

## **NOTICE**

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**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

Name: Milt Holstein

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Project Number 20012

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**Tape FLHP0158**

18:01:04

Q:

Okay, first question if you could just give us your name, and spell it, make sure we have it right.

A:

Milton H. Holstein. M-I-L-T-O-N, H, I will not pronounce the word, H-O-L-S-T-E-I-N.

(Both giggle)

Q:

Great and if you could start with a little background. Um, how long have you lived in these, this area, and where you were born, where you went to school, a little bit about your background.

A:

Well, I was born in West Virginia. I went to school at Oak Hill, West Virginia. From Oak Hill, I went to Dunbar, West Virginia. Dunbar, West Virginia to Hamilton, Ohio. I worked for a plumbing and pipefitter outfit in Oak Hill. And then I went and work for the B.F. Goodrich Rubber Plant in Dunbar, and started at National Lead of Ohio here in Fernald in 1954.

18:02:00

Q:

Tell us a little bit about their recruiting efforts at B.F. Goodrich.

A:

You mean uh, hiring us or. Well, B.F. Goodrich was more, as the wars was over, but the Korean War was starting. Uh, they uh, wasn't nothing secret about it, it was just a synthetic rubber that they made there for the government. Which was used for uh, medical, medical supply, like rubber sheets, and stuff. And then of course, the rubber they used in the tires for the airplanes, army equipment.

18:02:44

Q:

And of course when the Korean War was ending, they shut it down just like they did after World War II. That's when I ended up at uh, National Lead of Ohio.

18:02:57

Q:

So tell me how you got your job at Fernald.

A:

Well, N-, National Lead sent some people down there to interview us, in different trades. They was looking for uh, chemical operators, pipefitters, and millwrights, welders. And if you uh, was a

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journeyman in that class, uh, they would ask, they asked you to come down here for a physical. 'Cause, which it would take you, three months to uh, investigate you.

18:03:31

A:

If you had any criminal records or anything like that, they wasn't interested. So I guess I passed 'em all. I in about three months to the day, that I was here for a, for an interview and a physical, uh, they call me. They call me to come and work. And when I came here and seen this place, I was very scared. 'Cause in the meantime, some people knew you was thinking about makin' this move.

18:03:59

A:

Oh, do, can't, "You better not do this. You better not do that. I've heard this. I've heard that." And uh, but ah, I didn't move here to start off with. I worked here six months before I uh, moved to Hamilton. 'Course Hamilton, you couldn't find a place to move.

18:04:18

A:

I uh, (chuckles) found a place out in Bath, Indiana. And in the meantime, they was starting to build this subdivision in Hamilton that I live in now, and I been there ever since. I lived there 40, 47 years.

Q:

So you said the site frightened you when you first came here. Um, what exactly were you worried about?

18:04:39

A:

Well, all they talked about was uranium, thorium, and this and that, well I, I didn't know what none o' this was. I never been involved with it in any way. And um, they would tell you stories that it would give ya cancer this, and cancer that, and make you sterile, and uh, all this. And uh, but uh, back then, if you had a chance to get a good job, you better took it.

18:05:07

A:

And uh, they was people come in here, this was the best jobs they ever had, really. And they knew it. And a lot o' people would go along with anything that the company wanted, but there was always these guys that wanted to backmouth, or badmouth this, or badmouth that. And we told a lot of 'em, well, now I liked it here. After I was here for a while, I liked this job.

18:05:31

A:

And uh, we used to tell these fellas, "Hey. You can go out the same road you came in. It's not blocked." So uh, so it went on, and ya just uh say ya meet, ya meet so many people, and some of 'em are good people. 'Course some of 'em was bad people, and uh. This was about one o' the best paying plants in the Ohio Valley. Because I know all the chemical operators here was the highest paid chemical operators in Ohio.

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18:06:03

A:

And the maintenance. Pipefitters and all. Our pay was about as higher or higher than the biggest part o' the plants in the Ohio Valley. So everybody just hung on, and we trudged it out for years. They started all kind o' activities here because all of us was so young then. They had softball teams, they had horseshoe teams, they had uh, uh, basketball.

18:06:31

A:

We didn't play any football though, but uh, we had golf tournaments, we had bowling leagues. And uh, just one big happy family. But the only time you ever heard most o' the badmouthing about this, was around contract time. When you start negotiating for your contracts. Well, everybody knew that they was already getting' paid more than anything else.

18:06:57

A:

These other companies just sit back and waited 'til National Lead settled their contracts. And then they would match 'em, or else close to matching em. And I see no excuse for not bein' happy the years I was here.

Q:

Tell me what uh, the early years were like, when you first got here in the '50s. Um, the plant had just gotten operational.

18:07:24

A:

Everything was a little turmoil. You know, it was, this was, was really new. Everything was new. The equipment. A lot o' this equipment we had never seen in other plants or factories or wherever we worked before, we'd never seen this kind o' equipment. And the procedures we were goin' through. And uh, well, just say they'd have a acid, they had a acid leak.

18:07:50

A:

Well, everybody get upset tight because they didn't. They know if they got on ya, it was burnt. But uh, everybody would run here, or run there, or outs-, covered. Call the fire department. They'd come down and water it down, and uh.

18:08:03

A:

These chips that come out o' Plant 6 from the, ingots that they machined, were very hot stuff. They put those in drums, and put, fill 'em full o' water. And put the lids on 'em. And they would sit 'em outside o' Plant 8 down there, and I've seen those lids blow 50-foot in the air. And then a big puff o' fire. 'Course they call the fire department down, and Charlie Alvis.

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18:08:32

A:

(Laughing) Charlie'd come down and water it down and put it out (laughs). And uh, just things like that. You know, it just seemed like things somethin' always getting' around your feet around here. You better be able to move if you had to move fast.

18:08:50

Q:

How much did you know about the process when you began here?

A:

I didn't know anything about it. All I knew, I was a pipefitter. And uh, I found some pipe here that they used here. I never, like \_\_\_\_\_, stainless steel, now that uh, I was never, with my past jobs, I was never involved with none o' that. I was mostly used to copper, or uh, black iron, or cast iron, or galvanized. That's usually the only kind o' pipe I'd been involved with.

18:09:27

A:

But here, you had a different pipe for about every chemical, chemical that they had here. And they had a lot o' chemicals here.

Q:

So why did the pipe material have to be different to handle chemicals?

A:

Well, there're just certain acids and stuff will work on different types of material. Like uh, the uh, hydrofluoride. That had to be monil pipe. And some o' the acids had to be the stainless steel pipe. Caustic and stuff like that, you could either run that through stainless steel, or you could run through black iron. And galvanized of course, is mostly just good for water.

18:10:07

A:

And black iron pipe was good if you used any kind o' gas. And uh, the inchonel, inchonel pipe was mostly used on the ammonia, for the ammonia part. Because it was, it had to go to, it would be cherry red, 'cause they would run this liquid through that and then this makes your gas.

18:10:32

A:

And uh, that was the difference, difference in the pipes and the materials and stuff that I run into here, well I used to.

Q:

So they heated the pipe and ran the material through it and that's what made the gas?

A:

Uh huh.

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Q:

Ah, I was wondering how they did that. \_\_\_\_\_? We're gonna pause for a second.

18:10:56

Q:

(Off-camera: is that worse? And we're rolling.) Okay. Um, what was a typical day like for you? What time did you get here, what kind of I mean, showers and all that stuff?

A:

Well, I would try and always be early, I never wanted to be late and rush, rush, rush. Of course, you had till 8:00 o'clock to punch in at the gate, but uh, I usually would get here around 7:30. That would give me plenty of time to change.

18:11:28

A:

You had two sides, you put your clean clothes over on this side in a locker and then went through a turnstile over and picked up your other clothes on the other side and you had a locker over there for your dirty clothes. And I always, I was usually here by 7:30.

18:11:43

A:

Unless it was a bad winter morning and everything was slower, and uh, you would usually run a little late. But the company excused that, I mean, they understand that it's better to get here than kill yourself trying to get here. So, they excused that. Of course they didn't pay you for the time, they deducted for what you was late.

Q:

And then what was your routine like throughout the day?

18:12:09

A:

Well, we would go down to the pipe shop and uh, job orders would be handed out. Here you go with two and three, and take care of these, and somebody else would go to Plant 5 and somebody would go to 6 and somebody would go to the Pilot Plant.

18:12:23

A:

And they had maintenance already in those areas but these would be jobs uh, the area foreman would say, "Well, I'm not gonna be able to take my men to do this job. So I'll have to send these job orders to the pipe shop," and uh, we worked outta the pipe shop and uh, for awhile and then I worked in all the areas.

18:12:47

A:

I worked up at the Boiler Plant for years, and down at the Pilot Plant for years and uh, when I retired and everything I was working up here in this area. I'd been up here about 5 years I guess, of course this up here was a pud to what that was down there.

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A:

'Cause it was much cleaner and uh, all the equipment you worked on was cleaner and simpler than uh, pumps, dust collectors and digesters and metal dissolvers and all that, so, uh, I had a good 5, 5, my last 5 years was good I'd say, here.

Q:

Okay. Um, if you could tell me a little bit about um, let's see, your Q clearance, um, what kind of security measures were in place when, uh, especially in the 50's and 60's?

18:13:48

A:

Oh, uh, you would come down here and get your physical and they would explain to you that you're gonna be investigated. Have you got any names you'd want to give us if we wanted to go ask these people about you? I said, yeah ask anybody you want to. Uh, because I had never been involved in any, uh, never been arrested in my life, I mighta got a couple of speeding tickets in my younger days.

18:14:20

A:

And uh, when I lived down around Charleston, when I lived down at Charleston-Dunbar we go back up to Oak Hill every once in a while and I'd run into some buddies of mine, or somebody I knew, "Hey," they'd say, "was you in some kind of trouble." Well, I don't know - whatta ya mean?

18:14:38

A:

'Well, there was a guy came to our house the other day and wanted to know if I ever knew Milt Holstein, if I knew of anything he'd ever done that uh, but he said he didn't tell me who he was. And he said I asked him well what is this all about? Well we're just investigating him for a job he wants. Oh. But he didn't tell anybody he was down here and for the government and all this and all that.

18:15:03

A:

So, he said, no, I just told him what I knew about you and that was all there was to it. And he left, and uh, of course as I say it took three months. But later on, later on they started giving out temporary badges. They wouldn't be through with your investigation but they would give you a temporary badge and you could come on here to work.

18:15:30

A:

But you wasn't allowed in certain areas. And some areas, well otherwise, you was supposed to be with a Q cleared personnel at all times. You never just turn around and walk off and go somewhere by yourself. Because if you did you was out the gate. And uh, you know they had around 3,500 people, I think, working here in '54.

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18:16:01

A:

And this plant was just built for 1,200 people to start with. And then that was one of, one of the sad things here. A lot of these guys thought they'd got organized and, come a big layoff. They'd layoff a bunch of men. And uh, of course sometimes maybe they wasn't laid off six months, they'd call 'em back.

18:16:25

A:

Some of 'em they would get back and some of 'em they wouldn't. Some of 'em would go ahead and find better jobs someplace else. Or as good a job. And that was one of the bad things here, you never figured you could really sit down and relax and say I've got it made for a good job.

18:16:44

A:

'Cause they had big layoffs here in the 60's, in the 60's, they laid off guys that had been here for 15 or 20 years. And that was hard to take. A lot of those men were uh, well they wasn't young chickens either like when they came here.

18:17:03

A:

And uh, you know, they say when you pass 40 you'd better be, have you a good job or know you're gonna keep one, because nobody wants you. That's too old. But uh, with the laws change and everything, anymore I don't think the plants can get by with that anymore. You know, like at one time if you, when you got 65 you had to retire.

18:17:25

A:

Well, that law was changed. You got a person working here right now, that I know he's in his 80's. Jim Wallace, works down in stores. I guess he's still here isn't he? (Comment: Yea, I think so.) Well, there's a man right there that, now I understand the reason Jim never did retire, Jim never would take the insurance here.

18:17:51

A:

So he, uh, you know if you don't have insurance, you know, and you go to the doctor or the hospital you'd better have some. 'Cause that's pretty expensive. I just had a little ole like, a colonoscopy here a month ago. That was way over \$2,000 dollars, to have that. And everybody should get that at least every 3 years.

18:18:16

A:

So these people that don't have insurance and if they get blood showing up here or something like that, they haven't got the money to go to the hospitals on. So, poor ole Jim, I don't know, he's gotta be walking around on a crane or crutches or something.



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Q:

When did you learn more about the process and was there any training?

18:18:47

A:

Uh, about the only training that we had here was on safety. Now to, uh, well they would once in awhile maybe call you in a have an outline of a building. Now we come in here and we do this, then we go over here that. 'Cause they didn't want you to know too much about this stuff. Really, if I worked in, if a chemical operator worked down in 2/3, they didn't want him, boy, sniffing around in 6.

18:19:19

A:

Or vicey versey, they didn't want a guy out of 6 down in 2/3 fooling around. They just didn't want you to uh, they wanted you to know your job and you forget about the other guy's job. But the maintenance they couldn't control that way because we was all over this plant. We went everywhere they sent us.

18:19:36

A:

Of course, really, I never did go out of my way to try to find out what they was really making, or what they made it for. I didn't care. When I went home I had the same attitude. I left it right here. My wife would ask me, I say don't ask me no questions about the place out there. I don't know. I can't tell ya. And that's the way it stayed.

Q:

Did you ever handle any classified documents or anything like that while you were here?

18:20:07

A:

No, no. The only thing I ever handled in papers or anything would of been, been mine, or a, or for me. But nothing else, about any kind of product or processing or anything like that. I never was involved in none of that.

Q:

You mentioned safety. What was safety like on site when you got here?

18:20:33

A:

Oh God, I wouldn't know where to start. It was, it was pitiful. Well they didn't know. I'd say everybody was new, supervision was new, and uh, they didn't have the, I don't think the safety equipment back then, that they've got now, just like those suits and stuff like.

18:20:55

A:

They had a couple of three little ole flimsy looking suits that they would wear out there around the tank farms sometime. But I have seen these millwrights sometime have to go, they would go right inside

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these dust collectors and change the dust bags and they wouldn't have a thing in the world on but a little respirator over their nose and mouth.

18:21:17

A:

They didn't have all this stuff over their body. They would come out of there; their uniforms would be green as grass from that green salt. Some guys would go right up in the smoking area, have that stuff all over their hands, light up a cigarette and stick right up to their mouth and smoke it. And there's been a lot of guys die here on account of that too.

18:21:41

A:

Caught up with 'em in later years. Get leukemia. There's been a lot of guys died with that leukemia. And then a lot of guys got cancer of the stomach, cancer of this, colon cancer; I had colon cancer myself. It was caught right here at this plant. The doctor told me that you should go to your doctor and get, find out what your problem is.

Q:

Did the supervision here ever make you aware of the danger of working with uranium?

18:22:14

A:

No, they never told us. We worked in thorium and I didn't even know that. We worked in some plutonium, I didn't even, I didn't even know we had it here. But Bob Schwab is the one that told me that, no he said they had that over in Plant 4 when you worked over there.

18:22:34

A:

They was working with it up on the upper deck, upstairs, and of course you walk by or around it, but uh, some of the metals they made here, I didn't know they had it here. One time they, uh I was working as a pipefitter over in the Boiler Plant. Of course a pipefitter out of the Boiler Plant had to take you to the maintenance, over in Plant 1.

18:22:57

A:

They had some stuff over there in a crusher, a hydraulic, big hydraulic pressure, and they had tarpaulins all the way around that and they had two guards standing right there outside that tarpaulin. What had happened, in trying to crush this stuff they bursted the hydraulic lines. It wouldn't take the pressure.

18:23:22

A:

I had to get down in there, right down in this stuff, and take those bursted lines out and replace them with new ones. Now what that was I had no idea in the world what that was and I didn't even ask, 'cause I didn't care. But it was real glassy looking and it was round, just in round pieces about like that and about that long.

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18:23:47

A:

And they would put this ram up against that and try to crush it, that's when they blowed those hoses. Now, that was something hard. That was some kind of metal that was really hard. But what they was gonna do with it after they crushed it I don't know. I didn't know.

Q:

How did it make you feel about your government that uh, they didn't inform you of the hazards of working with this material?

18:24:17

A:

I don't know if that was just individual thinking of some people or uh, whether it was a rule that the government had. If this guy wants that job let him have it but if he starts nosing and asking around – get rid of him. Because your country, I would say, you've got to have some secrets.

18:24:39

A:

And I know there's a lot of people that have to give them orders for you to do something that they don't want to do that, but he's got a job, somebody's gonna do it. But uh, now a lot of people really hates this place because of some of those things that we did, and worked in was never talked what it was.

18:25:07

A:

But uh, United States has got to stay ahead of all these other countries, because when we stop feeding these other countries they'll start shooting at us. So we've got to be ready for 'em. Any uh, you know I seen something the other night right there on Discovery, and I never even knew that they did it. This little island uh, out there in the Pacific, where they dropped that hydrogen bomb.

18:25:37

A:

There was 2 or 300 people lived on that little island, they just went there, but they took all them away from there, and they dropped that hydrogen bomb. It just destroyed that island. Now that was supposed to have been a 50 time or 100 times more explosive than the atomic bomb that we dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima over there.

18:26:04

A:

But uh, as I say you've got to have places like this to make that stuff. If we just sat over here and never made nothing to defend ourself – why, hey it would be awful. Be awful. So uh, I don't know, I just to say I thought I had a good job here and uh, it's a risk if you walk down the street.

18:26:33

A:

You don't know if some jo-jo is gonna run up on the sidewalk and run over ya or not, I mean. And here, you just go home at night and get in the bed and think, you didn't even close the place down here

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all day, you breathe a lot of stuff, uh and you just wondered well, is this gonna be a killer of me or isn't it. So – I wouldn't know.

18:27:00

A:

Everybody's got their own thoughts. I, one way I could tell myself I regretted I ever started here, and then I'd say well where would you be today if you didn't go there. And uh, me and my wife we had a pretty good life living here, I mean, we had a lot more than some people and of course, we didn't have as much as some people.

18:27:25

A:

But uh, we just never did think too much about it. Just let the good times roll, that's all you think (laughter).

Q:

Now, when you come to site now and you see photographs and pictures of people in full anti-C's and helmets and gloves uh, working in the same area

A:

I'm glad for 'em, I really am. I'm glad for 'em.

Q:

How does that make you feel for yourself?

18:27:53

A:

Well, I mean, I don't feel like I've been neglected. 'Cause times change. Models of cars change. Everything changes. So from the time I worked here and these people started working here, times changed. The, the improvements in stuff everyday, stuff becomes obsolete everyday.

18:28:12

A:

At one time that's all you had, now it's obsolete, they don't have, they've got something different. These people that's working here today in this stuff, maybe if they stay here long enough, they're gonna see different stuff than they got right now. 'Cause they're making different stuff everyday. That's what keeps the world going.

18:28:31

A:

You can't just sit down and make one thing and think you're gonna live forever on it. You're not gonna do it. But it's good, I'm glad these people got all this stuff. And they're not even really, they're not in no production here. The only production going here is getting this stuff into this box or into this barrel or into this and shipping it outta here and getting rid of it.

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18:28:53

A:

But I don't know what they ever will do with all this dirt out here. I know there's gotta be stuff a hundred miles down. As much as run out on the ground. 'Cause when we, now I was talking to people about the weather out here, I have never in my life seen some of the rainstorms we've got right here at this plant. You couldn't believe it. All these streets would look just like a creek.

18:29:17

A:

And it all run that way. All ran that way. Right down toward uh, Paddy's Run. And I can understand these people out in these little villages around here that some of that water had to have some contamination in it. It would get in their wells, and get in their gardens where they plant their gardens. And their fields of corn and stuff. It's gotta be there.

18:29:42

A:

Because it laid on top of the ground around here. I seen them go from, hook up to one of those uh, trucks with uh, hoppers over in denitration to bring it over to Plant 4, that's where it came, and they'd take it up on the last floor and then they'd feed it down through there.

18:30:02

A:

That was orange oxide side, when it came out downstairs, it was green salt. But I have seen where one of them hoppers coming across from denitration over to Plant 4, there be a continuous stream of it going right across the street.

Q:

We're going to take a break for a second. We need to change tapes.

**TAPE FLHP0159**

19:01:00

Q:

We were talking a little bit about safety out at the plant. And what were your main concerns during the years that you worked at Fernald?

A:

Well I always tried to go with the safety rules. I mean because I figured that was the best route. 'Cause you can uh, you can sometimes go out on a limb and do something and uh, you get by with it. But they say eventually it's gonna catch up with ya and uh you're the one that's gonna suffer.

19:01:36

A:

So why take that road, just stay on the one you're on. Safety there's uh, millions of dollars spent on safety. Just little things that you don't think would interfere with ya. But if you want to go ahead and kick it around it's your own butt you're kicking around, I guarantee ya.

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Q:

What were some of the precautions you took while you were working out in the plants?

A:

Well, I was always sure, which still didn't mean much, but you had to have it, or you better have it, or something happens. You are supposed to have a permit.

19:02:19

A:

If they asked you say over in Plant 4, you go back in the HF area and disconnect the HF pumps back there, for the millwrights, we would take the piping loose and the millwrights would come and remove the pump. If you go back there and you bust a flan-, you ain't got no permit, and you go back there and bust a flange loose, or break a union loose and you get a puss full of HF you'll wish you'd got a permit.

19:02:51

A:

Because you, that, when you get that permit it's suppose to have the line cleaned out and washed out and so on and so forth. And okayed by the supervisor to take it apart. But there have been people that went on and did this job and some of them dodged the bullet and some didn't. Of course, they've, we've had some pretty serious burns here with that HF just cause the guys wasn't thinking.

19:03:20

A:

When you see that HF you'd better move. 'Cause you just have perspiration on your body that HF will burn you just like you stuck your arms in the fire. Because when it touches water, HF, the gas, that fires it up. That really ignites it. It'll burn you up right now. They was a guy that lost all his toes over in 7 when they was operating that place I think.

19:03:57

A:

He walked through some. See HF is liquid, but they do heat it and put it in a gas form for different uses. But if any of the liquid is run out on the floor and you walk through it, it'll eat the soles right off your shoes, right now. And when it hits your skin it's gonna start eating on it right quick too.

19:04:20

A:

So, I understand, this happened right after Plant 7 opened. They had some hot stuff in that building. Let's see, I worked in there about 6 months and then they was gonna close, and then I moved on to Plant 4, they was gonna open up Plant 4, and it was full of HF that 4 was.

19:04:44

A:

They had tanks after tanks of that sitting out there in the tank farm and uh, and I've seen them chemical operators go out through there, where there'd be HF, and walk right through that HF and (simulates coughing) like he's choking to death. No wonder – he's breathing that stuff. Old Red Morrison, I don't know if he's still living or not, but he was a chemical operator out there for years.

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19:05:08

A:

I seen that man sit and cough and cough and cough and smoking them cigarettes. I said Red I don't know which one of them's gonna get ya the cigarettes or the HF, but one of 'em's gonna get ya. So I don't know if the old man is still living or not. We had one guy that just dropped dead out there.

19:05:28

A:

And his daughter worked right over here in Personnel. We had several guys drop dead here on the project. Pfeiffer dropped dead up in the Boiler Plant. Operator dropped dead over in 6. Had two men killed in 9. One man killed outside of 9. One man killed inside of 8. And, you never know.

19:05:55

Q:

Tell me about ah, the fatality that you were closest to. Um, something that you saw that you were closest to.

A:

Well, let's see, I had just left the Tank Farm over there and that guy had his heart attack and died. I didn't see any of it. Um, George, he was up in the Boiler House basement. He was a pipefitter, I, I seen the Fire and Safety, Health and Fire and Safety go up there, but uh, I didn't know it was him 'til they, I didn't see him then.

19:06:32

A:

Ah, the just, plainest thing I seen, well, I mean I seen the bodies after it was over. But uh, the guys handling 'em, and doin' 'em, no, I just can't recall seeing 'em. The guy in 8, that happened on the third shift. He was up on the side of a piece of equipment, and Construction was diggin', had this hole cut in the floor from the second to go down to the first. They were gonna put a uh, a conveyer in there.

19:07:04

A:

He jumped off o' that piece of equipment over onto a board that was layin' over this hole, and the board broke. And he went down headfirst, and there was a fork truck sitting down there. Hit him right in the head. I don't know if it killed him instantly or not, but he, he was dead after they got him to the hospital.

19:07:27

A:

And them guys over in 9, now that happened the week I come here. That's one thing, you asked me 'bout what was I scared about. Well, when I came here, and I was workin' down in 2/3. They was tellin' me about 2 guys getting killed last week, over in Plant 9. And I thought, "Oh, no. What happened to them?"

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**Transcript**

19:07:50

A:

They had a experimental pot like sittin' there in the floor. And it was red hot. Had some kind o' metal in it. It was red hot. They was goin' to turn, turn somethin' off on it, and one o' the guys walked over and by mistake, he opened the water valve. And the minute that water hit that red, it just blew. It just blew all over the. Their shoe sole imprints was in the floor. It burnt them up before they knew what was goin' on.

19:08:26

A:

And the other guy that got killed, he was a Construction guy. He was, he had crawled up under a bulldozer to grease some fittings on it, and it was around noon. He thought the operator was having lunch. Well, the operator had come back and just got up in the bulldozer and started it up, and wheeled it around, and when he did, they. They had to shovel him up.

19:08:50

A:

They had to get up there and pull that operator's hands off o' them levers. He, he just froze like that. But they had to (chuckling) shovel that poor guy up down there, he was flat as a sheet. Well, I heard another one, but \_\_\_\_\_ that helped you know, throw a little fuel on the fire (laughing) about bein' scared.

19:09:17

Q:

Tell me a little bit about uh, removing asbestos.

A:

That was just a routine thing around here for years and years. That's all I ever knew to insulate uh, steam pipes with. Because there was four, really, real-, really four steam pipes, hot pipes, or call hot water pipes. Uh, they have insulated water lines with it, stuff like that. But that's all they had on the project. And that stuff got tore up so easy. It run into it or bump it with somethin', it would just break up.

19:09:54

A:

And it'd just be like uh, you see these dandelions how they, them little ole' white things come apart and go blowing. That's the way this asbestos'll do. It just shreds off like that. Then when OSHA stepped in, that was the end of uh, asbestos. Now I don't know if they ever got it all off o' this project or not. I know when I left here, they was plenty of it over there in the medical building, down in the basement.

19:10:25

A:

'Cause all those pipes down there was insulated with asbestos. Now whether they ever laminated it, I don't know. They was a lot of it in the uh, Lab Building, too. If you found a piece of pipe, after all this OSHA stuff, if you found a piece of asbestos, you better not touch it. Now this was after uh, Westinghouse came in. You better not touch it or buddy; you've had it.



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**Transcript**

19:10:53

A:

Uh, you've had to call Fire and Safety. They would come down and see how much was there. How it was wrapped. Usually, they would put that on the pipe, and then put aluminum foil like around it, with screws in it. And down through the years, that got bumped, bumped, bumped, and it was just loose stuff hanging in it.

19:11:12

A:

When you take that aluminum loose, it's all just gonna fall down there on the floor, and then up comes all this dust and you're sittin' there eating it. But uh, George Morgan, now he, he was hired in here as a pipefitter, but he was originally a uh, a insulator. I'm tellin' you the truth; I've seen that man eat that stuff. I'm not kidding ya. I've seen him eat it.

19:11:35

A:

He would have that all over his hands, it looked just like flour, and he chewed. Chewed tobacco. He would take his hand just reach right down in that bag o' tobacco and get him one and stick it right in his mouth. Now I don't know if the man's still livin' today or not. But he should of died 40 years ago (laughing). He worked in it day after day after day. He worked in that asbestos.

19:12:05

A:

But they really claimed they stopped that. They replaced it with some kind o' stuff, and I'm tellin' ya, it was, we called it "egg shells." You could just breathe on it and it'd break. But that's what took the place o' asbestos, when they took it out. You know, all these buildings that had this uh, these panels on, around 'em, that big ole' gray. That had asbestos in it. That, that stuff come from Canada.

19:12:33

A:

That's where they bought that from, Canada. And uh, now I know they was gonna remove that all off all these buildings out here when they, I don't know how they handled it. I don't know, I didn't see none o' that. But that had asbestos in it. They was a lot of holes uh, holes knocked in these buildings where uh, been bumped with fork trucks and this, and that stuff, it was pretty brittle, it'd break.

19:13:03

A:

Now they went on a repair basis here one time, they was gonna fix all them holes, you know. But they couldn't find none o' that stuff. Uh, they had quit makin' it, uh, in Canada, whoever company made it, uh, they couldn't get nothing else so I don't know what they did. But I, I'd like to know what they did with all that they took off all these buildings. Boy, there'd be a trainload of it.

19:13:30

Q:

That's transite, transite, the outside. Yeah. They handle that very carefully.

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**Transcript**

A:  
I imagine, 'cause they said there was a lot o' asbestos in it.

Q:  
Umm.

19:13:45

A:  
I was telling you there awhile ago about those hoppers being towed from denitration over to 4. After this uh, after this went through the reactors in Plant 4, it turned into green salt, it went over into another hopper, it was loaded in drums, well, it was cans really.

19:14:11

A:  
They were uh, 10-gallon cans. They filled those right there before you stepped in the front uh, side door of 4. Now these, they had these trucks, flat bed, they would stack those on. And haul it over to Plant 5, they'd go over to Plant 5. Now is wasn't nothing to see one of them come tumbling down off that truck and hit the street, the lid flies off it.

19:14:41

A:  
Here's HF; I mean green salt laying all over the place. And the same thing when the, when they would go bring the empty cans back. Boy, that fork truck driver - he'd be a getting it down the street and cans go flying every, well there's a little bit left in every can. Green salt strewn all over.

19:15:01

A:  
They would eventually get two laborers over there, they'd call for two laborers, they'd come over and sweep it up and put it in ah, but he didn't get it all. That stuff will still be well, as I say, now if a good rain, that goes right down the storm sewer.

19:15:16

A:  
Or if it's a windy day and it's hot that stuffs blowing around out in the air. So. But uh, I don't know if they very uh, really uh, made any chan-, the last time I seen they was still hauling them hoppers and putting it in them five gallon cans and hauling it over to 5. So that was a bad thing here.

Q:  
How about the silos? Did you ever have any involvement with the silos?

19:15:47

A:  
Over at 1? Years ago, they wasn't in use, some of those, I don't think they ever used some of those over there. They built those to store that material in. Now they did have one over there that they had some gray looking stuff in there. And we had to go up on top of those silos.

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**Transcript**

19:16:10

A:

I remember we was doing that on the even, we had to fight those pigeons, them pigeons was gonna eat us up up there because they was wanting to go to bed. And here we are up there tearing out all this piping; they just come and went right at ya.

19:16:26

A:

But we was uh, changing a lot of pipes up on top of there and they cleaned, and then they took it all out of there and put it in bags, I don't know what they were doing, I don't even know what it was. It just looked like gray, gray sand. But I don't know what they ever did with it.

19:16:45

A:

And uh, but uh, I understood some of the silos though was never used. I never did work on 'em for anything. I never did do any jobs on 'em. And I worked over in Plant 1 quite a bit. But uh, see, was they got to the point uh, now whether they was gonna put that stuff in them silos and then let it drop down on the conveyors, cause them conveyors run from to the top of digestion over there.

19:17:16

A:

And but uh, they was, all this material that I ever seen coming from Plant 1 going to digestion they was sitting it on the s-, uh, oh the uh, escalators or elevators just in the barrels. And they would take 'em in the top of 2/3 or digestion and dump 'em from up there. Which they had digesters sitting down where they dissolved that stuff with acid.

19:17:45

A:

Now they had that muriatic acid down there that dissolved that. There was another that was pretty hazardous job. There was a supervisor one night got us to go back in there and take the bottom off of one of those digesters. And we got all the bolts out of it and my buddy took his wrench and just hit that valve to loosen it - acid started squirting out the sides.

19:18:13

A:

Well we all took off and got out of there. Come to find out he showed us the wrong digester. That thing was full of acid. That acid came all down in that floor, run outside, eat up all the floor, concrete out there, and all the stuff, clear out into the uh, they had that soapstone all over the, started eating, you could just see that stuff start foaming where it was running eating it up.

19:18:41

A:

Eat that all up. Oh what a mess. I think they hung that foreman, I don't know. I never did see him no more. He just told us, took us back in, said I want that valve pulled out of that digester right there. Well now that was, see, back in the days where they didn't push those permits. I don't know what he had a job order or not.

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**Transcript**

19:19:03

A:

But, maybe he did and he looked at it and after he looked at it he had pointed at the wrong digester. The wrong number. They all had numbers. And I just figured that he looked at the wrong number and that's why, we could have both got burnt pretty bad by that acid. But uh, so I say, no matter how careful you are you can still get hurt.

19:19:27

Q:

In the mid 80's, 84, 85 somewhere around there um, there's a series of dust collector leaks in Plant 9. Can you just tell us your point of view, what happened there?

A:

Yes, this one dust collector really started the ball rolling around here. This leak showed up and then they knew, they tried to say at first too much of it didn't get in the air, but they come to find out later that more got into the air than they thought.

19:20:00

A:

And then they started checking all these other dust collectors. And they really found smaller leaks in a lot of them. Well, then, that's when, I was telling ya about, they wanted, well Fire and Safety, or Health and Safety, anytime they wanted to check the flow of those dust collectors they would have to go up on the top floor.

19:20:24

A:

Where the vent went outside and they had a little sampler like thing sitting there and they'd take that out and look at it. And how they read it or what it was supposed to tell them I don't know.

19:20:36

A:

And that's when they decided they would put a nanometer on each stack from each dust collector and run a line to the panel board. And put a nanometer right down there where, these nanometers were so small, they had like a little BB in it, but when you'd turn in on, that little BB would raise up. Cause that showed you there was flow going through there.

19:20:59

A:

And that's how they could tell then that they was getting the right flow from that dust collector upstairs. But if that BB fell down, they had a problem. But now, as I was telling ya, I rode with Yawn Schafner, and he told me all about, he found that leak on that dust collector and he told his supervisor, his foreman, that there was a leak up there on that dust collector.

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**Transcript**

19:21:30

A:

So he told Macaffie, he was the area supervisor, plant supervisor for Plant 9, well that concerned Macaffie too, that sort of shook him up, so he goes to the front office. They told him you run your building, we'll take care, if there's any responsibilities we'll accept them.

19:21:53

A:

So from then on it seemed to me like Macaffie just went downhill. He just, well really his son and daughter-in-law just got murdered down there in uh, it was Georgia, or somewhere down there in one of those, and he'd never got over that. And when he retired, I talked to him over in the locker room. And he said, "I don't know what I'm gonna do."

19:22:25

A:

He says, "I come in here and I give these people," I think he said "30 some years o' my life." And he said, "They're kicking me out o' here like I was garbage." Usually, any supervisor that was retiring, they give him a big dinner up in Hamiltonian, or here, or there. They never brought that guy anywhere.

19:22:49

A:

Just kicked him right out the gate, and so it wasn't long after that he stuck his shotgun in his mouth and hit the trigger. And he was uh; Wes was a nice guy. He was as nice a fellow as you'd wanna know. And he was always a good worker here, and always done his job. He was doin' his job when he told 'em about that. But they didn't accept it that way.

19:23:13

A:

They knew th-, I think, well, everybody was scared, I mean up in the front echelon. Up here, everybody was scared 'cause they didn't know what was goin' on, or what this was gonna amount to. Well, that was, that was there in, that was in '83 or '84. They still run for, but '85, that's when they shut her down, the production. Production was shut down.

19:23:41

A:

So I don't know this, that was uh, really stirred up a stink uh, in this whole part of Ohio when they knew, found out one o' those dust collectors was leaking, 'cause they really didn't know how long it'd been leaking. But they tried to cover it up like, "Oh, no big deal. We've had these times before. We've had this happen before, pinch. Well."

19:24:07

A:

When the Senators, and Congressmen's, and Mayors, and everybody else started comin' in here. Now there was somethin' that I would of bet money that would never happen. With the security that they

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had here, they wasn't nobody, nobody got by that gate out there unless he was escorted by. Well, when all that happened, why, here comes writers in here, photographers in here, the TVs trucks in here.

19:24:35

A:

Takin' pictures o' this, takin' pictures o' that, why, that was really a no-no. But hey, they couldn't stop it. So it went on and on and on, they just, National Lead just throwed up their hands and uh, got rid, got out of it. Got away from here and Westinghouse took it. Now Westinghouse come in here and really started straightening this place up.

19:24:58

A:

I can't understand why they, why they didn't stay longer than they did. I mean I was really sh-, shocked when I heard that Westinghouse was leaving and, and they was another outfit out o' California movin' in here. Fluor MacDaniel, isn't that where they from? Well, I was real, I said, "Well, maybe Westinghouse got all they wanted left and maybe Fluor Daniel's gonna (laughing) \_\_\_\_\_ . I don't know.

19:25:23

(Laughs) Yeah, maybe they'll get their pockets full (chuckles). 'Cause I know they, when they was putting out these figures, millions and millions and millions o' dollars. I said, "Hey now, there ya go. If they'd a spent all that money back when things was as bad as it was around here. They wouldn't fix nothing! They wouldn't fix nothing. Production, production, production comes first.

19:25:51

A:

Down 2/3, they was acid pumps down there be pumping and acid be flying everywhere. They would not shut that pump down and let you fix it, unless it was absolutely, uh, final from the Plant Manager they could take that pump out. They, production. That's all they wanted. Production. They even got racing each other around.

19:26:15

A:

This building be racing this building uh who could put out the most production in 8 hours, or 4, 24 hours or whatever. So uh, well, when OSHA stepped in and Westinghouse and them come in here, they started straightening this place up. I mean, Westinghouse really spent some money on this place to try and, try to keep it runnin'.

19:26:34

A:

But uh, I can't think o' that uh, Plant Manager's name. Boy, he was a nice guy. He was as nice a guy as you wanna talk to. And he was, he was uh, and they spent some money too. Now Weldon Adams said, "Now when I'd a got Plant Manager, I already made up my mind. I was gonna take \$50,000 and put it in a sports program here." But he never did get Plant Manager, and he wouldn't a did it anyway.

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19:27:05

A:

But Westinghouse put some money in it. They formed the softball teams again, the bowling leagues again, the golf leagues again. They gave us a big, a big outing every year and uh, at different golf courses. They was really a good company to work for. Really a good company to work for. But I left when they was here.

19:27:29

Q:

Now going back to the dust collector leaks and stuff that happened in the mid '80s that eventually forced um, the closure of Fernald, how did you feel about all the national media attention that was goin' on?

A:

Well that's, (chuckles) I knew you know, you give uh, these committees, these national committees and stuff, an inch and they gonna get cha for a mile. Because they really knew enough about uh, I guess this atomic energy stuff, and uh, these Paducah, and Oak Ridge, and uh, Washington out there. They knew that what was goin' on in all these plants.

19:28:09

A:

And they knew that if they ever had a big release, a lot o' damage could be done. So if that small leak, it was small. But uh, just they still never knew how much o' that stuff had got in the air. And the committee, the news committee boy, really started pounding 'em. And they, they really opened it up. That's why really, they had to shut it down.

19:28:38

Q:

When you got the news about the plant shutting down, um, how did you feel about that?

A:

Well, I, I knew that I was right at retirement, and uh, I knew they couldn't shut this plant down in no 2 years. You see, they shut it down in '85. And I had 2 years to go 'til I was 65. I said, "I know this plant can't close down in uh, in 2 years, 'cause I said, "When I hit 65, I'm retiring anyway." So I, I, it didn't bother me.

19:29:12

A:

But I'm glad that uh, they did shut it down, then, until they found out what uh, to do with this stuff. Now ya see, they're having all this problem, but I'm glad they got a place t-, to store it. But I can't understand all these uh, western states that's lettin' all this stuff come out there and be stuck under their grounds. 'Course it's government ground.

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19:29:38

A:

But what if they have a big earthquake or somethin' out there some time, where all that stuff stored down under the ground? I don't know. Just like right here. I don't see what they're gonna do with all this dirt.

19:29:51

A:

Now you know they had in the paper they was gonna turn this into a playground for the animals, or uh, a park, well I wouldn't want to bring my kids down here and let 'em play around down here in this uh, if it was a park.

19:30:06

A:

'Cause they run into that big problem down there in Florida. They let that contractor go in there and build all them homes and uh, these kids was out here in this yard digging one day and all this white stuff is flying up, hey, they'd covered up tons and tons of asbestos. In that ground.

19:30:26

Q:

We've got to take a break here and change. He's fervently poking me.

20:01:05

Q:

In your estimation what is going to be one of biggest challenges to clean up? One of the biggest messes.

A:

Well, after I, I would, I would say after they get rid of all the buildings and all of the equipment and all of the waste that they have here on top of the ground – what are they gonna do with this under the ground? And I don't know, as I said I think Plant 6 over there is gonna be a mess.

20:01:41

A:

Because they used oil by the drums over there in that building on all those pumps and stuff they used to have down in the basement. There a big basement under that building over there. They used to have safety meetings and everything else; they've got a great big conference room down there.

20:02:00

A:

And then they've got all those big pumps that used to sit down there and them things leaked oil awful. Now, when Jack Witherspoon was here, he was that young engineer, he just came in here, somebody came up with the idea, cause there was just drum after drum after drum of that oil, they knew that radiation was in it.



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20:02:26

A:

And they couldn't figure out what in the world they were gonna do with it. So Jack was assigned to go down to the hot raffinate building and renew and replace a lot of pipelines down there, there was some big tanks they had sitting there in that one room, all by themselves. And uh, I worked for him on that job.

20:02:53

A:

Well, they did this, they come down, cause the walls in that building is two feet wide, or three, or thick, or I don't know what they thought in the world they was ever gonna run in there that would blow them walls out. Because uh, what I always seen, ever seen in there was the stuff that they got down there in those tanks.

20:03:17

A:

They run that, they run them through them digesters in there, then a filter, and they had lines, they used to have a tunnel all the way from hot raffinate clear down to those tanks down there. Well, eventually, when years past they tore all that out and just filled it back in with dirt. But uh, well as I say, this deal didn't work.

20:03:42

A:

It didn't work with the oil. So the, Leroy Williams, he was over Water Plant, he started fool around up there with a 55-gallon drum and some few gallons of oil. He'd pour them in that drum and let it burn and burn and burn and burn, and they claimed that was the uranium that burned out of this oil.

20:04:10

A:

Well OSHA got on their tail ends about them up there burning this oil all the time, and here's this smoke screen going up and down, they stopped that. And they built a big pad up there, and they built a furnace, and they filled filters and then, they started running that oil through there pretty heavy. So eventually they had to stop that.

20:04:37

A:

'Cause they was making a big mess up there with that stuff. So they just gave up on that oil, I don't know what they ever did with all that oil. But I know one thing, if they didn't have a floor under that building over there 6-foot thick, and completely sealed, there's gonna be a lot of oil down in that ground that's contaminated.

20:04:58

A:

And what in the world they gonna do with it – I don't know. Unless they box it up, like all this other stuff, packaging that stuff up and sending it, sending out, do the same thing to that dirt under that building. Now 4 well 5, 5 could have uh, some mess. Four shouldn't have any problems. Denitrate or uh, yea, denitration should be alright.

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20:05:29

A:

Extraction down there, they used, see they extracted the radium from that, it smelled like kerosene in that building, that's where they've extracted that out of there. And God, tons that was the only building on this project you couldn't smoke in. Because it had that like kerosene uh, but uh, met a guy one time took some of that out on a brick and went outside and took a torch and held it on there and held it on and held it, it never did even ignite.

20:06:05

A:

But I don't know, maybe a bigger quantity of it would've. But uh, that's all I can tell you about that waste over there in 6. It's gonna really be a problem.

Q:

How about the waste pits?

20:06:22

A:

Didn't, never did work too well for them here. Never did work too well for them here. They had those big pits built down there and they put that big rubber lining in it and then they would take all them crucibles (crucibles) and stuff out a Plant 5, and dump them right in there. Well, that stuff was like graphite. It just punched holes and everything else in it.

20:06:47

A:

And they found out that that stuff was runnin' out o' them things as fast as runnin'. Now these new ones they built here, I, they built a lot o' new ones. I don't know. I don't know what's in 'em. So I don't know how they're workin' for 'em, but them never did work down there.

Q:

How well documented is the waste that went into the Waste Pits?

A:

You mean how dangerous it would be?

Q:

Well, to, how did you, I mean did you have to fill out paperwork to put something in there?

20:07:17

A:

No, that was a routine thing for uh, Plant 5 or any the other plants if they have any waste. They might be "Hey now this goes in a certain pit down there." But I don't think they had to be any special permits or anything to put anything down there. Now they didn't take no garbage of anything out down there, just away from the plants.

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20:07:39

A:

'Cause they took all that out to the burner, burnt that out, out the Sewage Plant. But uh, Plant uh, 5, or Plant 8 could have. Now they was uh, they was uh, filtering that stuff and just hauling that down there somewhere. Now I don't know what pit they was putting it in though. But uh, they did, they kept a continuous filter running down there filtering that stuff that supposed to been waste off the project.

20:08:20

A:

Now I don't know what building's exactly come out. But they ship stuff in here from other plants. Airport. Now I don't know where airport supposed to be, but they had a lot o' stuff come in one time in boxcars, from a airport. Now I don't know where that was from. They would run that through their filtering system down there.

Q:

Did you ever hear any um, any talk about Manhattan Project waste on site?

20:08:47

A:

Oh, yeah. They went up there and stripped that. Is, I think that was the plant they went up there and s-, they sent chemical operators from here up there. They went up there and tore all that stuff down, and they hauled loads and loads and loads o' that pipe and pumps and stuff here. But they dumped it all off up there at Decontam.

20:09:10

A:

And uh, if we needed a piece of uh, 4-inch stainless steel pipe, or 6-inch stainless steel pipe, or a flange, or a valve. We'd go up there, pick it out o' the pile, and give it to them guys to clean up for us, and then bring it down in the plant and use it.

20:09:31

Q:

So that was from the Manhattan Project then.

A:

Yeah.

Q:

Wow (chuckles) because I had heard that there was waste on site, too. Not just, you know. I never heard about the hardware.

20:09:40

A:

Well now, they've. They could've had waste down there from up there. They tell me, these guys that went up there, that was the filthiest place they was ever in in their life. They just said, "I don't know how they could even operate it the way it was." But they uh, oh, some o' them guys they went up

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there one time, they wouldn't go back no more.

20:10:03

A:

But see, there was, \_\_\_\_ they wasn't giving them the safety equipment they thought they should have to fool with that stuff. They didn't know what they was gonna fool with up there. But they brought that stuff in here in, in those condoliums (gondola), uh, cars, loaded with that pipe, pumps, 'cause they claimed they was uh, saving on the cost o' the storage down there.

20:10:27

A:

If you could, instead o' goin' down there and buyin' a new valve and put it in, they'd go up there and find one in uh, Decontam, let, "Let 'em clean it up for ya. Put it in." That's what they was doin' with all that stuff. Now I've seen that stuff layin' up there. And uh, I don't know, it looked, it looked somethin' like maybe orange oxide or some kind o' material like that.

20:10:52

A:

'Course I didn't know. I didn't know what it was. But uh, it looks to me like they'd a cleaned that up up there, and left that junk up there and took the, bring the pipe down here, but they brought it all down here.

20:11:04

Q:

And when you say, "Up there," where was the location?

20:11:08

A:

Uh, you mean at uh, Manhattan? I don't know. I knew it was up there, but I knew it was at. Now if I'm not mistaken, Jerry Green was one o' the operators that went up there. Now he could tell ya exactly what went off up there. Or Clarence Vogel. Clarence Vogel, uh, he was one o' the foreman's that went up there. Uh, have you ever interviewed him or anything? Vogel?

Q:

No, but I'm writing that name down right now.

A:

He uh, he lives in Hamilton. He lives at uh.

Q:

V-O-G-E-L?

A:

Um-hmm. Yeah, I see him every once in a while, Clarence.

Q:

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

So they could give us more information about the Manhattan.

20:11:56

A:

Or, I imagine Jerry Green could tell ya more knowing him, 'cause I tell ya, Jerry was a pretty, pretty smart boy.

Q:

Good. We'll be talkin' to him on Tuesday.

A:

Now, I won't sell ya short, I think he was, I could be wrong, but I thought that he was one o' the operators that went up there. He worked down there in Extraction for years. Or George. He worked with George. And uh, he'd be a good man to probably tell ya about it, if he will.

20:12:27

Q:

Now, you served some time in the military. And um, so you're very aware of what America's mission was during the Cold War. How do you think that Fernald uh, worked into America's mission during those years?

A:

Well, I think they uh, they did what they was supposed to did. They made somethin' they wanted. The, the finished product that left here, I think worked. Uh, for what they wanted to, wanted. It was a fuel, those, I understand those little uh, things they, what we was talkin' about a while. Came out over there, they, they was all different sizes.

20:13:14

A:

And for different reactors and for different this and that, they never had no problems with 'em. They worked. On them atomic submarines, I understand they made the fuel for 'em right here. I don't know, I can't imagine the heat that it took to melt those things. 'Cause I seen the heat it took to uh, make 'em here.

20:13:41

A:

See, they dumped, they dipped some o' those uh, right in that furnace over there that guy was supposed to have jumped in. But I'll never say he jumped in it. Now he couldn't a jumped in it with a metal top on it.

Q:

Could we pause for a second?

(Tape cuts out and begins again)

20:14:07

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

Q:

Something that ah, they've been talking a lot around site is ah, folks that worked during the Cold War like you did ah, they sort of have a name for them. They call them the Cold War Warriors. How do you feel about being called a Cold War Warrior?

20:14:22

A:

I don't ever remember hearing that one.

Q:

What was your mind set in particular during the Cold War? How was you feeling about Russia and the situation in the world?

A:

I'm just like ah, General Patton said, "Don't stop the Rhine River, just keep right on going." 'Cause he hated that, he called them SB's, SB's. He said we better take Russia next, we better not stop until we take Russia next. He never did like 'em. And I think we was right, 'cause Russia ain't never done nothing for us.

20:14:58

A:

Just like in all this other stuff, ah, Russia is against everything we what to do. They won't agree with us on nothing and we pulled their butts right out of that war over there. They should have gave him to Hitler (laughing). 'Cause that is their, their, I don't know, millions of dollars, millions of dollars. Equipment, planes, ships we gave to them during the war.

20:15:25

A:

Why they didn't have any, nothing to fight with and then, no I'm glad, if it took a place like this to, I think a place like this has really helped to keep Russia in their place. They would shoot us tomorrow if they thought they could get by with it, but they know they can't get by with it. 'Cause, that's one of the things this country does, people think they spend, we're in debt now trillions of dollars. Hey, just make some more and put it on out there.

20:15:55

A:

Well, Eisenhower had it right to start with. Back there, there was almost a depression, and Eisenhower, he's the one that said, Spend money, start spending money. Credit cards, give them credit cards, let 'em spend it, get the money rolling. Boy, it's been rolling all right (laughing). It's really been rolling, yeah.

Q:

So how did Fernald work into America's defense then?

20:16:23

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

A:

Well I think that ah, A) just like this place here was ah, doing their part, just like some factory building airplanes, some shipyard building ships or, or somebody's making guns or uh, like during World War II, Moesler, Herring Hall, all those places up there. They shut the safes down and started making guns for ships and that. Hey. National Lead made 'em some fuel for their submarines and this and that. Good. Good. I say put the "A" flag out there.

20:16:58

Q:

Do you ever worry about your health because of working at Fernald?

A:

Well, I figured, except for my colon, that I had a malignant tumor, uh, that's, that's the only thing. And now I had that 27 years ago, the operation. And uh, lot o' people won't believe I'm still walkin', and had a colostomy. 'Cause a colostomy is somethin' that if you don't catch it at the right time, you're not gonna live to be a, you're not gonna live another year.

20:17:38

A:

Because if it takes a hold to the walls of your organs, it gets in your kidneys, it gets in your bladder, gets in your liver, and you're done. That's all they is to it. It's just a matter of time. I know of too many friends o' mine that's had colostomies, and they're dead. Now they was 5 people on this project. They was a fellow over in 5, and me was the first two that I knew had colostomies here.

20:18:09

A:

Now they been, Ralph Edwards in Water Treatment and Lilian, 1, 2, 2 women over here in, in this. They're dead, they had, they had 'em. And I understand that um, the fellow that had. I'm the only one livin', out o' the 5 that had these colostomies. And the word is, or the proof is that uh, colon, that thorium, these metals will cause colon cancer.

20:18:57

A:

But uh, I just think I'm lucky that uh, I'm still livin', and uh, really in good health as far as I know. 'Cause I go to these doctors and they say, "Well, see ya later."

20:19:15

Q:

What did you think of the classaction suit that was uh, filed on behalf of the workers?

A:

I think that the men really got the, really the weenie on that deal. They got 17 million dollars out o' that classaction suit. By time Chesley and all his little attorneys got their part, hell, there wasn't enough left for the workin' man. And that was what the whole thing was supposed to have been about. \$3,000 I got out o' 17 million dollars, \$3,000.

20:19:53

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

A:

I know that they was some guys on this project, went down there and testified, got 20 thousand dollars each. Workers here. And I know they say them uh, attorneys, they got around a million bucks apiece. It's hard to say how much Chesley got. But now, I go to them meetings, I'm on that committee, and we have got 4 million dollars yet of that money hasn't been spent.

20:20:36

A:

It's still in the bank, or supposed to be in the bank. And we keep asking Benjamin and Kearney, and uh, these other, "What are you gonna do with the rest of our money? Why won't you give it to us instead o' lettin' it lay down there in the bank?" Now they're talkin' about they gonna donate it to some sports thing or this. That isn't money to donate to no, that is money we supposed to get.

20:21:03

A:

And we're getting' on their tails, and getting' on it good at every meeting any more. "When're we gonna get the rest of our money?" And they always come up with some kind of answer, "Well, we don't know. We uh, we gotta do this with this, and we gotta do this with that." And I said, "What's gonna probably end up uh, they'll split it up amongst them and keep that."

20:21:24

A:

They was some o', now that's somethin' I don't understand. Now, just Benjamin and Kearney, I was sittin' down there talkin' to. And they said, "You know, some o' your people, workers out there refused that money?" I said, "Good! That's more for me! If he don't want the damn money, I'll take it. 'Cause I think I earned it." "Well, it's not gonna be that simple."

20:21:45

A:

(Mumbles) Well, yeah, but I can't understand somebody they said, "I don't want that money. I don't want none o' that money. I don't want a thing they got down there." Same way with these physicals. We got people that will not come over and take that free physical every year. I don't know whether they got somethin', they don't wanna know it, or what their deal is.

20:22:08

A:

Or maybe it's, we've got people that's in different states. We give them permission to go to any doctor in their hometown, and get a complete physical and let him send the reports to us; we'll pay the doctor. Never hear no more from 'em.

20:22:29

Q:

How did you feel about the uh, government's decision to not go to trial on that particular law suit?

A:

Uh, which one was this on now?

Q:



**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

Well, with the uh, with uh, I think it happened with both of the classaction suits. One for the residents and one for the workers. They decided to go ahead and settle out of court, instead of going to trial.

20:22:53

A:

You mean this last time and now they come up and they think that people like, live within five miles of Ross up here should have more money, or get more money because now they've found out that it extended farther than five miles. Or they're wantin' to extend it out. I, I feel this way about it, I tell ya. Now I worked right here in this stuff. Every day.

20:23:22

A:

Now why aren't I eligible to get some of this money too, if they go give it to some guy lives down the road 5 miles from here? And maybe he hasn't got a speck down there, or maybe he has. But that's good. If he's got it, he deserves the money. But I think every worker that worked in this plant back in those times when this was. Should get the same money that those people was getting.

20:23:47

A:

Now here's a good friend o' mine. He lived up there at Ross when this all exposed. His wife has gotten money twice, his son has gotten money twice, his daughter has gotten money twice, and he hasn't never got a penny. They won't give him one penny. It's the same way with everybody that worked here. If you worked here, you're not eligible. Now why wouldn't they be eligible?

20:24:15

A:

Good grief, if anybody was gonna get it (laughs). We sure gonna get our part. Just like that morning right down there that operator opened up that big cylinder, uh, that oh, it was some kind of a, gas. It was HF gas or some kind o'. 'Cause they had to put it out there in that booth and heat it to form it into gas for when he wrecked. He had a long handle it went outside to that hopper and he's back here behind apiece.

20:24:52

A:

Well, it's plastic, but ya. He opened that valve, but instead o' the valve stem pulling out the valve seat, it backed the whole works out. And it all come out. And they was no way to shut it off. That whole tank set there and bled and bled. And it went right out over the top o' Knollman's Dairy down there. And they have sold milk from them cows out there ever since this plant's been here.

20:25:24

A:

Ever morning, there's a truckload o' milk would leave there and go to Cincinnati, right outside o' this plant. It don't make sense. The sprinkler system on that, they turned it on, it wouldn't work. Somebody had slept. That was, I say, should have been Health and Safety's job to check that shower. If that shower had a-worked, they could a smothered that gas right there.

20:26:00

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

A:

But there was no way. Well, they did get down there at last, the fire department come down there and hooked up a hose. But the gas was gone, 'cause that was under, god, I don't know how much pressure. And that was a 2-inch line that he backed that valve out of. And went out, went right out over Knollman's farm out there.

20:26:20

A:

I asked uh, I was over here one time talkin' to one o' the plant managers about somethin'. And I asked him, I said, "Tell me somethin'. Why hasn't it ever been brought out or mentioned about these cows eating grass and weeds around this plant every day. And Knollman sells milk to the city of Cincinnati every day, down there at that dairy. Now why hasn't somethin' showed up in those cows, or in some o' those people that buys that milk?"

20:27:01

A:

And do you know what he told me? He said, "You know, I never had give that a thought." So what he ever, if he ever done anything about it, I don't know. He said, "I never had give that a thought." I thought, why. Well, somethin' that plain, right under your nose, you probably don't think much of it.

20:27:21

A:

I mean if, but ya just sit down and think about it, I, I don't know how many times, why I used to be out there at the Sewage Plant workin', here're them cows not twenty feet from me, they're eating that grass. And all o' that waste and stuff they hauled out there, I know it had, some of it had contamination in it. See they had a big burner out there. They burnt all their stuff out there for years.

20:27:44

A:

They made 'em shut that down. OSHA shut that down. That thing would just a-puffin', that ol' (laughing) radiation, I guess. So I don't know. I was really shocked. I looked at that Plant Manger, I thought, "Boy, you must have a lot o' other stuff on your mind." Never think o' that. Do you mind if we whack off at five?

Q:

Oh, no. We'll be done in just a few minutes. Um, what do you think o' the cleanup right now? What's goin' on right now?

A:

I think they're doin' a good job, I mean with what all the stuff they have to put up with, I mean that thing ought of be done this way, and everything ought to be. But it's better to do it here, and just say like that one truck, somethin' fell off of it, a little drop o' somethin'. Way out there in Oregon or somewhere where it's almost to where he was takin' it.

20:28:31

**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

A:

But uh, I say they're doin' a great job on, on what they got here on top o' the ground. The way they're boxing it up and package, I don't see how in the world anything could get out of it. I don't know what all they put in there, but uh. One time I was down through there on the, well, it was um, that was Westinghouse. They was already takin' stuff out o' Plant 8 down there and putting it in different containers.

20:29:02

A:

And uh, I thought that was. Some o' them boxes they had sittin' there, I thought, "My god, you put a wildcat in that it couldn't get out." Uh, but I've seen these pictures that they show ever once in a while, you know. This box and this truckload or this trainload. And I don't know where, I don't know why these states is tryin' to make such a big issue out o' these trains just goin' through there.

20:29:30

A:

Hell, they don't know what's goin' down the interstate ever day in these trucks. They could have anything in those trucks. They could have more stuff in that trucks than what they're hauling out o' here. They don't stop them and say, "Hey, what ya got in there?" Sometimes they will, they, you don't know.

20:29:51

Q:

Okay, we're gonna take a break here. We need to stop rolling for a second. We're at the end of our. This is nat sound.