex. Well, I'm over there you know, and I'm just goin' along inside the Six-Plex, just mowing. And back then, the safety was in place, but it wasn't, we were, everyone was not as aware, aware back then as they are now.

17:13:57

A:

It's like a real, real priority now, but back then, it wasn't as strong as it is today, so needless to say, I didn't have my safety belt on. And I was just you know, goin' through there. And in the uh, Six-Plex we have like ruts in the um, in the grass. I hit a rut, and the Hustler is like a horse.

17:14:19

A:

It'll start to buck. So it got to buckin', and I started movin', and my (moves right hand, palm forward and back) head started bangin' on the wheel, windshield. And the, the axle broke and the back wheel came off and it flew over the front of it.

17:14:33

A:

Then the door flew open and (laughing) I fell out the Hustler onto the ground. And then, then I got up and needless to say, the Hustler is uh, is broken. It's buried itself down into a hole and that's the only way it stopped, and I'm layin' on the ground. And then I, I get up and I'm lookin' around, and then I kind o' walk slowly back over to the shop.

17:14:56

A:

I walk in, and everybody is laughin'. I mean, because they saw me over on this Hustler. They was laughin' so much at me and teasin' me, (laughing) I clocked out and went home. But I mean it was really funny. I mean because here I am, I'm scrammin', I mean screamin' at the top o' my lungs because I can't get, it's a two-stick, and I can't get the sticks together to kind o' stop it.

17:15:18

A:

And (moves right hand, palm forward and back) I'm (laughing) just bangin' just like I'm ridin' a bronco, and I just got thrown out of it (laughs). I mean it was, it was really funny. I should have had my safety belt on, and I didn't. But, it was hilarious. I mean even I had to laugh, I mean because it was really funny (laughing). I didn't get hurt but the Hustler did, I didn't (laughs). Oh, we've had some times.

17:15:42

Q:

Oh, man. That's great (laughs). Yeah, Mollie made a special note of that.

A:

Oh, gosh. I mean it was funny, real funny.

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17:15:52

Q:

So um, when you got here, there had just been a bunch o' stuff happen. Uh, there had been some, some dust collector releases in Plant 9 just a couple years before you got here, and so really the plant was kind of in some turmoil. Um, can you tell me what your impressions of all that were when you first got here?

17:16:09

A:

Well, um, I remember after I had gotten here we had an incident where there was a release. And it was a big cloud, like over towards, goin' towards like the Lab Building, over where um, used to be Plant 7, and that was the old Pilot Plant. It was an area over there. And I can say that was the only time that I was really frightened.

17:16:34

A:

They had everybody you know, leave and we all went out into the parking lot, and then we got the all clear, but you could actually see you know, the, the cloud that was over that area. And, and that was the only time I was kind o', I was real concerned about that. That really use, really scared me, but they kind o' you know, came back and they you know, calmed everybody down.

17:16:58

A:

And then there was another incident we had where it was a green salt spill, up on, me goodness, it's been a long time, let me get my bearings right. I think it was, um, is that where plant two-, Building 12 is. It was on the corner of where Building 12 was and uh, Plant 4. There was a big spill and we were up there you know, cleanin' it up.

17:17:21

A:

And then after that incident, we all had to you know, leave a urine sample after a incident. But everybody was fine, and everybody really took all the safety precautions. Everybody was dressed out and everything. But I've never, that was the only time I ever felt uneasy about bein' here. But all the other times, I've always felt very safe because, like I said, the safety precautions were there.

17:17:46

A:

They're not a, they wasn't as strong then but we had our respirators, and we had our protective clothing, and it was there and you just had to make sure that you took the initiative to, to use what was in place. And I've always felt pretty safe workin' here.

17:18:03

Q:

Tell us about some o' the plants you've worked in out on the process side. All the different areas, what were your, what were your impressions of all those different areas, and were they ah, they were still producing at that time.

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A:

Yeah, well, I worked um, I did a long stint in Building 12. I used to clean up all the shops and different things in Building 12, and that was a pretty uh, good area to work. I've over, worked in plant si-, Plant 5 in the Rockwell furnaces. I've been in Plant 9, because we used to go all over, the laborers did, cleanin' all the break areas so, 2/3 maintenance, we clean the break areas there. We um, we used to clean out the, I almost forgot about this.

17:18:45

A:

The smokestacks. There used to be a old Boiler Plant. When the ashes used to get, used to be so clogged up, we used to go up there and clean all the ashes and soot out of it. And we actually used to have to, it was uh, a the mason and a laborer used to do the work.

17:19:03

A:

The mason would actually get in and you know, chisel out the ashes, and we would dip 'em in this bucket. And he had to lower it, it was another laborer, we had to, one had to go up and we had to lower it down on a rope down to the other laborer to get rid of the ashes. And the soot from the um, from the coal they used to burn to keep you know, the steam and the heat goin' to the buildings.

17:19:28

A:

So I worked at doin' that. And I also worked up at the Pilot Plant, just assisin-, assisting craft personnel on different things. And I also did one other thing, but it was kind o', it was part time but it was associated with the company. I was a fire fighter here for eight years. From 1988, yeah, I started in '88. And I did that and I really enjoyed that.

17:19:57

A:

I got a lot o' training, and was one o' the first persons to go through the two hundred-hour f-, uh, class, and I enjoyed that. So I've done quite a few things since I've been here. Quite a few.

19:20:11

Q:

Tell us more about, is it the E.M.T., or the M.S.?

A:

Yeah, um, well I did take the E.M.T. class. I didn't fin-, I, I finished it, I took my test once, and I, I failed it by one point, which I kind o' got upset about it, but I never took the refresher to go back because after a few years after that I, I got out of it. But um, it was myself and one other person, who was, we were the only two female, Karen Helfferich that was on the fire um, department.

17:20:46

A:

And that was a really good experience. A really good. I mean we did a lot o' training. I mean I felt, well, they had us, e-, we were capable of goin' anywhere to, like bein' on the Cincinnati fire department. We, we've had all the training that any fire station has ever had. We had it, also.

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17:21:07

A:

Matter of fact, some of our two hundred hour classes, we had outside fire fighters, like Colerain Township, Miami uh, Whitewater, Green Township, they actually came and trained with us, as part of our program. So we're pretty well known, our um, fire brigade is pretty well known outside of here.

17:21:228

A:

Matter of fact, when they had the, when the Boiler Plant caught on fire one time, our fire department, they did a really great job. I wasn't involved because I was up in Findlay at the time doin' the HAZMAT course that we had to take. It was like a three-week course, and we would come home on the weekends for HAZMAT training.

17:21:46

A:

So I was there doin' that when the fire took place, but they did a wonderful job of responding, so. I think uh, the training that I've had, I mean I can always use it, as far as the CPR, and I have all my certificates, and everything associated with it.

17:22:04

A:

I'll, I'll never, I mean that was some excellent experience that I went through and I'll never forget it and I'm very thankful that I had the opportunity to be a part of it. I'm not it in now 'cause, but I became a supervisor was very hard for me to get away to um, participate in the training without having someone try and cover my position.

17:22:24

A:

And so it got harder, harder and harder for me, so I had to resign. But. So.

Q:

What's the most strenuous thing you had to do as a fire fighter?

17:22:35

A:

Go into a smoke-filled building (chuckling) pull out a, run up five flights of stairs and search for a hundred and sixty pound dummy and get him out o' the building in a certain amount of time. Actually had to go into a smoke-filled room and uh, go in and put on my S.C.B.A., my mask and everything, and come out breathing air without bein' able to see anything. So, within a minute.

17:23:03

A:

So I mean, we're talkin' (laughs) it was tough. It was tough but, but I did it. We used to have scenarios where we had to um, start on a ladder, run on a ladder, and go through the window, and pick up the hose, put out the fire, rescue the person, come out the other side, I mean, it was really strenuous. Really strenuous.

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17:23:24

A:

We had to do rope rappelling off buildings and things like that (laughs). So I mean, at first, I, I used to be afraid of heights, but I'm no longer afraid of heights. Because of the you know, rope rappelling. But I ain't never done that before and that was a wonderful experience too. So.

(Off camera: Let me stop for just a second.)

(Tape pauses and returns)

17:23:47

Q:

Okay, so how did the men react to having you on the fire department?

A:

Well I think they accepted me pretty well because they knew I was one to pull my own weight. They really didn't have to assist me with anything. Whenever we went into a burned building, and had to do our uh, scenarios, I came out, I mean, we were going in pairs, and I always assisted my partner and there were never were any complaints as far as you know, me participating because.

17:24:14

A:

They used to make a joke, "Ah, don't bother her. She's strong." 'Cause it was one person, who used to pick, pick with me all the time. He used to come up behind me and try to you know, rattle me, you know, or scare me, or things like that, and at the end of the class our the last day that we were there, I actually, (laughing) came up behind me and I actually flipped him over.

17:24:36

A:

And it seemed like everything was dead. Everybody was, "Don't mess with her, boy. Don't sneak up behind her. She'll get you. She don't take no stuff." I mean it was a big joke, but it was in fun, and they accepted me really well (chuckles).

17:24:50

Q:

That's great. Tell us a little bit about the people that uh, were your trainers, and what type of training you needed. That's a lot o', of, lot o' training, two hundred hours. What exactly did you have to do?

A:

Well, we had to learn the different types of hoses, the couplings, uh, we had to learn ladder safety, CPR um, we had to learn about the pumper, you know, how to connect to the fire hydrants. Uh, how to do the reading, the P-, we had to learn about P.S.I., our um, S.C.B.A. the different parts of you know, about our packs, our masks.

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17:25:26

A:

How to check to for you know, to make sure that we breathing air. I mean it was a lot o' things we had uh, to do tests on signs, and symptoms of uh, heat stress. And um, hypothermia and what to do when someone was burned, I mean, there was a wide variety of things we had to know in order to pass the two hundred hour class, and then we had a humongous test (chuckles) at the end of the class.

17:25:53

A:

But I mean, like the experience like I said was well worth it. It was like when I went through the E.M.T. class, we had to learn the different functions of the heart, uh, blood diseases. A lot o' things that doctors and nurses learn about high blood pressure, uh, hypertension, uh, stress, I mean anything associated with any kind of illness. We uh, touched on the nervous system.

17:26:20

A:

Uh, bones, fingers, toes. I mean you name it, we learned about it. That was in the E.M.T. class. But the firefighter class was basically you know, learnin' about fightin' fires, what type of fires, the phases they go through, smoldering, incipient, I mean (sighs) it was so much. Some of it I've you know, forgotten, but I try to brush up every now and then. I still have my books at home.

17:26:45

A:

If I find that I may not remember certain things, I'll kind o' glance through 'em and say, "Oh, I remember when we did this." Try and reminisce and kind o' keep up to speed on some o' the things that you know, I learned so I won't forget it.

17:26:57

A:

'Cause sometimes you know, when you don't use things, they kind o' get dormant. And you don't you know, think about it and quite as much so you might not be as quick with the response as you once were when you first you know, was in, into you know, doin' the fire fighting, but.

17:27:12

A:

I talk to the guys every now and then just to see how is it goin', the training and see if it's still you know, basically the same things we were doin' back then. And they said some of it is improved a lot since I been off. I think I been off of the fire brigade for about three or four years now? I'll say about more like four years. So a little, few things have changed but not a lot. So.

17:27:37

Q:

How 'bout uranium fires? Did you ever have to deal with uranium fires?

A:

No. We touched on 'em, but as far as ever dealing with a uranium fire, no. We never had a uranium fire here or even a criticality that, ever since I've been here, or not really close. I mean, the incident

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where the cloud was, they didn't do a, it wasn't a criticality. But it wasn't, it was kind o' serious, but not to the point where a criticality would have occurred. But we were trained on what to do in case of a you know, a uranium fire and things like that.

17:28:16

Q:

What would the fire um, department have to do in case of a criticality?

A:

Well, they, a lot more people are involved when it comes to a criticality. It goes all the way up to Washington as far as the steps that have to be uh, that have to be taken. Now the Boiler Plant fire, now, I'm not quite sure that, if that was almost declared a criticality as far as you know, as big. 'Cause it was a pretty big fire. But as far as uranium, no. We didn't have anything like that.

17:28:48

A:

Like I said, there was a lot o' people were involved in the steps that have to be taken in the case of a criticality. I know when a criticality occur-, occurs, it's only certain people that's gonna be left here. Every, everybody else will be evacuated. Like if we had a spill, it, we. In fire training, we went over what to do if we had a, a uranium spill, or any kind of leaks from the drums or anything like that.

17:29:15

A:

Uh, we used to go through decon scenarios. Uh, we actually uh, used to go through joint responses with outside help to assist us. I know there was several occasion where I played a victim who was called back into one o' the plants and uh, got hurt and fell out and you know, they had to come in and rescue me.

17:29:35

A:

So I mean every scenario that could have taken place here, we practice on it. Like uh, we practice on a tanker comin' in, and if it's carryin' flammable liquid, what would we do if it spills? Uh, you know, bringin' in foam and blanketing the area you know, to, to uh, take care of the flammable liquid spill. And as far as magnesium, we used to have magnesium up at the uh, butler building.

17:30:05

A:

If it was a magnesium fire, we would have to use dry um, powder to put on the magnesium fire. I mean, all of the different scenarios, scenarios, we touched on in our training. So (laughs) they're very well trained out here. Very well trained out here.

17:30:22

A:

I think a little bit more trained than some o' the fire stations like Cincinnati and Colerain Township because they don't have to come in contact with the things on the outside proposed to what's here. So you know, we, our training was kind of like, in my opinion only, just a step above you know, the norm.

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Q:

Great. We're gonna take a little break. We're gonna switch tapes.

A:

Okay.

Tape FLHP0134

18:01:04

Q:

Cool. Um, tell us a little bit about clearance. Did you have to have Q clearance to work here?

A:

Yes I did. My actual hire date, well, was December 31st of 1985. It took me 'til August of '86 to get in, to come through the door. So that was a pretty long time. I mean they went all, they actually went around and the people I listed like who my neighbors were at the time.

18:01:32

A:

They talked to them; they talked to my family members. I mean they did a lot o' background check back then be-, when we had our Q clearances. A lot.

Q:

And what kind of feedback did you get back from like friends and family? Like what're kinds of questions did they ask?

18:01:47

A:

Well, what they want to know is was I into any kind o' trouble. At first, it was like, "Girl, what you been doin'?" Somebody was over here ask all kinds o' questions about you!" And then I had to explain to 'em it was for a security clearance to work at uh, Fernald. And they was like, "Really?" I mean they were real, really surprised because they just knew I had got into some kind o' trouble.

18:02:06

A:

I don't know why. I'm not the trouble kind you know (laughs). But, they just wanted to know what I had done to deserve someone comin' to. 'Specially my grandmother. "What you done got yourself into (laughs)?" I'm like, "Calm down, Mom. Calm down. I done nothing wrong." But, so, but they, yeah, they, they went all the way back, I had to list till seemed like I was in high school.

18:02:27

A:

'Cause I was twenty-three when I started here, so. They wanted to go back ten years. I'm like, so, that was a long ways back. I was still in like grade school (laughing). They did a lot o' checking, and it took 'em very long time for me to come in, like eight months.

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18:02:47

Q:

So what did you do while you were waiting?

A:

I worked at um, Ohio Casualty, as a claims clerk. I worked; I was working there while they were doing my clearance. And then I quit there to come here.

18:03:01

Q:

Did they ever let you know that they were still in process, or were you just sort of up in the air until you found out?

A:

I was up in the air. I didn't hear anything, and then I finally got a letter tellin' me when to report. To do my physical and all that good stuff, and then. 'Cause they didn't bring you, they did your clearance before you did your, your, then they brought you in. You did your physical and everything, and then you passed your physical, you got your clearance, then you were hired.

18:03:30

A:

I mean, you know, they made you an offer and came on in. So. But then after a few years, they got rid o' the clearances. I can't remember exactly what year it was, but then they, you didn't, you no longer needed them, to work here.

18:03:46

A:

Because we, production went down. It was no longer a production, and I guess some o' the secrecy that was here was no longer here any more, so we didn't need that level of clearance. So.

Q:

Wow. And tell us a little bit about the transition between um, production and cleanup. A-, actually, before that, tell me what it was like the day you found out they were gonna shut the plant down for good.

18:04:17

A:

Our, it was, a lot o' people were really worried because when they said we were run, no longer gonna be in production, first thing you thought was, "Oh, wow. I'm out of a job." It happened, we actually stopped production in 1989. And everybody was worried that you know, we would no longer have a job here.

18:04:37

A:

And we're like, "Well, what're we gonna do? 'Cause all we know is production. Hurry up. Let's get this out, let's do this, let's do this." We're no longer gonna be in that mode. And so everybody was

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really afraid that we wasn't gonna no longer have a job. And were really concerned about what they were gonna do you know, with us.

18:04:56

A:

And then you know, we had the big, where they call us all together and they like explain to us what were gonna be doing. That we were goin' into re-, remediation, and that we were gonna start cleanin' up the site. Well, and they start retrainin' us to reflect that. Now my position in the labor shop, it really didn't change a whole lot as some of the people did back in the plants.

18:05:22

A:

Because my function was uh, a lot of outside work and relocating furniture and things like that. I didn't do a whole lot, I mean yes, I worked in the plants assisting the different crafts with their daily operations, but as far as the production, the ones that made the ingots and things like that, I was never involved with that. Only the part of rebuilding the Rockwell furnaces.

18:05:46

A:

So my job function, you know, basically to some degree, stayed the same until you know, I became a supervisor. But as far as the other people, like the chemical operators and the people who worked over in the rolling mills and things like that, it was a big you know, a major, major change for them, so it was a real big concern for a lot o' people.

18:06:09

A:

You know, because no one wants to be out of a job. I know I didn't. So, we were really glad they started retrainin' everybody and lettin' us know what the uh, direction was, what direction they were headed and far as what we were gonna be doin' as far as you know, cleanin' up the site.

18:06:26

A:

And how we, we were still gonna be here and that the site would still be progressing along, but just in a different mode. And we just takin' a different direction. And they would still need the people here, so that, that was pretty good. They, they did, to me they did excellent at calming our fears, as far as employment and being retrained to you know, go into the different direction that the co-, company was headed.

18:06:51

A:

I mean a lot o' people, I guess they were kind o' buck, bucking it because no one likes change, but sometimes you have to do it in order to grow. And to continue on, so once it finally became accepted, and people started really buyin' into it, it became a lot smoother. In my opinion (laughs).

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18:07:13

Q:

What was it like the first day you went back to the process side? You didn't hear the jolters going and all the machines goin' on and all that stuff, what was that day like?

A:

It was, it was different. I mean you could actually, hear other people. No, just kidding (laughs). I mean, it was, it was quieter. You walk into like Plant 5 and you didn't hear all that chick-n-osh, all that you know, noise that it made. I mean it was just, you just walk on through and, people would be doin' work, but it was a different, different type o' work.

18:07:42

A:

You know, cleanin' up and, uh, 'specially when we did our first, I remember when we did our, I'm tryin' to think, you know, it's been a lot o' years, and as far as pinpointin' certain dates, I can't recall. I remember when we did our first open house. That, I mean, that was, it was really exciting. The p-, it looked really nice out here.

18:08:05

A:

I think it, I think when we had that first open house here, it calmed a lot of people's fears on the outside. Because you always heard about Fernald, but it's taboo, you can't go there. You know, they won't let you in. It's top secret. It's all this goin' on. If you go there, you might not come back, or if you worked there, you're glowing all the time.

18:08:25

A:

This was the big myth out there. Because I, I always used to get questioned, "Do you glow at night?" and my little remark was, "All the way to the bank!" (Laughs) So, but uh, when they came out here, I think a lot o', I think a lot o' people's fears were kind o' calmed about how the operation was here, and what was really goin' on here.

18:08:49

A:

So after that big, that first open house, you never. I mean you heard about Fernald, but over the years, the things that's been written were not as big and as fearful as they were back when they first started. It seemed like we were always in the paper. You know what, I can actually come across people now, today, and they say, "Where do you work?" and I'll say Fernald. "Huh? Where's that?"

18:09:14

A:

And I'll look at 'em, "Why, hmm. You mean there's people out there that don't know we're here?" To me, that's a good thing because we're not always in the paper and people don't have this big fear like they used to have about workin' out here. Me? I think it's pretty safe, but that's just my, my personal opinion.

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18:09:35

Q:

So when you were under Q clearance, when your friends and family especially, would ask you about your job, what did you tell 'em?

A:

It was not a lot you know, bein' under the Q clearance. I knew my responsibility as an employee at that time, and I knew that it was certain things that I could not speak about, and this was my job, and I value my job, and you know I was hired, and all that was made clear to me, so I thought it was my responsibility to respect you know, what I was hired to do.

18:10:04

A:

So, I, I used to try and dispel. It was really my grandmother, I mean other people in my family, they would ask me about it, and, and, "Well, we heard it was this, and we heard it was that. It was bad to work there. If you worked there for a week, you were liable to die." I mean things like that, and I'm, "Oh, that's not true."

18:10:23

A:

But I couldn't really go into the particulars of what was goin' on out here because of you know, me bein' under the security clearance. So I, I did. I took that to heart you know, so I didn't divulge a lot of the things. I would kind of talk about it in a general way. "Oh it's, it's safe out there. Pfst. I work outside; I cut grass." You know, I get into subjects like that.

18:10:46

A:

You know, "I ride lawn a mower." You know, "I plant flowers." And things. "Oh, you do all that? Landscaping." You know, I would take the subject towards that, instead o' goin' into, you know, "Well this is in the plants. And we got this out there, and this'll take your arm off."

18:11:00

A:

Or somethin' like that (laughing). I would never do that. But I would kind o' go into a generic subject as far as workin' out here and not get to anything specific.

Q:

So what was the big secret here at Fernald?

18:11:15

A:

Well, me personally, I didn't think it was such a big secret. Just uh, a lot o' activity that went on, the uranium, the process, what we actually did, you know, anything associated with nuclear weapons. That's the first thing ya think. "Oh, gosh. They're out there creating bombs." Well, not really. Technically no.

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18:11:37

A:

But um, just that, to me which I felt wasn't a big secret, but they felt it should be kept secret, so. A lot o' things I guess as far as um, documents that could o' gotten into the wrong hands, or the way we did certain things out here with the uranium processing that could of gotten into the wrong hands. I think that's what they were you know, what they were mainly concerned about.

18:12:03

A:

One o' the things that we had out here that could possibly contribute to a bomb you know, people thinkin' that somethin' out here to come out here and maybe steal it. So just things like that, they wanted to kept secret because you never know who's listenin' in on your conversations. When you're out you know, speakin' in general, people can overhear you talk about certain things.

18:12:27

A:

And you know, what they do with it, you, you know, you never know. so. That's why, I was kind o' careful about what I said (chuckles).

18:12:38

Q:

A lot o' people have told us that when you were first hired, you sort of got a spiel from security on your Q clearance.

A:

Yeah. Your proper protocol and. You did. You know, not to discuss you know, the activities out here and because a lot of the things are secretive and. Well, they didn't say, really say secretive, they didn't want these certain things to get into the wrong hands, or you know, just things like that. But you did, you got your talk from security.

18:13:07

A:

And basically a lot o' departments, H.R., Industrial Relations, you had conversations with them, but yeah, you did get the spiel from security (chuckles) on proper protocol.

18:13:21

Q:

And when you first started working here, how did you feel about the security, because security was a, of course a lot tighter back then. Can you tell us a bit little about that?

18:13:27

A:

It was. Well, yeah. Security was a lot tighter back then. A matter of fact, they carried guns. We had a SWAT team. We um, we had the expert mark, marksmen. And they I mean, they would be on the post. It, it's a lot o' different, it's not as, it's more lax now, because the security clearances now, is not here. Gates were not unattended. You know? We had the gates up everywhere.

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18:13:54

A:

Now you can just walk right in. And you have the one point you have to come through, but I mean the physical gates were in place. We've taken a lot o' the fencing down over the years, but back then, the fencing were, was in place. And you had to come up to the security guard, I mean you had to state your business.

18:14:12

A:

You had to have, even comin' in as a visitor, you had to have a certain amount of clearance just to come in visiting, bein' a vendor or whatever the case was, you had to have a certain level of clearance just to come in here. Not just go to the badge trailer like it is now, and then say, "I'm here from such-and-such." And this a little document to fill out. I mean you had to go through more 'n that to get through just to visit back then, compared to what it is now, so.

18:14:41

Q:

Great. So, back to open house, did your, did your family come to open house?

A:

Uh, I, no. None o' my family came. My, I bought my, I'm tryin' to see, did I bring my, no I didn't bring my daughter in. No I take that back, I did have a cousin who actually came to see what it was actually like back then. But, I mean they didn't really, really say anything. They were kind o' impressed about you know, when they took.

18:15:08

A:

'Cause the first time we had the clearance, they actually took a tour. We laid black matting along, and you could actually walk you know, back to the plants, like through plant, back by Plant 5, Building 12, and you know, everybody, we had the little stanchions up and you had to stay on the black rubber matting.

18:15:27

A:

That was the first year we did that, and everybody got to walk back in the back area to see what it was really like. And she got calmed pretty much, because it wasn't what they expected. And I think that was, a lot o' people because you got a lot of positive feedback because I worked that day bein' a tour guide you know, back in the back. And you could just hear the people talk.

18:15:51

A:

"Oh, this is not as bad as we thought. I mean, this is a ni-, you know, a nice and clean area." I mean those were the comments and people had their kids. And they went back there, so you got a lot of nice feedback, on you know, what the place was like compared to what they were hearin' in the newspaper and seein' it for themselves, I think they formed a different opinion about you know, how the place was.

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18:16:17

Q:

Good, very good. You know, I think you're the first person to mention open house. And I think I remember the last one. It's a lot o' work.

A:

Yeah, it is a lot o' work. It was a whole lot o' work, because I also worked, um, the laborers worked and helped getting the site prepared, and we worked long hours you know, making sure everything was in place. And puttin' the stanchions, stanchions up and rolling the black matting along the streets you know, for the people to come in and.

18:16:53

Q:

That's a lot. I know how big the plant is, and that's a lot o' black matting (both laugh).

A:

Yeah, it was a whole bunch o' matting.

18:17:00

Q:

Uh, how as a maintenance laborer or supervisor, um, you're responsible for your staff's safety. Can you tell us a little bit about the safety culture here at Fernald?

A:

Uh, how it was when I became a supervisor? When I became a supervisor back in '92, the safety culture was far more progressed than what it was back in '86. You know, everyone was to be more aware. We had, in place was a lot more training compared to when I first came in.

18:17:38

A:

You went through your orientation, and a little bit o' training, but as far as the training that we take to this day, it was nowhere near, we'd never, we never had that much back then. So, my responsibility as a maintenance supervisor was to make sure that my, my people attended all the tr-, the training that was required, to hold my uh, morning briefings.

18:18:01

A:

To discuss any safety issues or any questions or concerns that my people may have had at that time. 'Cause anything that was goin' on site, and make sure they adhere to all the safety regulations where, whether it. 'Cause we, the maintenance laborers worked outside a lot in cold and in the heat. So you also had, you had heat stress and cold stress. Those were major concerns for our group.

18:18:24

A:

So we had to make sure that our people had the safety equipment that was necessary in the summer time, as far as the winter time when it came to you know, removin' the snow, clearin' the sidewalks

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and things like that. Uh, I was very proud to be able to um, implement. I was one o' the first participants. It's called the Safety Awareness Team now.

18:18:50

A:

Well, the Safety First. Back then when it first became in place, it was a Safety Awareness Team. And that was when safety really start becoming a culture. We devised this team to come up with ways to promote safety. We came up with the Safety Award Programs.

18:19:08

A:

I mean, a lot of the titles and things have changed, but back then, I was one of the first person who ever became involved in a team that had to deal with promoting safety awareness. So I was, I was very proud of that, to get. I was actually asked to participate, but that was why I, I, while I was a maintenance laborer. So I was representing the uh, wage personnel at that time (laughing) Forgive me.

18:19:40

Q:

So now you've just moved into uh, Industrial Relations work. Tell us a little bit about what your job is like now.

18:19:45

A:

Yes. Well, once again, I'm still working with um, wage personnel, but my job right now is making sure that wage personnel, along with salary team members, adhere to the F.A.T.L.C. bargaining unit contract that we have in place with all the um, varying unions out here. I deal with counseling employees on different issues such as attendance.

18:20:14

A:

Makin' sure that uh, team members adhere to the rules of conduct. And we um, handle investigations as far as um, harassment of any kind. Um, if employee have a attendance prob-, problems, we administer uh, attendance.

18:20:34

A:

I'm over all the grievances, whenever a bargaining unit employee file a grievance against, whether it's a contractor, salary personnel, or another bargaining unit, unit doing their work, I'm sort of a mediator. I go in and I listen to the grievances, and I decide whether they, they are valid, you know, valid or not. And then I make decisions based on the uh, information that I gather from doing investigations.

18:21:03

A:

We're not only here for discipline. We also are here to help team members as far as they have any problems, whether it's uh, site-related or off-site-related. You know, we try to help them out and then

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make sure that we could make it, make it easier for them to be able to come to work. And we're not here to like get rid of team members, we're.

18:21:28

A:

Because we have a lot if you know, we go through a lot o' training, so we have a lot invested in our employees, so we just don't want to send them out the door at any given you know, little infraction. We want to work with them and help them overcome any kind o' uh, adversity they may be goin' through, whether it be here or off site, to help them become a better team person.

18:21:50

Q:

Tell us a little bit about a grievance process. I mean, what would cause a grievance, first of all?

18:21:54

A:

Well, what would call, cause a grievance, let's say for instance, you have a salary personnel and they're moving, they have a um, piece of moving equipment, a two-wheel dolly. And they're moving boxes let's say, from the print shop to the lab. Well, that's not part of a salary team member's function. It's part of the um, general labor group function.

18:22:17

A:

They're the ones that are to be called whenever uh, you need any kind of relocation of it, whether it's boxes, furniture, computers, uh, file cabinets, anything of that nature, that's, that falls under their scope of work. And you would have to get in touch with that group in order for them to do that.

18:22:39

A:

And if a um, general laborer sees this salary person doin' their work, well, the first step of, the grievance has three processes. You have first step, second step, and third step. The first and second step is handled through the uh, first line supervisor and the managers. Third steps are handled through me. First step is usually a verbal conversation.

18:23:05

A:

The team member would go to their first line supervisor and say, "I saw a salary team member um, haulin' five boxes from the print shop to the lab. Uh, and I wanna know why are they doin' that?" Well, that's the first initiative of the grievance. The first line supervisor will, they, the uh, team member will tell the first line supervisor, just say for instance, they will give a name.

18:23:29

A:

Say it was such and such a person, of such and such a group. And they will go, and then the first line supervisor will call that person of that group, and ask them why were they you know, carryin' those boxes. Now it depends on the answer that they get, and if this person is a new employee, they might not know that we have a bargaining unit in place, 'specially bein' on, on the salary end.

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18:23:54

A:

So they may not, they may be unaware of, you know, the process of what y' have to do to get a general laborer over to move your boxes. Then the supervisor would council that employee. Well, this is what you, steps you need to take because it is a bargaining unit in place, and we cannot break that contract so we have to follow these specific guidelines in order to get our items relocated.

18:24:19

A:

Well, if the person is not new, and they give some excuse, and then the first line supervisor would get back to the team member and say, "Well, they said they didn't wanna wait for you to get over there and get 'em, so they decided to do it theirself." That's a no-no. That person'll say, "Well, I'm not acceptin' that answer, they still don't have a right to do it. I wanna go second step."

18:24:41

A:

When they do second step, it becomes a written document. They have to write out what the infraction is, and put a request in of what it is they want in return for this person doin' their work. Well, the manager then, will do some more investigating, and then he would make a answer on that. And then it would be up to the team member to accept their answer. Then it comes to me.

18:25:04

A:

And then it comes to me, I actually have to have a meeting with the steward, the um, the person who is doin' the grievance, uh, the person that's over the grievance from the union, and three, um, members of the grievance committee. And we all sit down, and I listen to what they have to say, and then I take all the information down. And I tell 'em I'll get back with 'em with an answer.

18:25:28

A:

I come back, and I do some more investigation on my own, to find out you know, 'cause sometimes you're not actually told everything right then. And then after I gather all my information, then I put in a letter form, uh, stating whether you know, I agree or whether I disagree, as far as the infraction. Either I'm gonna offer what they want, or bargain with 'em, or, or I'm just gonna flat out deny it.

18:25:53

A:

So, that's how it works. And then some of 'em after that goes to arbitration, but it's up to the union whether to arbitrate it or not. So that's the process. Hello (laughs)!

18:26:04

Q:

So you're a liaison then between the people who may make an agree-, a grievance and then the folks who have to address the.

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A:

Yes. I re-, yes. I represent the company, and they um, I guess I can say Jim Ball, he represents the union. And we have to come to an agreement on you know. Sometimes they like what I say, and sometimes they don't. They may accept what I say, and then they also have the right to decline what I, what I put down, so.

18:26:37

Q:

What's the worst one you've ever done?

A:

Well, the worst ones have been the terminations. Now terminations are different. When a bargaining unit employee is terminated, their grievance automatically go the third step. You don't have to go first or second step, it go, automatically goes to third step. And myself and another I.R. person do the terminations. And we, when once we terminate a person, we'll sit down with the same people, grievance committee and the person that's bein' terminated.

18:27:11

A:

And then we'll listen to what they say, and then I'll also have to do a third response to that, whether I say the person can come back, or whether they still terminated. Then af-, if I say, if we say that they're still terminated, then it's up to that um, unio-, union's local to decide whether they gonna arbitrate the case or not.

18:27:31

A:

And arbitrations can go from anywhere from, it can take anywhere from three months to a year for it to be arbitrated.

Q:

That's a lot.

A:

The arbitrations are kind of expensive to conduct, so they kind o' pick and choose, if they feel it is valid, that the employee was wrongfully terminated, then they may, they will arbitrate. But if they don't fee-, that they feel that the employee was at fault, they may choose not to arbitrate. So.

18:27:59

Q:

So it's a lot of negotiation in other words.

A:

Yeah, it's, it's a lot of negotiation and a lot o' fact-finding that has to go on. Because you have to be absolutely clear when you terminate a person. You have to do a lot of investigating. You have to have a clear mind. And you know, you have to be willing to listen to all parties and gather as much information you can.

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18:28:22

A:

Because sometimes there can be some mediating circumstances that may you know, play a factor in why a person may have reacted or done something that they did. But I enjoy it. I really like, I like my job (chuckles).

Q:

Great. (Speaks to cameraman: Do we, you wanna ____ it now?)

Tape FLHP0135

19:01:07

Q:

Tell us about the uh, cleanin' out the drain.

A:

Oh! Back behind Building 12, we had the truck dock. Well, we called it the old truck dock. And it used to clog up all the time. When it rained, uh, debris and everything would get in and around the drain. Well, whenever it got stopped up, they always call a laborer to come unstop it. So I put on my little wader boots and uh, venture back there to stop it, uh, to unclog it.

19:01:34

A:

Well, this particular time, I mean the water was really, really high. It was like level with the, you know, it went down like this (demonstrates with right hand palm down). It was level with the back of the truck dock. I had to walk in all this water, and the water was up to my neck. And I had this long pole, and I was just scrapin' over the drain tryin' to get the debris out.

19:01:55

A:

And I, needless to say, I couldn't see the drain because the water was up to my neck. And I, I finally got it unclogged, but the little wader boots that I had that came up to my knees, they were no use because I was soakin' wet. Drenched. I was walkin' back from Building 12, every step I took it sloshed with water and mud. And needless to say, everybody was laughin' at me.

19:02:16

A:

But I mean, it was just one o' the many jobs of the labor (chuckling) function. You, I tell you, you never knew what exactly you were gonna be doin' durin' the course o' the day. Sometimes we had to go. Oh! I remember one time (laughs), we used to clean all the trash in the parkin' lot, we had to empty all the trashcans. One time we went out there, and we looked at the trashcan.

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10:02:36

A:

And the trash can didn't look right. It was raining, and all this red stuff was comin' from underneath the trash can. We got kind o' concerned, you know, we was scared. I was tellin' the other, I was like, and "It's a body in there!" (Laughing) Because it looked like, it was, it looked like blood or something. "It's a body in there!" Then we would laugh about it.

19:02:56

A:

(Laughing) We went got security, and sure enough, somebody put a deer's head in the trash can. I think they were tryin' to scare us because we were always the ones out there uh, cleanin' the trash. Well, needless to say, it did. It was (laughing) It did kind o' scare us, but it was a deer's head in the trash can, so I was like, "Oh, gosh!"

19:03:17

A:

(Laughing) I mean I tell ya, I been up against a lot o' things out here. Animals in particular. Especially the locusts. Was when we had the year o' the locusts.

Q:

Oh, tell us about that!

19:03:27

A:

(whispers Oh!) Gosh! They're attracted to sound, right? So I was goin' down the uh, south access road to weed eat. So I start up my weed-eater, and I go to start weed eatin' around uh, the bushes and around the uh, the trees, on the access road, and locusts came from everywhere, and next thing I know, I done tossed the weed-eater and I'm (begins to laugh) runnin' down the access road, screamin' at the top o' my lungs.

19:03:55

A:

(Laughing) I mean of course, I'm scared o' bugs, so. I mean I think sometimes I think I could write a book on the adventures that I've had out here at Fernald. But the locusts was a, uh! 'Cause every time you start up a lawn mower and ride it, they just migrate. I mean they would be all over your uh, your coveralls and everything. They just, I mean, sittin' there and lookin' at you.

19:04:19

A:

(Laughing) Uh! They were terrible! Well, I got through that, I was like, I didn't think I ever would, but.

Q:

Did you hear what happened at the Pilot Plant that year? I think it was that year. Must have been that same year because those things only come around once every seventeen years or whatever. Oh, we did an interview with Homer Bruce, and he said there was a noise at the Pilot Plant that sounded like the mating call of all the locusts.

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19:04:44

Oh, okay, okay. Yeah, I did hear that. They, they, are, they were comin' to the Pilot Plant all the time. But oh, that was a year! Needless to say I was scared to mow the grass. (laughs) Well, my fear o' bugs have kind o' got more mild now. At first, when I first started workin' out here, oh, I used to be so scared. But, I've come across a lot. Especially mowin' grass, I been through hornets nests, and.

19:05:10

A:

(laughs) I mean, oh, one time I was out on the north access road, and I was mowin' grass. And it started to sprinkle, and they had the fence out there, and they had the cows. This was the area where they're doin' the cell, which is there now, but it wasn't in place then.

19:05:29

A:

Well, I'm out there mowin' grass and it startin' to sprinkle, and I say, "Okay, I can mow just a little bit more before it starts pourin' down then I have to go in. Well, uh, my windshield wiper got stuck. So I got out and I turned my mower off and I walked around and I caught myself tryin' to unstick my windshield wiper.

19:05:46

A:

Well, I went around the side o' the mower that was closest to the fence, and I leaned over tryin' to unstick the um, uh, windshield wiper. And I felt somethin', and I, and I jumped, and I looked around. And I'm like, "Okay, what is that?" It was a electric fence! (laughs!) I was getting' shocked! (still laughing) I kept leanin' on it. I kept getting shocked.

19:06:07

A:

(laughs while she continues) I couldn't figure out what was goin' on, I just kept getting' jolts. And you know, I was wet, my feet. (stops to laugh) I mean it wasn't bad, I mean it didn't hurt me, but. And I'm lookin' around, "Okay, what's goin on?" And I'm just, contin-, I know I did it about six times until I finally figured out. "Dingy!" (still laughing) "The fence is electric! Get off of it!" (laughing) So, one of my many adv-, many adventures.

19:06:35

Q:

I did that as a kid on my grandfather's farm. He said that I had uh, I was wearin' a necklace that was metal. It was like zzz. I was like.

(both crack up laughing)

A:

I was like, "Gosh, what is goin' on?" (both stop to laugh) It was right on my hind end. I mean, just bent on over like that. (laughing hysterically and leans forward in her chair) Just keep, just keep on doin' it. Okay, then it dawned on me, "You idiot! You're on the fence!" I didn't tell anybody about that one. I was like, "Okay, they've laughed at me enough, I'm not gonna add that one."

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19:07:09

Q:

Now you've told the whole world.

A:

(Both laughing) I know it. This girl got shocked, and didn't know it. Shee!

19:07:16

Q:

(Still laughing) Pitiful. Man. So uh, what do you think about the cleanup? What do you think about what's goin' on now?

19:07:24

A;

Well, I'm really impressed. I mean uh, through the years, we heard that you know, we're gonna be cleanin' up and we're gonna be takin' down buildings and well, actually we'll be workin' ourselves out of jobs. And you will listen to it, and the statement will be made, "Oh, we been hearin' that since we been here. That they gonna lay off, they gonna lay off."

19:07:43

A:

And then after production, you were hearin' it, too, that we were gonna start takin' the buildings down. And people, "Oh, they're not gonna lay nobody. They're not gonna be doin' that. It's gonna take 'em twenty-five, thirty years to do the cleanup," and all that. Well, that's not so. I mean, to actually see, physically see the progress that's bein' made. The buildings comin' down. It's makin' your mind click.

19:08:03

A:

This is actually happening. They are really serious and this is what we're doing. We're taking the buildings down with, we're doing safe shutdown. We're removing the old machinery that we're not using anymore. And you can actually see the progress that's taking shape and that, the direction that it's going and what it's gonna end up. I mean it's actually happening and that's kind of amazing to me.

19:08:29

A:

That we, you can actually visually see what's going on. Instead of its being, it, them talkin' about it and you know and you thinkin' about it and seeing all the little graphs that were out. But now you can actually look at the graphs and look at the projects and say they're the same 'cause it's actually happening, so (laughing).

19:08:50

Q:

Great, and um, they're tearing down all these buildings and a lot of discussions been going on about what they're gonna do with the property, what would you personally like to see happen to the ground that Fernald sits on right now?

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19:09:00

A:

Well, I would like to see it just a big old green field, just nice pretty green grass, someone maintaining it real good, or even if it was possibly a nice park. I would like to see something like that if it's possible with, you know, swings and where you can have picnics and things like that.

A:

And then you know if it becomes a nice park, where people can come and have family reunions or whatever the case maybe then everybody will see that this place has actually been cleaned up. It's a nice safe place, you can bring your family and you can just sit on the pasture and have a nice little time (chuckles). So I think that would be neat.

19:09:40

Q:

And what do you think about the Living History Project?

A:

I think it's great. I mean, because you have a lot of people who's worked here through the course of the years and they have their ideas and their opinions and they've been here in the production years when it first started. I mean, you've got people who can take you from 1955 to now and it's, it's a lot that's done happened in there that documents and ah, pamphlets or maps that can't tell you that.

19:10:13

The people who actually been here, who went through the different changes that's taken place, that's more, you can get a better, better visual of what actually take place instead of trying to read about it or lookin' at a map and say "okay, that, that might have been there." But to hear a person talk about what actually went on, the things that took place. From how it was then to the progress that's happened and to where it is now, I think that's wonderful.

19:10:41

Q:

Great, is there anything you want to add? Anything we didn't talk about you wanted to mention or?

A:

No, I think we basically touched on everything. What I like most about the company now compared to back when I first started is the safety. I think they are doing a wonderful job of promoting safety awareness for the team members and the concern that they have for everyone's safety. Back when I was a laborer, the right to actually stop a job like in production years, say something was unsafe and stop – that was unheard of, you didn't do that.

19:11:21

A:

I mean, 'cause (begins snapping fingers) production is gold. Get this out, do this, do this. Well now when a person can walk and say ah-huh, I feel uncomfortable, something's not right here, we're

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deviatin' from the safety plan. They have a right to stop the job until all their safety concerns are addressed and they are okay with the process that's goin' on, and then they can continue the job, I think that's wonderful.

A:

'Cause it didn't happen back then, but it's in place now so that's a good tool that the team members whether you're salary, or whether you're ah, wage you do have a right to address safety concerns. And they make sure that those safety concerns are addressed and you get an answer back on what your safety concerns were, and I think that's wonderful.

Q:

Great, now we're going to do something called natural sound, and that's just ah I need quiet on the set for about 30 seconds just to get the room tone. So this is nat sound.