

**000501 Interviewer:** All right, we're up and rockin'. I'd like to start by asking you to tell me your name and where you were born and raised.

**0001320 Donald:** Uh, my name's Donald Cook. I was born in Cincinnati, OH, and raised in Kentucky and come back to Ohio, and that's where I resided 'til I'm... still live in Ohio.

**0003020 Interviewer:** Where'd you go to high school?

**0003229 Donald:** Didn't go to high school, went to grade school in Addyston, Ohio.

**0003528 Interviewer:** What...down on the river?

**0003620 Donald:** Mmmhmm.

**0003702 Interviewer:** Then what did you do after grade school?

**0003923 Donald:** After grade school, I went to, uh, went to work down in Cincinnati at a...a manufacturing company during the war, it was after, it was during the World War II. I went to work at a manufacturing company down in Cincinnati.

**0005821 Interviewer:** What was Cincinnati like during World War II? Was it pretty busy? I hear stories about how that train station was busy all the time.

**0010425 Donald:** Oh yeah, very busy, they had a lot of buildings it was making war material for a...well it used to be a coffin company, stuff like that, they had making war materials. They was real busy. In fact, I had five jobs in one week. You didn't have a problem gettin' a job.

**0012325 Interviewer:** How did Americans feel about, uh, that were staying home, how did they feel about the war effort in supporting the troops over in Europe and fighting Japan?

**0013405 Donald:** Well, they, they was kind of...they wasn't as bad as it has been in the last few years, but they they accepted it. They they accepted it as a...in knowing that we had to do our part to win to win the war.

**0014917 Interviewer:** You met someone and got married. How did that happen, and how did you start raising a family, and where did you settle down to do that?

**0015800 Donald:** Uh, here on the East Miami River Road, I lived down at, down there close to Cleves and I met uh, this uh, my wife, my first wife, started going with her and worked at Schoenling's Distillery. And while I worked at Schoenling's, I got drafted to the Korean War. Where I went and served my two years before I got out I got married while I was home on leave.

**0022806 Interviewer:** Did you go, did you go over seas during the war?

**0023012 Donald:** Yeah, then after I got married, they shipped my over seas, so my, I had my first son, he was a couple of years old before I ever saw him. So when I come back and got out of the service, and we moved to Harrison, Ohio, I went back to Schoenling's Distillery, which they was closing down, from there I got a job at Fernald--National Lead Company of Ohio.

**0025412 Interviewer:** And where did you read about this job? Was it in a newspaper? Or how did you find out about a job opportunity there?

**0030026 Donald:** At Fernald?

**0030121 Interviewer:** Yeah?

**0030220 Donald:** Well, they was, everyone around this part of the country you know said Fernald was hiring. So this is in 19 and 53--I'm sure that's when I got out of the service, May 9th, uh, November I think I went to work at, uh, filled out my application, and they called me--Fernald. So, I went to work at Fernald, and worked there until 19 and 70.

**0032911 Interviewer:** Did they do any sort of information or background check on you when you filled out your application?

**0033228 Donald:** Oh, definitely.

**0033311 Interviewer:** What was that like?

**0033525 Donald:** They told about a P clearance. You go in on a P Clearance, you not allowed in no buildings. It was kind of security...when you had to be outside all the time on a P clearance. Well, here I was uh, worked thirty days and supposed to be and they'd get you Q-cleared and you allowed to go inside. And they told me that 90 days went by and I still wasn't Q-cleared. So, I had an interview with two security and a guy come in and said uh that was uh they couldn't get me Q-cleared on account I was supposed to have been killed in the Korean War at Lake Company B. And there was three of us that went to Europe see and I was one of three that went to Europe, so he had me...they had to go clear overseas to get me Q-cleared and realize that I was still living. See, so they had a...

**0043002 Interviewer:** They didn't trust you, huh?

**0043201 Donald:** Evidently, they thought I was somebody else. See this is what they had to make sure you was who that you said you was. And here they had a message that I was down missing at this company that I took basic training went to Korea and all of 'em got killed--that whole company--so, they thought. This was a confusion, so anyway, and after, oh, I don't know, 5 of 6 months, they finally Q-cleared me. Then I could go in all of the buildings.

**0045902 Interviewer:** What was your job, your first job there?

**0050117 Donald:** I was in the Transportation Department.

**0050326 Interviewer:** What were you moving back and forth?

**0050600 Donald:** Fork Truck, moving all the equipment, all this metal, and everything they made over there. Everything, all the uranium, orange oxide, and green salt, they called it. They had a name for all that. All that stuff they melted down and made ingots out of it, made uranium, metal out of, they had a name for it.

**0052621 Interviewer:** So, this material was in drums and you'd move it from one building to the next?

**0053001 Donald:** Right, in drums...drums and big containers, and when they'd make the metal, it's on big, metal skids. They made that metal out of this stuff--orange oxide, green salt--it's a lot different ore, uranium metal, uranium dust, if they made the metal out of, started...number 1 it goes all the way to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 plants, even plus the pilot plant. They was making part of it, too, so...so I did this for, then we, I got, from Fork Truck I got advanced up to MVO which is uh motor vehicle. You drive big trucks, automobiles. And from there again, I took and moved equipment, big dump trucks of sludge to K-65. You dump in these pits. And they didn't have the pits lined at this time. They would just dump 'em in big dig-out, big, open pits, and dump in' this here, all this waste in these K-65 pits, which run into, right next to this was made up of Paddy Run Creek, these pits was, and all the stuff run out of it into Paddy Run Creek. And, I live about 100 feet from the creek.

**0065826 Interviewer:** What shift did you work? Did you work different shifts?

**0070118 Donald:** Different shifts, uh-huh. Most of the time, I was on day shift, and then I, you could bid your job from a day. If you wanted to take the second for a while, you could maybe trade with a guy that's on second. So, I worked all three shifts.

**0071600 Interviewer:** How busy was the plant at the bi...you know, at the high point? I don't know if that was when you were working or not, but how busy was it?

**0072110 Donald:** Evidently, that's when we was workin' there...between 53 to, to 74, I think was the biggest peak of Fernald, National Lead.

**0073005 Interviewer:** How many people would work out there in a given shift?

**0073220 Donald:** Mmmmm...roughly, I'd say, uh, eight, eight hundred to a thousand people a shift, I'd say, yeah, maybe more.

**0074501 Interviewer:** What time did it start in the morning?

**0074606 Donald:** 8:30 in the morning, and it worked around the clock. You had 8:30 to 4:30, 4 to 12:30, and 12:30 to 7:30, I think it was, yeah.

**0075919 Interviewer:** When did you move, you moved at some point to a place on Paddy's Run?

**0080613 Donald:** Nineteen and fifty, fifty...five or fifty-six, I, we moved from Crosby Road to Paddy's Run Road.

**0081719 Interviewer:** Why did you move? What was, what did you like about that new place or that other place on Paddy's Run?

**0082306 Donald:** Well, it was a lot, see I lived in a house, uh, with another couple on Crosby Road, and we had, we could got this house, all, the whole house by ourselves, so that's the reason I moved over there. And, it was a little closer a little closer to the plant. So, uh, then in 1961, 62, 1961, I left there. The reason my wife was so sick, she couldn't take care of the place, and I got a smaller place here, on East Miami, down in Cleves.

**0085803 Interviewer:** Now, living so close to the place, to the site, what, uh, what did you have...were there smells when different things were going on?

**0090613 Donald:** Oh, definitely.

**0090613 Interviewer:** What was that like?

**0090816 Donald:** Every morning, you'd get up and have this acid in the air, you gotta, I have to run to my automobile just feel like it's stinging you. The, the after...the dust, every morning when the dew was falling, it'd fall on your skin. You'd have to run to your automobile, which was about 50 feet, or you'd feel that stinging. Oh, it'd fall on your face or your arms--you could feel it was stinging you. Acid, they said it was just acid, uh, you know, droppings from the acid from over there at plants two and three, plants two and three, which is close to K-65. So, there was always a smell. You could smell that orange oxide. You could see it in the sky. It was colored...the sun, you couldn't even see the sun it was so thick at times, and that orange oxide coming out of that acid recovery or acid fumes.

**0100228 Interviewer:** What did it smell like?

**0100418 Donald:** Well, like acid. You've smelled acid? That's what it smelled like. I mean it'd get in your nose. It wouldn't get in the house. Early at the morning, you'd hardly smell it, it was...the dampness of it, see...so, uh. But it was a continuous...I mean it never left.

**0103002 Interviewer:** What was the water source for your property?

**0103125 Donald:** Well, they said we had an underground well, and it was a perfect, it was good water 'cause Fernald used it. They used it over there at the plant. And, everybody around Fernald used that, supposedly an underground lake. So, anyways, by them running K-65. It was a well. I had a pitcher pump on my sink at a...you melt the sink around that pitcher pump and I'd just pump that water in it. It tasted like good water. We drank it for about three or four years

and my wife come up with this, uh, she got female problem. Took her to the doctor, and they said that she had cervical cancer. So, she had to rush up to the hospital, and she was there about a year--them operating, radiation treatments, one right after another, day and night. Sometimes I'd take her and I'd bring her back; and I take her, and I took her back, and they said her, they couldn't get her kidneys cleared up, to bring a sample of water. What was she drinking? I says, "Just plain water. She didn't drink a lot of extra..." Said bring a sample of water in. So, I took 'em in to old Dr. Stewarts, up 'ere in Hamilton, and they said that water's bad. Said it ain't good for her. They said could I get a bottle of water, I said, "Yeah, I can get a bottle of water. So, I got Talawanda water and uh, yeah, he said it'd be best that...if, uh, your, you know, you and your kids have drank the Talawanda too. So, that's what I did and found out the water was bad. It was contaminated.

**0120716 Interviewer:** With what?

**0120810 Donald:** With radiation. They never did come out, Doc Stewarts wouldn't come out and tell me it was radiation. They said the water was bad. So, then, I said, "What do you mean it's bad?" They said, "The lady at the hospital, she says it's contaminated, that it could be from living that close to that plant." I said, "Well, o.k." You know, I accepted that. I had to...and kept drinking bottled water. So, anyway, after that, she got in and out, in and out of the hospital and uh I had uh I had uh, I went to work one morning, I was up all... I had been up a lot of nights with her, and I went to work one morning...ten o'clock in the morning. I was on a truck, and we went out to the K-65, that dump load, me and my labor, I was the driver, and he was labor. So we go to K-65 and the truck quit. I was in the dump, I was up on me...was jerking to get the load out, the garbage that we took out of the trash truck, that's what I was on that week, the trash truck...the engine quit and it wouldn't start. So, one of the other drivers come out in a dumpster to dump the dumpster out there, and I saw him tell the garage that our truck quit...me and my labor. So we sat there and we both dozed off to sleep, and somebody...they didn't, the guy didn't come out to tell us, so here somebody noticed us...told the supervisor...division head, and they come out there. So, they take us both in, fired us both, right on the spot. I was off for four months. They cancelled my insurance the same day I was they fired me. Me and the other guy too. So, anyway, we fought it for three, four months we was off, couldn't get a job no place. So, we fought it and got our jobs back, plus. And they said, "Why did you go to arbitrating, you ever hear of arbitration?" Yeah. The arbitrator said, "Well, the man, his wife, at a young age, has had, has got cancer. He recognized this, see. That's the only reason I got back, me and my labor both got back on account of... And I was up, and I proved to him I was in the hospital late at...we all didn't get no sleep for two nights, two days and nights. And, I had to work. I told him that's the only reason I know I dozed off. I don't usually, I ain't no sleeper on the job. But, anyway, I was off for...and, I couldn't get hospital. They said, "you don't have any insurance. The only thing we can tell you is to take your wife home and keep her comfortable until...". So, I had to, that was the reason I had move from over there, moved down here, and, then the county let me put her back in the hospital, and she got...she improved. They had a new drug or something. And she improved some, but then in about six months, why she kept going down. She got worse. Passed away in September of 62 after I moved down there. So, after that, I got, like I say, I got back to work and I was single for about 8 or 9 years 'fore I remarried. Raised two kids, raised them two kids by myself.

**0151708 Interviewer:** How did you feel about...uh, sort of a connection, or were you starting to make the connection between the bad water and her cancer, or what?

**0152715 Donald:** Yeah, I explained, I said, well, gee, this main reason, well, I thought I gotta, I really couldn't afford it at the time to buy the bottled water. I said I gotta move from here on account of the water's bad. If the water's bad, it ain't no good this close, ain't no good for none of us. So, that's mainly the reason I moved from Paddy's Run, from Fernald. But, uh, and I explained to these doctors, that we had to go out and go to Cincinnati from Hamilton, and I explained to them that, uh, they said the water was bad up 'ere. But, anyway, we had to get a full report from Fort Hamilton Hospital of the all the time that she was in there and, you know, the medical stuff that they had given her and all this. And it stayed right in there--they had to change her water, I had to change her water, on account they couldn't clear her kidneys up from the bad water.

**0162329 Interviewer:** But they didn't, they don't have on the report the source of it?

**0163020 Donald:** No, they said they's never, and they said they would never pay for no wrongful death, or something, I don't know. Said that if they ever do, it would be the first one that would... It ain't the money. I said it wouldn't...a hundred million dollars wasn't going to bring her life back, but it would sure help 'cause I had doctor bills that they, for five years after that I had to keep paying on, that they had cancelled my insurance when they fired me. But, see, they had to take me back, but they sure didn't pay my hospital bills. See, so, anyway, then I worked about from 62 up to 70, then I said if I ever get a chance to, can leave here without, and get my severance pay for being here that long. So, then I took this, uh, this old Mr. McDonald would have been laid off, so I took his layoff and got my severance pay, which was about, oh, I don't know, eight or nine hundred dollars for being there 17 or 18 years, ever how long I was there. And, uh, so I didn't quit. I took his layoff, and when I took his layoff, and after that, why, that's when I quit--1970, July 1970.

**0174422 Interviewer:** Between the time of your wife's death and when you quit, did you ever speak to a supervisor, or someone in NLO, management, or in their health office, or something about what your doctor reported about the bad water?

**0180119 Donald:** Oh yeah, they didn't want to hear it. They just ignored it--they really ignored it. And, I said, "Well, I had to change water." In fact, I went to the lab and got a little jar, a little, clean jar, a little, I don't know, a pint. And, I went down there, just a clean jar, and I explained to them I'm going to take a sample of my water in to them, they told me to get a sample of my water and take to the doctors up 'ere. And, they, like I tell ya, they, they ignored it like uh...cause it's bad, if that water's bad over there, it's gotta be bad comin' out of these... So, they started gettin', they was gettin' bottled water. All them still drinkin' out of they had these water bottles...they had Talawanda water fountains in about every building. That's what they got.

**0184700 Interviewer:** On site?

**0184916 Donald:** On site. They sure did. Had that...I said well I need to get some Talawanda water 'cause I live over there. So, I got me, got a, filled my bottle of Talawanda water. So, in every one of them buildings, you see you had that Talawanda water, and I thought, well they knew that water was bad 'cause they ain't letting the guys drink it inside here. They drink that Talawanda, you know, bottled water.

**0191321 Interviewer:** So how did that make you feel?

**0191816 Donald:** It made me feel like, well, gee, they knew the water was bad, you know? Why did they let it go on, when the residents living around here that close was going to drink that bad water, knowing it was bad? It did, I got to thinking, well, this place is, is...if I can get out of here, take this fella here's layoff and get out of here, I'm going to be better off. So, that's what I did.

**0194426 Interviewer:** Did you ever get real sick or get any illnesses or anything?

**0194824 Donald:** Oh, I had a...they told me after I left there that I got, that I had TB. I had a back operation, o.k? After I left there, I had a back operation, and, uh, so, Bethesda Hospital said that couldn't operate on account I had a bad lung. And, wanted to where I was, uh, well, they called it TB. So I had to take, go down to the TB Center for about a year or two and take this here, some kind of treatments and medicine.

**0202017 Interviewer:** Did that surprise you when they told you you had TB?

**0202317 Donald:** I thought, well, where, you know, they said, "Where'd you get, uh, you ever been...?" I said no, I said. They, then they put out on a list that my mom had TB, and she didn't have it. She had it years, years ago. And they put down that, then all my kids have to go take this TB test and all this, it wasn't TB. Now they, this, this medical monitoring thing called it something else, and I've had it ever since I left Fernald. Said in my right lung. They called it something, they didn't, here I had taken them TB treatments down there for a year after I got my back operated on. And then, here, two years ago, they said I had prostate cancer. Then this lawyer for DeMarco sent a three-panel doctors said I should apply for workers' comp from Fernald. Well, I filed it, that lawyer did, and they sent it back said no, nothing you've got, you didn't get it at Fernald. And, I can show you a paper where it says right on it that stuff from Fernald causes lung cancer, prostate cancer, skin cancer, and this Lisa Crawford, she won on it. She already said she won a suit on it, from drinking bad water. Well, here, me, I didn't get nothing out of it. My kid didn't even get paid for living closer to Fernald than anybody, all the rest of the residents all got...

**0215803 Interviewer:** Why was that?

**0215421 Donald:** I don't know, said I was a worker. I worked at the plant, that I couldn't file for... I...didn't make sense to me. Cause I worked at the plant, that I was a worker, and I couldn't file for, that was a different class action, or, you know, said that would be coming up later--Class Action 2 and Class Action 1, I thought it was, something like that.

**0221809 Interviewer:** Did you participate in the Class Action that the workers filed?

**0222103 Donald:** Yeah, that one upset the, the workers all got, we all got, uh, I don't know, we got maybe 200 or something per every year we was there. We didn't get near nothing like the residents did, but I went to the laws, there was a lawyer up there, a judge there, meetings they had every time they had one for the workers, and uh and every year I'd go to that medical monitoring for Fernald. They get so much for giving the workers examination, they get so much a person for that.

**0230625 Interviewer:** Do you feel that the government owes you, uh, either in terms of money, an apology, or explanation about the health risk that you were exposed to on site and then your family was exposed to because you guys were living right across the street? What do you think the government should do in your case and maybe some other cases where they didn't?

**0233124 Donald:** Well, they should, the ones that are pushing up the daisies, they are done deceased and passed on. I mean there is no way we can bring them back, but I feel they owe me a plenty--money plus apologies. Plenty apologies and money 'cause it really set me back to have to pay hospital bills after I left Fernald. And it really shouldn't have been my fault, see. Hospital bills, aggravation, and worry, and losing my wife, there's no money in the world that can bring her back, but I feel that I should had, get reimbursed as much as anybody else got. And, a lot of people got quite a bit.

**0241525 Interviewer:** Did you feel while you were working there that you were working on behalf of the government for a mission to help the U.S. win the Cold War or felt that kind of a patriotic aspect?

**0243002 Donald:** Yeah, definitely, this is what I thought. You know, we're making uranium; we're making stuff for these here, to help fight them wars. And, here I was going, I was, we was driving. I was in, kept a motor vehicle operator driving. I was driving from Fernald to Adrian, Michigan, from Adrian, Michigan to Corvallis, Oregon, clear across the United States. Hauled the hottest stuff, we'd have to pull in on them port-of-entries, and they'd check my badge and say, "Well, you gotta get out of your truck for awhile, say we overnight." See, you gotta stay over. They pull your truck in the back, like a scale, you know how you go through. They call it a port-of-entry. And they'd explain this letter that you had to stop at all of them, and they'd check you... Well, they said mine was too hot to stay in the truck any longer, so I had to stay, we had to stay over night. And, the next morning, they'd put us back in and go on toward the...me and another...two of us, two guys and a truck. We'd go out there and pick up the other load that the other two guys took out. We'd take a load out and bring a load back. Evidently, the way I understand it, it was the hottest stuff ever made at Fernald.

**0254204 Interviewer:** Do you know what it was?

**0254322 Donald:** They said, thorium, that's what thorium is, thorium. I think that's what they...but, anyway, I got, we got pulled over in Columbia Highway, uh..



**0255219 Interviewer:** Where were you?

**0255400 Donald:** Close to the Columbia River. We were out in Oregon, and this patrolman said to open your...we got to see what your hauling. I said, "Man, we don't have no key for it." I said, "We can't get in that truck." "Don't tell me," he said, "I can get in it." I said, "Well, your, you, it's your privilege, brother. You can go and get in it if you want to. We have no keys." I said, "I'll give you my letter." And, he read that letter, and we went through the port-of-entry. I passed and didn't see it. It sent off to... So, anyway, I went on through it, 'cause I was driving, and I went on through it and didn't stop. They give you a sticker when you go through the... Well, that sticker, he noticed that sticker wasn't on there. So, well, he said I wanna take, you gotta go back. Three hundred and some miles, I said, "Man, I ain't going back." I said, "We was supposed to be in Corvallis, Oregon at four o'clock," I said. "Well, what are you hauling?" I said, "Well, it says in the letter, radioactive material. That's all we know." And, we didn't have no keys for the back. And we didn't, they didn't tell us what was in the back. Later on, I mean, they said it was thorium, some kind of hot thorium. They go out there and proc...do something to it...in Corvallis, Oregon, which is underneath the ground. It's a city underneath the ground, right on the coast, and they done something to the... What we took out, and then the other truck...there's two tr-, there trucks going all the time, delivering and taking the... And I got uh, I got, uh, this, this trooper, when I give him that letter... They give us that letter in case we got in any difficulty we couldn't solve ourselves, give him that letter, so... "What is this?" he says. I said, "Man, I don't know. You read the letter. As far as I know...". I thought, well, I don't want go back no three hundred miles, so I just told him, I said, "Well, I'll tell you, we supposed to be in Corvallis, Oregon at four o'clock, four-thirty in the evening." I said, "If we ain't there, I don't know, this truck might blow wide open." I said, "It might blow the city, the state of Oregon clear off the map." So, you know, I did this in order, just to more like a, so I wouldn't have to go all the way back. "By gosh," he said, "I'm going to escort you all the way to the next town, and I'll notify them that you accidentally by-passed a port-of-entry." So, we went on then. We went on, got on, got our load. We went on, dropped the truck off, and next day, got another truck, same truck, but they load it with different material so we can... That's what we did there the last part that I was at Fernald--we'd haul that stuff back and forth...to the Bureau of Mines in Corvallis, Oregon. I say it's a town underneath...a lot of people wouldn't believe that it's a town underneath the...looked to me, it's like a town underneath the ground. But they process this stuff, see, done something to it.

**0283322 Interviewer:** How did you feel when in the mid-1980's, or thereabouts, the newspapers starting reporting that there was discoveries that the wells were contaminated?

**0284505 Donald:** I expected it. I really expected it. I said I knew this would happen sooner or later. I said I knew this would happen, on account of...they convinced me when my wife, she was twenty-six when she had this. She, her mom is living today, 98, 99 years, way up, you know, and her sisters and brothers all living. Then, they proved to me when my wife passed away that, this was caused from bad water. Just like the doctor told me, he said, well, you're a man, when you come in, do you always clean your fingernails, and stuff, you know? This could very well be what contributed to your wife. I said, no, I wash. I wash coming out of there.

Yeah, he said, but this stuff could get underneath your fingernails. Well, wait a minute, I said, well, that's all I can do is wash. I'll said from now on, I'll clean, it's too late then, but I'll clean underneath my fingernails when I...just stuff like that, you know. That convinced me then when they come out with all this that that's what caused my wife's death.

**0295525 Interviewer:** How did that make you feel?

**0295819 Donald:** Made me feel pretty bad knowing that I worked there, and I could've prevented it by going somewhere else to get a job, or maybe out of the, wait till this...country, 'cause around here, this variety. Yeah, that made you feel kinda of...that made me feel that they was the on that caused her death. Left me with two kids. Like I said, I didn't think I'd ever get married again, but I needed to, see. Ten years went by, and I needed to get married again, and I got four kids. And, this one...the wife I got now, right after we got married, she had a problem. They said she was radio exposed. I was still working at Fernald, then. She said she never was over-exposed, but they said she was over-exposed by radiation. Which, how she got that, I don't know. Then, after that, that's when I quit. Whenever I, I said, well, I'm gonna leave, and I took his voluntary layoff. And, I never regretted it from one of the days. I'm glad I did leave when I did. I would've left sooner if I'd got a job somewhere else.

**0311224 Interviewer:** What do you think should be done to clean up the plant? Do you think they're doing what they should be doing?

**0312411 Donald:** They're supposed to be cleaning the plant up...they've checked so far under the dirt and all this here to make sure it's up...but, I don't believe they'll ever get all the radiation out of the dirt. It went so far down. And how they ever gonna get it out of the water after it went so far down into the lake. There's a lake that's supposed to be underneath there. This would be very good if they could ever get it all out, but I don't think they'll ever get it all out. But, they can sure, they supposed to be cleaning it up. There's still a clean-up team is the way I understand it. I haven't been back, I don't think I've ever been back over since I left. I don't think so, no.

**0320724 Interviewer:** You didn't go back for the fiftieth anniversary?

**0321007 Donald:** No, I would have went, but like I said, we was over at, like a say, over at Perkins, me and this guy, my buddy, we was over there, and they say they wasn't having it that day. We usually meet over there to Perkins, you see. So, they said they wasn't even going to have it today. And, if they'd of just said they were having a fiftieth anniversary, we could've went over there--it wasn't but three mile. But, we didn't know it, so we left. Well, they was supposed to have it Tue...the second Tuesday of every month over there at, where Perkins is.

**0323725 Interviewer:** Have you interacted some with folks you used to work with? Do you keep in touch with some of those people?

**0324222 Donald:** Oh, yeah, definitely, yeah, a lot of them. Not a lot of them, I know a lot of them I used to know are dead and gone. They sure are, what few is still living is, uh, you know, if they live around here pretty close I communicate with them, you know.

**0330016 Interviewer:** Do you guys ever talk about Fernald...

**0330303 Donald:** Oh, yeah.

**0330407 Interviewer:** ... times? What kind of thing would you talk about?

**0330519 Donald:** Talk about us working over there and the jobs that we was doing and not realizing what we was, that it was gonna affect us later. And, a lot of the guys would say, well, it didn't bother me, I'm still living, you know. I'd about to, you know, I would say that too--I'm still living, but I really think it bothered me, just like the lung problems and prostate. I think they contributed to it. So...

**0334128 Interviewer:** What did some of the other guys talk about? Do they have some of the same problems?

**0334618 Donald:** All of us usually got, everyone of them are up in age got something wrong with them. Everyone's got something wrong with them. But, some of them say, like I said, well, I'm still living, so, you know. But, I think every one of them has something wrong with them. I don't think I've talked to one guy that said...maybe one guy...I don't know. I went to a guy's funeral that died about a year ago and he said he was still healthy. He said, "I don't know nothing it's done to me. I'm feeling fine." I said, well, I'm glad for you. I said, That's good. That's good that he feels that way. It's good for, you know... So, but the majority, what's still living, there's something wrong with them. It might be, you know, might be old age, you know, but then they say they had this problem and this problem, and they had...every one of them had some kind of an operation or some kind of treatment. So, you know, it makes you feel like, well, you know, there's something that sure wasn't no good for people that worked over there during this time. Now, after they started to clean up, it was a lot better. They got rid of a lot of cleaning up, you know, that... **(His microphone slipped here, and the video was cut.)**

**0352009 Interviewer:** What kind of health or safety warnings or training when you got the job or later on in various tasks?

**0352500 Donald:** Oh, they would have, uh, have, uh, there was a health and safety group over there, strictly health and safety.

**0353703 In the background:** I'm sorry, could you start over again.

**0354213 Interviewer:** Go ahead.

**0354325 Donald:** They got a regular health and safety group over there, a lot of them that goes out and check the...they continuously checking. But, evidently, they didn't, the fumes and stuff,

they couldn't control that, but they'd make sure you were safe. You got your safety shoes on which you have to change off and there's, they got safety goggles and stuff like this. They did a good job, I think, doing it, but they couldn't control the damage of the dust and radiation was doing to people. That's the only thing that I condemn the Health and Safety Department about. Why didn't they tell people more that you're in a...we gotta move you out of that area cause you're, which they did to some people, they moved them out to the field, said you're too hot in that area, we'll move you out for, there, so... But, they didn't do that to all people. Some of them, it depended on what job they was on. Well, evidently, they figured, well, that guy was doing a great job on this one, we gonna leave him there no matter how bad it's hurting him, or, you know. And, they didn't do this to everybody. They had the regular health and safety group over there. The one building was strictly health and safety. They was, always had somebody out from health and safety guy that was checking for different things. Different health and safety guys would check for different things. But, to me it was like letting all this stuff going out in the air. They should've did something about that years ago. That's when it first started. They ought to knew that their air was full of radiation, all this fumes 'a-falling, and all of that stuff. And dumping raw sewage in just a big, open pit. After that, they lined the pit...too late, then. All the worst stuff they had, they dumped, whenever they dumped into that open pit, the worst. And, after they were cleaning up, they put that rubber liner in, but them holes, eating that rust and rubber lining had ran right in to the ground, right in to the water, right in to the dirt. Like I said, I believe they work another fifty years and still never get it out of the ground and get it enough to be where, like it used to be.

**0380117 Interviewer:** I've heard it told that one argument that is made is that the U.S. government did do some pollution and put some people at risk, the workers and some communities at risk, but it was justified because of the military or national security reasons that we were fighting the cold war. I don't know what you think, sort of the costs, the costs of doing that were versus the benefits, or do you think the United States should have done some rethinking of how they produced this stuff, or exactly how you feel about the impact or cost we paid for fighting the cold war.

**0384312 Donald:** They should have, the United States should have investigated that place, made sure they was getting to where they didn't care. See, back then, you cared about people to death. The people that worked there, they was producing this uranium. They were trying to get it out as fast as they could. And, why? At this time, the war wasn't that bad, I don't think. Korean War was, yeah, but this was after the Korean War that I went to work over there. And, they shouldn't have been that radical to have to risk peoples' lives or getting careless with this material that they was, the way they was handling it. Just like I said in the, guy across country with these trucks and hit the...why you could, you could contaminate a whole city with it. The way I got it figured, a whole city could have been contaminated by one truck, maybe it would have wrecked or something. See, I didn't have no idea it was a hot as it was, whatever we was hauling, that stuff to the West Coast. And, they was taking it up to Michigan, had another place up there. They called it, Freeport Brass (?). It was another part of working for this plant over here at Oak Ridge. Took a lot of it over to Oak Ridge, a lot of hauling. But, uh, they got to where, at this time, I don't believe they valued people's lives. They figured, well, you know, the way I figured it, maybe they figured if we lose a hundred people out of ten thousand, that ain't

bad, you know, which is a bad way to me of thinking. But, anyway, that's, uh... But, they supposed to be cleaning it up. They tell me it's clean, and the water's pure, and they checking the water closely.

**0404001 Interviewer:** Do you ever talk to your kids or grandkids about Fernald? Or, what would you want your kids to know about Fernald?

**0404707 Donald:** Oh, yeah, I got grandkids, they know quite a bit about it, you know, just from, I had so many different, I did quite a bit of relation work in Fernald, too, see. We get talking back and forth, and they'll ask questions. So, I just tell them. There ain't no use beating around the bush and tell them something different, you know, that it's not, that you don't know for sure. You tell them the truth, the facts. That's all you can tell them, the facts, and that you know what happened. There're quite a few of them. The little ones, they don't understand, yet. I got some little ones, yet. And, I got some grandkids up, close to thirty. And, they got kids. And, they, their kids, their mom and dad will tell them, no doubt.

**0413906 Interviewer:** I'm putting together an educational, this is an educational project. What do you think either history teachers or science teachers who talk about Fernald, what should they be telling their students for the future?

**0414820 Donald:** For the future, I'd say that every time that these government, uh, starts these here projects in these plants, whether it's the government or it's an individual, to have it checked out before they go in full action. I would say that, I mean myself. But, they're doing it so fast anymore that they're in operation before you even know what's happening. You don't know what they're making, or nothing, see. They're doing it so fast anymore. This'd be my advice for the younger generation, I tell you. If you don't know, there should be a Chamber of Commerce, or somebody, should get a hold of... if they're putting up something...they don't know what...check it out, 'cause they could be lying about what kind of plant they're putting up, or what kind of factory, or what they're doing, you know. That'd be my advice.

**0424622 Interviewer:** I'm finished. Is there anything else you want to say?

**0425016 Donald:** No, not at this time.