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Transcript

Name: Ken Morgan

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Tape: 106

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Tape FLHP0258

00:00:50

Q:

Are we ready? Okay. First of all if you could give us your name and spell it.

A:

My name is Kenneth Morgan. That's K-E-N-N-E-T-H M-O-R-G-A-N.

Q:

And your official title.

A:

I'm Director of Public Affairs for the Ohio Field Office, the US Department of Energy.

00:01:08

Q:

Great, if we could just start a little bit with some background. If you could tell us sort of where you grew up, where you went to school and how you got your job with the DOE.

A:

(Laughing) Well not from around here. I grew up in Missouri, in rural Missouri and also in the suburbs of St. Louis. So, I'm apparently a rare critter, because I, I can remember milking cows, and slaughtering hogs and all that kind of stuff on a general-purpose farm, which doesn't happen much anymore.

A:

But then I also had suburban life. I'd been away to Vietnam in the Army. Had been a technical writer and kind of evolved into the business of public affairs work from that technical writing business. I came from Hanford where I had been doing public affairs work and pretty well made about all the mistakes that you can make. And really saw Fernald as an opportunity to apply some, some new principles and lessons learned.

00:02:07

Q:

And what was your first experience with Fernald?

A:

Well (laughing) I think the first experience was when I came here for the interview and this place was a mess. I mean it was this dismal looking place and I was thinking, do I really want to work here? Do I want to take on all these problems?

A:

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And that was your first impression of the site?

A:
That was my first, first impression of the site.

00:02:35

Q:
Can you elaborate just a little bit about when you say it was just a mess? I mean what was, what were the plants like, and what year was it too.

A:
Well this would have been the summer of '92. 'Course it's got a fence around it, the, the physical layout of the place it just, there's debris; there's piles of stuff everywhere. And some of those piles didn't look very nice. Barrels that are kind of rusting, and crude over here, and lots of litter in fact, everywhere. And of course the buildings are old, built in the '50s and had not had much maintenance.

00:03:10

A:
So, it didn't look very appetizing. And then there was the social backdrop against it. I mean, it had made the cover of *Time Magazine* as environmental bad guy. And I knew it would be a difficult challenge to try and turn this situation around.

Q:
And what were you hired in as originally?

A:
Director of Public Affairs for the Fernald project. There was no Ohio Field Office at that time. It was my job to see; typically public affairs people are thought of, as you know fix this, spin this story and get people to like us. Well, the business is really not about spinning a story, but it is about getting people to like us.

00:03:58

A:
But that usually requires instituting behavior changes. You can't go on behaving the same way and get people to like you.

Q:
What was some of the history of that whole situation that you sort of walked into?

A:
Well, when this site got built in 1953 or so, it was kind of the leading edge of our national defense strategy. Our culture of the United States was, I like to say that people were afraid of Communists. Well, by the time I came here, people were no longer afraid of Communists what the were afraid of was carcinogens and this place created them.

00:04:39

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A:

So, it went from being, high tech kind of good guy to this terrible environmental polluter. And it wasn't so much that the site's behavior changed, it was because our American culture changed underneath it. In 1953 most of our cities pumped raw sewage into the rivers, pollution was pretty common and we became more aware of that. Unfortunately the Federal Government didn't change.

00:05:09

Q:

How did the workers react to that change in thinking? Like you say they were afraid, most people were afraid of Communists and then know they're afraid of carcinogens, and I know, I think probably a lot of the workers felt a little bit blamed. They felt like bad guys. Can you tell us how you worked with them first of all?

A:

I hate to speak for them because I, it was my observation that I think there was a certain number of old-timers who were just sort of confused. I mean, why is this happening? We did our job. We did a good thing? I think there were a lot of younger people who were now trying to get involved in the cleanup who really didn't have anything to do with making the mess but they couldn't make any progress because they were kind of blamed as being the bad guy for making the mess in the first place.

00:06:02

A:

So, both kind of work groups felt this kind of a despair or at least there was a very low morale, like no matter what we do it's wrong.

Q:

I might ask you that again, was that real loud (directed to cameraman)?

(Cameraman: that was pretty prominent)

Q:

Okay, that was great too and I want to get a clean (laughing), so you can sort of rephrase that, um yeah, (Comment: okay) if you could just say that again as far as what you just said.

00:06:29

A:

My observation was that the workforce was kind of two groups. There was one that were some old-timers, who had always been doing this patriotic thing and they were kind of confused, how come I'm a bad guy all of a sudden. And it's just not true, you know, the pollution isn't that bad.

A:

And then there was another group of people who had, who were newcomers who had been hired on to do the cleanup, but they were kind of lumped in by the public with the other people, so they couldn't do any environmental stuff. I mean, they were blamed as if they were the polluters and they weren't. So, couldn't get any progress because there was no trust

00:07:08

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Q:

What kind of media coverage was Fernald receiving when you first got here in '92?

A:

All the media coverage was bad. The only question was is it bad or very bad. When I say bad I mean it was critical. They can't get anything right. There's always pollution there. They're dishonest, they don't tell the truth. About anything you can think of, that's the kind of reporting we got.

00:07:39

Q:

Like how would you say, how many times a week were the news media here or were they reporting on Fernald at the time?

A:

I think coverage by that time, it was an old story. It was sort of a chronic sore or so, we could expect stories a couple of times a month I think. And always negative.

Q:

And when news media would come on site and that type of stuff, who exactly was contacted, I mean was there a spokesperson or.

A:

Yes. I was the spokesperson or Gary Stegner and we would kind of state the government's position. But there was an immediate sort of sense that you couldn't trust that government position, so let's find the real truth somewhere else.

Q:

What was the hardest interview you ever had to, had to do while you were here?

00:08:37

A:

The hardest interview was certainly not with the media, it was with the public. I can remember one time there was a story where, well it was not very good reporting. A story got made that the Department of Energy had plans to put waste on what's called the Girl Scout's camp north of the site. And the story got out that the Department of Energy was studying placing Fernald waste in Morgan Township and others off site.

00:09:15

A:

And it got people just furious. And I had to go to a town meeting over in one of the township halls and it was packed. There were people outside trying to get in and of course nobody would believe me because I was a government spokesperson. It was a terrible misunderstanding. What happened was the Department of Energy was trying to get an understanding of the geology under this site and so they had let a contract to a firm that did the geological study.

A:

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And what they did was study all the area around here that had geology that was similar. And every geological report and then use that to kind of interrupt the geology immediately under the site. And from that the immediate suspicion came that the department was out looking for places to put the waste here in everybody's backyard.

08:10:08

That really wasn't the case, and because our credibility was so low it took all night long to get people to halfway believe, maybe this was, was a reporter's fault not the Department of Energy. But a certain number of people of course didn't believe it even then.

Q:

What are the roots of that mistrust with the public?

A:

Oh I think there are a couple of things. All institutions tend to behave like black boxes. And public affairs people tend to get used sort of like a speaker on top of the black box. And the speaker is supposed to say, "This is what's going on inside the black box." Well, no matter how careful the spokesperson is that inevitably leads to distortion.

00:11:00

A:

Nobody can trust what's going on inside the black box. Now, all institutions sort of behave like that naturally, but the Department of Energy was much worse because we were deliberately secret. You know, we build bombs, this is national security, go away – don't ask any questions. So, our spokespersons say, kind of act like the guard outside the Magnificent Oz, you know, the Great Magnificent Oz is not in, go away.

00:11:27

A:

We're not here to answer your questions, you don't need to know. Well you add that to the natural tendencies of bureaucracies and it created an opportunity for people to believe whatever they wanted to believe about what was going on at Fernald. To undo that is very difficult.

Q:

When you're at some of these public meetings and you're dealing with some many folks from the surrounding communities, what were some of the things that you heard that they believed that were just like really out in left field?

00:11:58

A:

Oh, that the things that were left field were or simply weren't true, the notion that the water towers were deliberately painted a checkerboard color to make people believe that the site was making dog food or something. That is was a Purina Chow Plant, and it was this unfortunate thing that the name of the site was the Fernald Feed Material Production Site.

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A:

Well, (chuckling) it was feed to nuclear weapons complex, it was, that name came from internal myopia. You know, there was no since in what the public needed to know, yet clearly when the site got built, there were public announcements, there were newspaper articles about what was to be done here and what was to be made here. But over time because of the secrecy these kinds of things were able to evolve.

00:12:53

A:

What were some others? Um, oh, along with whole trains and all kinds of debris that are buried, supposedly buried on the site, there's a few bodies too. So, that's what happens when you become a black hole as people can read into it what ever they want. There were plenty of dirty, you know, skeletons, closets, but they weren't literally skeletons. But just aired, since those have been aired a lot of people believed what ever they wanted.

Q:

Now, were you here when the *Unsolved Mysteries* thing happened?

00:13:26

A:

Not when it happened (Comment: what that after you?) although I was here when Robert Stack did their story about it.

Q:

Tell me about that.

A:

Well, Robert, the producer called from *Unsolved Mysteries* and wanted to know about the story of this fellow who apparently disappeared in a salt vat at Fernald. I think there's good evidence that he went in there, but the kind of odor about it was peculiar. Kind of the story was spun that he, I mean, what I understand that happened, I'm not a firsthand witness.

00:14:06

A:

Was that this guy worked at the site, worked the night shift. He disappeared. Inquires were made about him, the sheriff came, couldn't find anything, but we did notice that the salt vat which was this big thing that was heated super hot, full of this liquid it had a continuous thermometer on it. And there was a dip in the temperature, which suggested that something had been put in that vault.

A:

And so, the sheriff requested that we drain it and we did drain it and in it we found what the coroner thought were some human bones and a little bit of debris, some eyelets from shoelaces and a little bit of keys. The coroner, I understand and again I have not read the coroners report because it was before my time, said that after, what the coroner does is do a lot of interviews and he believed that the most likely thing that occurred was suicide.

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00:15:11

A:

But there's minnesota that the guy was murdered and the odor is that, the suspicion that perhaps he knew some secrets about, you know, Fernald's pollution. Well the only trouble with that motive is that at the time the site was immune because of the way the federal laws were. And it wasn't a particular secret. I mean we were telling other federal agencies, it was a secret to the public but it wasn't secret to bureaucrats.

A:

So this is hardly a motive for, you know, to murder somebody. And we still don't know why this fellow disappeared, I mean, I've heard people think that he committed suicide, others think he was indeed murdered, and others think he just went over the fence and made it look like he died because he wanted to get away from personal situations.

00:15:55

Q:

What kind of a public affairs nightmare does that create?

A:

Well, that's a part of the background that makes it difficult to establish credibility. But, you know, it, that happened before my time, and it happened before, it was in the production years. And it still really doesn't have anything to do with the current mission. So, we're able to get past that, but it's certainly another obstacle in credibility.

00:16:27

Q:

Tell us a few other things that might be obstacles to credibility when it comes to dealing with the public as far as Fernald and the DOE complex in, in general.

A:

Oh, well, the big problem is institutional behavior. There's a tendency for bureaucrats to wanna do a good job. Every bureaucrat wants to be patted on the back (pats himself on the back) and "Oh you did a fine job." Now, this is an unrealistic expectation (laughing). Americans have a God given right to complain, and people don't get up in the morning and open their newspaper and say, "Gee, I'm so proud to be an American and so happy because there is a road that goes right from my house to where I need to get to work today."

00:17:08

A:

No, what they do is, "Darn those orange barrels." See, that's what people do. So people have this natural tendency to complain. Well, bureaucrats aren't really (chuckling), don't react well to that. I mean, they want to be patted on the back and they can't understand why we're doing the hardest, we're trying to do a good job here and all we do is get criticism.

A:

So, whenever they get criticized they tend to kind of huddle and come up with a better plan. And then

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come out with the next better plan and of course that gets criticized. And that makes them more defensive and more defensive and more defensive. This is that business of how institutions, all institutions tend to become black box, boxes.

00:17:50

A:

Well the trick is to quit letting the institution become a black box. The analogy I like to make is instead of being a black box you need to be a goldfish bowl and it needs to have people in the institution, usually public affairs, whose job it is, is to work kind of like the catfish and the, and the snails you know, that clean all the algae off the edge of the bowl, because that keeps the bowl clean.

00:18:14

A:

Now the bowl naturally wants to collect algae and turn into a black box, but you keep it nice and clean. All the people can look inside and see what's going on and ultimately participate in what's going on and things start to get better. Because, another phenomenon about Americans is that they're actually very forgiving. You can make a mistake, if it's like an honest mistake and people go "Oh, that's okay. It was an honest mistake."

A:

But what bureaucrats what to do is try to be perfect all the time. Well, you can't do that.

Q:

Tell us about the early days of dealing with the public when you first got here too. You're saying they're very mistrustful and how did you begin to change the Public Affairs Department here at Fernald to help them understand what was going on here.

00:19:04

A:

It was a long process, but the first thing that we had to do was start becoming responsive. Somebody asked a question we needed to give them an answer promptly, not three months later. And if we couldn't get an answer we had to tell them promptly that we couldn't get an answer and this is why. It was just this business of giving a hoot.

A:

When people called up it was important that we, when we went to public meeting if somebody had a question, no ma'am I don't know the answer to that but we'll get back to you and we wanted to get back to them within 24 - 48 hours. That was important. The second was to try to open up the decision making process so that people really had access to it.

00:19:43

A:

Another thing was you had to be very open about what your problems were. You had to kind of lay all the big mess out there so that people really understood what it was. As long as bureaucrats will have a tendency to say, "Don't worry, we've got it under control." Well, there's a thing that happens it's called the Violation of Maser's Law. The more you tell people, "It's okay," the more people get worried.

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A:

Well we wanted to demonstrate that we were at least as worried about the situation as they were and so that means we have to open up to them and say, "Oh, we've got this problem, we've got that problem, got this problem and we'd like to invite you to help us wrestle with those decisions."

00:20:20

A:

Another thing that had to happen was we had to have person-to-person relationships. You couldn't hide behind the bureaucratic wall. You really need to know people by name and establish relationships of trust. Because people don't trust facts anymore but they do trust people and if you, we developed a cadre of people whose job it was, was to go out and establish relationships, to be responsive and always be truthful over and over and over again.

00:20:54

Q:

So what were some of the things that you did to uh, establish this person-to-person contact? Did we hire more people, or how did that work?

A:

Uh, we might have gotten a few more people, but we had a fairly large public relations organization with the contractor already. But it was tended to be oriented toward um, kind of, "Well, let's do better window dressing. You know, let's write a better speech. Let's have a slicker graphic." Well, the trouble with slick graphics is they have an almost built-in lack of credibility to them.

00:21:29

A:

The slicker they are, the more PR'y they seemed. So, what we did instead was to begin to try and open up lots of doors and windows, so that people could have access to the site and understand what was going on. We need more interactive ways for the public to understand what was going on. We were able to introduce um, well, like games for instance.

00:21:52

A:

Um, one of the first games we did here was called "Cleanopoly." And the idea was to get everybody, opposing factions to sit around a table, kind of parlor, parlor game style. To get that kind of home atmosphere, and you get people who ordinarily wouldn't sit to each other. And you make people play this game, and play the role of the site manager. "Ooh, we got a budget problem here." See?

00:22:13

A:

So people began to see the institutional problems, why this couldn't be fixed overnight. Um, we knew that we needed an advisory board. Because we had problems that needed to be decided here that a bureaucrat couldn't decide, without the commitment of the community. So we needed to know, well, how clean is clean? I mean, how clean should we get this place? 'Cause we're talking billions of dollars here, depending on how clean you make it.

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00:22:41

A:

What do we do with the waste? I mean, it's a social problem, the waste; it's not just a technical one. Nobody wants it in their backyard. And for some people, not in my backyard means not on my planet. This makes it very difficult to come to a technical solution. Another issue was um, priorities. What should we do first? What should we do second? What should we do third?

00:23:03

A:

What's, what's the top of the list priorities? We knew that a good advisory board could help us with that, so we wanted to form that. We did. We did the Envoy Program. And that was to try and get anybody who had a concern for this site, had at least one person that they know they could call up on the phone and say, (brings right hand to right cheek) "What the heck's going on about 'X'?"

00:23:23

A:

And that person could give them a reliable and trustworthy answer. They didn't, there wasn't this bureaucratic wall out there, there was somebody I know on the site. And that evolved to things like um, Open House, um, to lots of workshops of all different kinds. And gradually, we really were able to get the community to help us come up with the solutions, and made our community part of solving the problem.

00:23:53

Q:

Along those same lines, let's uh, let's talk about FRESH, and your dealings with them when you first got here, and where they were sort of in their grassroots effort. They were formed um, somewhere around '85, '86 I believe. Um, what was your personal experience with that group when you came on site?

00:24:10

A:

Well, I was really nervous because I knew that they would be a key, key part of the solution, whatever that was, at Fernald. I had had considerable experience at the Hanford site, and I had observed there that we had not really engaged those activist groups in a constructive way. And I knew that had to be done here. So I kind o' gulped and immediately started going down to the week, to the monthly FRESH meetings.

00:24:39

A:

Now that pattern had already been started. Um, the demand, FRESH demanded it. So um, Pete um, Westinghouse guy, can't think of his last name (Comment: Pete Kelley.) Pete Kelley, yeah. Pete Kelley had already started um, that process. But for the first time, the govern-, I mean he was with the contractor. The government started coming down. And I was able to start controlling some institutional behavior.

00:25:13

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A:

I mean, not only could they get a Westinghouse answer, but they were gonna get a government answer, and they were gonna get it as soon as possible. Um, I spent a lot of time cultivating the leadership of FRESH, by trying to be responsive to their needs. Because until we got a level of trust between us and them, we really wouldn't get very far. And it took, I think a couple of years um, but um, now I

(Tape ends)

Tape FLHP0259

00:26:02

(Cameraman: Anytime)

Q:

Okay, we were just talking about the differences between Hanford and Fernald and you mentioned there were things you could do here that you couldn't do in Hanford. Can you tell us some of the things you could do and why?

00:26:12

A:

Well, at Hanford we started doing some research. Don Beck had just got his Ph.D. and had come on with Battelle Memorial Institute, Pacific Northwest Laboratory. He came to me and said, "Gee, let's do some research about how we solve problems." And went around and looked at different sites and environmental issues and find out who was doing it right and who was doing it wrong.

A:

And there was a blueprint in my head about well, gee you know, 'cause I'd been doing plenty of things wrong. I mean, one of the things I'd been doing spin doctoring and I didn't think I was doing spin doctoring, I thought I was telling the truth.

00:26:45

A:

But what I discovered was that all I was doing was providing programming for an entertainment industry when I talked about the news. The news is not there to solve problems; they're just there to sell advertising space. That's ultimately what their job is.

A:

Now some are better than others, but ultimately we have to understand what their mission is and that's to sell advertising, entertain people. So, that means we have to do something more deliberate if the government wants, if we really do represent the people of the United States and we want to improve a life of the Americans then we have to do something and not rely on the media to get the story straight.

00:27:26

A:

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‘Cause they, they just don’t. Not very often, least, if for no other reason, just because they oversimplified. It’s really almost always a lot more complex than a two and a half-minute segment on the TV can provide. So, when I came here I had an opportunity to do a lot of things I couldn’t do there, because back there it was a big bureaucracy. It was huge amounts of problems and I just didn’t have enough authority.

A:

But I came here, smaller pond but I got to be a bigger bullfrog. And a lot, we were looking for a way out. So somebody who had some answers was ready to be listened to. So, we started dealing with things, you know, we really had a dispute here.

00:28:12

A:

There are, there are three things that have to be dealt with if you’re going to have (air quotes) “peace and justice” and all that kind of stuff. Usually there’s a substantive issue and it can be water rights. It can be, you know, resources; it can be things like, you know, this cleanup issues here. But that’s one thing the substantive issue.

A:

The other is, the two, the second one is, do people like the process? Is this some process that we agree with? You know, Americans routinely will vote for a president that doesn’t get elected yet they still accept the president they didn’t elect because they believe in the process of majority rules. So we don’t have blood in the streets every four years.

00:28:58

A:

Okay that’s the process, I agree to that, well good. So, we as an institution of the Department of Energy needed to have a rational process for making decisions that people trusted. The third thing is probably, is at least important as the other two.

A:

The substantive and the process issues, the third is the respect issues. Did you ever win an argument with somebody and you got what you wanted but you went away feeling bitter about it? The person says “Well, here (gestures with right hand) take it then.” You see, because you were not treated with respect. Well, that was very important that we start behaving respectfully, respectfully to all the people who were players here at Fernald who had been affected by this, and we were able to do that. It took time, but as we did it, things got better.

00:29:47

Q:

And that’s mainly the neighbors, the surrounding communities.

A:

Oh, I think it was everybody. Not only the neighbors, it was our regulators; it was the Congressional Delegation, anybody who had an interest with this site, even reporters (chuckles) we had to treat them with great respect.

Q:

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I'd like to go back just a little bit and talk a little more about the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board and how that was put into place. Who were some of the major players that were originally on the board and what, what, what did the Department of Energy hope to accomplish by putting them in place?

00:30:24

A:

Well, I already talked about, to some degree about why we thought it was necessary to have a board. I also had a very deliberate notion of how a board ought to be set up. A lot of boards around the country kind of get set up in a haphazard way and I think that's a mistake. We got, we knew we didn't have enough creditability to appoint people, and I think it's important to appoint people.

A:

I don't think it's a good idea to just call for volunteers because the best people on the board are gonna be people who have very busy lives who are respected in the community, and you call for volunteers they're not, most of them are not going to volunteer. A few will, who are deeply interested in the issue, but, but you really need some people with a little objectivity too.

00:31:10

A:

So we got Eula Bingham, Dr. Eula Bingham who is a professor at University of Cincinnati. She was also the first head of OSHH, very distinguished woman. We said, "Eula, could you help us do this?" We contracted with her to go around and do interviews and try to interview everybody and every kind of opinion group around here and ask them about their concerns and a little bit about who they might, who they respected in the community.

A:

And then she went to those people and asked them if they would participate on the board. So we got a very good board. And another thing I asked Eula to do, I said, "Go out and find us a chairperson." 'Cause a chairperson needs to be a little bit above it all, needs to be a distinguished person, have good parliamentary skills and their only concern should be the furtherance of the process.

00:32:06

A:

Not their own particular issues. Well we got Dr. John Applegate, a professor of Environmental Law, very distinguished man. And the process was his issue so he was a wonderful chairman to help get us through some very thorny areas there.

Q:

Great, yeah, we interviewed him too, so we got sort of both sides of that. Yeah that's really wonderful. He was very proud to actually serve on the FCAB, so.

A:

Yeah, Dr. Applegate services, oh I can't say how many ways he helped further the process at Fernald.

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Q:

Great, when you saw things starting to change, did you map out a sort of plan for like maybe five years or something like that? And what kind of plan did you map out?

00:33:02

A:

Ah, from the time I got here I put together one-year plans, and we looked one year ahead. And what we tried to do was look at what I call the social landscape. What are the obstacles to the mission in that social landscape? And then we have to then get the institution to work to either reduce that obstacle or go around it.

A:

There are some things that are too big, you know, don't try and fight that, just don't go there. But there's some times you can reduce the social obstacle. But it often takes institutional behavior changes, you see you have to really go out with some alternatives. Okay there's three or four ways we can solve this and get people to buy into, okay let's take a look at those alternatives and come to a consensus decision about it and what would have been an obstacle ceases to be an obstacle.

00:33:54

A:

But there were other things, like for instance we can look at the mission for a year ahead and see what kind of big things we're gonna be doing. Well, if we're gonna start increasing truck traffic well, there's some people we ought to tell. I mean, there may be schools involved and school children trying to cross the street. Well, maybe we shouldn't run our trucks at certain hours of the day.

A:

Now the old behavior was we'd just make our plans and that was that. But now we said okay, every time we're gonna do something, well that's gonna have possible impacts in the community. Well, let's go out and talk to those people and get their input on that issue and then it ends up being a two way street. People go along, they know we've got to do something, but they see us modifying our behavior and people aren't angry.

00:34:44

Q:

Let's talk a little bit about the closure of Fernald and the kind of economic impacts that's gonna have on the surrounding community. Was that something that was discussed back in '92 and in subsequent years when you were here?

A:

Yes and I have to credit Gary Stegner with doing the real work to get the Community Reuse Organization going. Gary has been great all through this process and we worked as a team. I don't think anybody but

Public Affairs was concerned about the issue of economic development and I still don't think that the public here quite recognizes the impact that the site will have when it goes away.

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00:35:23

A:

There's a lot of jobs here and it will have an impact. But on the other hand at least now the community's going into it fully aware, it won't sneak up on them one day when they, site closes and all the jobs go away. Boom! Now what? We'll have a clear path as to what the future at Fernald's look like and what the community will look like as well.

Q:

Great, tell me about that first open house. What year was that and how did the public react to being able to go over on the process side?

00:35:55

A:

Well, I'm not a very good person to ask that, I mean, I, there were so many people here that were involved in that and by that time I had moved up to the Ohio Field Office and came down as an observer. But it was certainly a different world, I mean; people went, "Huh! A tour! At the site?" I'd like to see us do another one. I think it's good for the site.

00:36:22

Q:

Great, now they're tearing down buildings awfully fast and just on a real personal level, what would you like to see done with the land here?

A:

Ah, Public Affairs officers are not supposed to have personal opinions and to tell you the truth, that's the way it ought to be. You know, you don't want Public Affairs officers out there driving their own personal agendas. I've got one, but you know the one I really want is my professional one and that is that this site as a future, that was decided by the people who live here and that's the future that I want for this site.

Q:

Great, tell us a little bit about your job now. I know you're based up at Mound and tell us what you do now.

00:37:16

A:

Well, I'm now as Director of the Ohio Field Office, I still have responsibility for Fernald but Gary does most of the work here and has for a number of years. It's now my job to run interference with Headquarters so that, I do have some influence there and when they want to something or other that really isn't well considered, I say, (puts hand up) "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! We've got a public process down here and let's make it work."

A:

I try to get other sites, the five sites of the Ohio Field Office, to have programs that are similar to the site. Each, every, the social circumstances are different in every site, so I'm kind of there and frankly all of those sites do have very good programs. The Ohio Field Office has a reputation in the Department of Energy and largely in the nation, for doing this very well.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
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00:38:06

A:

In fact I now am in the position where I've gone to other places. I've gone to Brookhaven National Laboratory, to Paducah the Gaseous Diffusion Plant down there. I was even asked to go to Russia to help them institutionally. How do we change our behavior so that we can get something done here? Make a decision that doesn't stick because of the public turmoil over it? What do we do about that? Well, public involvement is powerful stuff if you learn how to do it right.

Q:

Tell me about the three-legged stool?

A:

Ah, early on we needed a doctrine for how we were going to behave in terms of an institution and it helped management understand what we were going to do with, I came up with a thing called the three-legged stool. Which is just a simple way of, you know, having three ideas to get across.

00:38:56

A:

The one was management involvement. Guess what bosses, you don't get to get out of this. This is your job, it's not Public Affairs' job. You don't stick us out there, little speaker out there on top of the black box. You're here to help us open all those doors and windows. You have a responsibility and the first and foremost responsibility of public affairs work is yours.

A:

Two, we do need public information, and we've got a good program there, that means we've got to write our documents in plain English. That means we've got to make all our information accessible to ordinary people. That means a seventh grade reading level. Now, seventh grade reading level doesn't mean we're talking down to people. I mean, Mark Twain wrote in a seventh grade reading level. That is plain English, anything higher than that is a specialized vocabulary.

00:39:44

A:

So we want to get down to what ordinary folks talk. So, doing good public information was important and we will provide lots of mediums for managers to help get that to a dialog. Then the third item of the three-legged stool was this business of person-to-person communication. People don't trust facts anymore, they tru-, they're looking for someone to trust.

A:

So we have to be trustworthy and we have to make personal relationships with anybody who's concerned with this site. So those three things are what we did and I think they made a big impact.

Q:

Great, let's talk just a little bit about funding issues and various administrations in your, your experience how's funding issues changed or how do you keep abreast of those?

00:40:32

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A:

Well, Congress is responsible for funding of course, but one of the wonderful things about public involvement is that if you want to get something funded then the more people that are involved the more likely it is that it's gonna get funded. The more successful the program is the more likely it is that it's gonna be funded. I mean, the fact is that politicians they love to stand in the middle of a crowd and if all the crowd is going "Yes! That's it!" That's where they want to be.

A:

So, our public involvement process builds the kind of consensus for an economic community that says this is something that we need to get done and this is something we should expend public treasure on. And politicians say, "You betcha." So I think our public involvement program has been good, for keeping pretty steady funding for the site.

00:41:25

A:

We've not had too many dips, and public involvement also made sure that that funding was effective; it got applied well. 'Cause we were held accountable, the people who were doing the work to meet up with the expectations. That's part of trustworthiness.

00:41:42

Q:

Great. Is uh, is there anything that we didn't talk about that you expected to talk about, anything you want to add?

A:

Only this, I think um, and we see disputes all over the world, and in order to resolve those disputes, it takes more than solving the substantive issues. I talked about the three kinds of things that have to be solved. It takes a willingness on the part of the disputing partners to want to solve it. And it also takes um, at least a few people who understand how to facilitate that, the dialogue, and make it work.

A:

So people like Dr. Applegate, our uh, Citizens Advisory Council, um, and our Public Affairs officers have shown a great deal of maturity and help make sure we had the mechanism in place to resolve the conflict that we had here at Fernald.

00:42:46

Q:

Great. One other thing, I, I'm kind of intrigued by the sense of history that's, not just here, but in the DOE complex. Um, why is it important to preserve some of that history?

A:

(Chuckles) I think the old an-, answer ah, was it, which historian it was, "He who does not learn his history is condemned to repeat it." Um, I think in fact, that we have learned, as bad as we think things are, the study of history tells us how much worse things were. Uh, we find out, you wanna find out about pollution?

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
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00:43:26

A:

What Cincinnati was like in 1910, when everybody was burning a coal stove and a coal gas lamp, and the, there were animals in the streets doing what animals do, including dying in the street. Open sewers that ran right down into the river. Um, also in our social mechanisms. You know, there was 200 and 300 years ago, um, 300 years ago they were still drawing and quartering in England.

00:43:53

A:

That means you know, dismembering people, and hanging their body parts up on a fence. Um, that's really not a very good way to solve disputes. And we've actually learned a lot, and if we build on this learning curve, if we teach our children how to, how to resolve conflict, and how do we cooperate together, it really is a much better place to live.

00:44:21

Q:

Great, is there anything else you want to add?

A:

Nah, that's plenty

Q:

Great.

A:

You made me talk for an hour (Ken begins to get up to leave).

Q:

(Laughing) Ken, that was wonderful. Quiet on the set. Shut those crickets up. This is nat sound.