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Transcript

Name: Harold Knue

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Tape: 52

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Tape FLHP0117

01:01:10

Q:

Okay, we're gonna do that again.

If you could just give us your name and spell it.

A:

My name is Harold Knue. My last name is spelled K-N-U-E.

01:01:20

Q:

And uh, if you could give us a little bit of background, where you were born, where you grew up.

A:

I was born and raised right here in Dover, Indiana. I have uh, three brothers, three sisters. Three, two sisters have uh, worked at Fernald back in the late '50s and early '60s. My mother still lives here in Dover who is 88 years old, and uh, my father is deceased.

01:01:47

Q:

Great, and tell us a little bit about getting your job at Fernald. How did you hear about it, and how did you get your job?

A:

I think at that time, everybody knew about Fernald, that uh, there was a lot o' jobs there that they paid better than the average wage in the area. So I went up and filled out an application. I think I went in January, and was hired on, in April. So had to wait 3 months for your uh, security clearance.

01:02:15

Q:

Tell us a little bit about the security clearance. What did they do?

A:

(Smiles) They went around and I guess they checked your, your record with the police department. And then they would come around and interview a lot o' your neighbors, friends, relatives, and what kind of a security risk you would be.

01:02:37

Q:

And did you ever get feedback from your friends and neighbors that they talked to, what it was like?

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01:02:43

A:

Yes. A lot of 'em said they were interviewed, and they said, "It was an awful lot of questions." But they didn't say anything bad, so I guess I was a pretty good citizen because I got my Q clearance.

01:02:57

Q:

And once you got your Q, Q clearance and you were working at Fernald, could you discuss your uh, job too much with your friends and family?

A:

No, not at all, everything uh, was left at Fernald when you uh, went home that night. So about all they knew was you worked at the atomic plant, and that's about all they knew.

01:03:17

Q:

So when they asked you a question like, "Hey, Dad. What did you do today?" (Laughs) What did you tell 'em?

A:

(Laughing) "I can't tell ya. Security, classified information." Since we worked with uh, oh, was several different clearances. We had a secret uh, information, we had confidential, and then there was then classified. And you handled uh, all your secret documents that're all documented, you had to keep track o' them.

01:03:47

A:

And every once in a while, once a year maybe, we would have an inventory of all our documents, and we would have to go and find out where they were and if we could account for them.

Q:

So what was the big secret at Fernald?

01:04:02

A:

What was it, the production of uranium, and the feed materials for different other sites. Uh, especially Washington, Richland, Washington. Savannah River, then there was New York, a place in New York, uh. And then well, there was Oak Ridge, oh there was many places, RMI up in Ashtabula, which was in Adrian, Michigan, back in the early days. And so we had contact with a lot o' those places.

01:04:35

Q:

So RMI was in Michigan at that time?

A:

Adrian, Michigan.

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01:04:38

Q:

Oh, I didn't know that.

A:

Yeah. They did the extrusion of the uh, ingots up them.

01:04:45

Q:

When did they move?

A:

I would say somewhere in the early '70s, somewhere in that neighborhood.

Q:

I didn't know that. I've been up to RMI a couple times, shooting stuff up there.

A:

Oh, you have?

01:05:01

Q:

Yeah. They took out the press.

A:

Finally?

Q:

Yeah.

A:

Is the place cleaned up yet?

01:05:06

Q:

Yeah! It looks pretty good.

A:

Oh, it is.

Q:

Yeah. That's not a very big site.

A:

Yeah.

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01:05:10

Q:

So – it's an interesting place, though.

A:

It is. I was up there once. And uh, we was pretty close with the uh, materials control and accountability people up there. So uh, we knew exactly what was going on, their shipments, our receipts from them. So we did a lot o' work between us, between RMI and ourselves.

01:05:33

Q:

Tell us a little bit about that process, did they do with it? I mean how did material get up there to them and what exactly

A:

We would send ingots up there. The majority of 'em were depleted. There was some enriched, but the majority of it was depleted uranium. We would send it up there, by Kluge Direct Transportation. And they would put it, and heat the metal, the ingot, put it in this press and then extrude a long tubes, they were probably what, 15 feet long, 15, 18 feet long and they would put 'era in boxes.

01:06:12

A:

And then uh, once it came back to Fernald, then they would come in and then they would cut 'em to certain sizes, the extrusion. Well, there was two different sizes, there was an inner and an outer, on the extrusion so, I don't know exactly what the dimensions are, but it's probably, I'll say a 4-inch and a 2-inch uh, extrusion, so they were called inners and outers.

01:06:37

A:

And then they would come back to Fernald, they would finish 'em, by machining and the trans, formatic machine. And then they would be packaged and sent to Savannah River.

Q:

And why was Fernald sending material up there? Didn't we have the equipment down at uh, Fernald to do that?

01:06:57

A:

No. We did not have the equipment at Fernald, but the reason I understand it stayed up there was politics. They had a, either a good representative or a good senator, or the senator looked out for, let's say an area that needed employment. That's probably why it stayed up there.

01:07:17

Q:

So their extrusion press, did it take the place of the rolling mill?

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01:07:21

A:

Oh, no. Well, the rolling mill only took the ingots, and they would heat 'em and roll 'em out to a solid piece, of metal, which may have been uh, what, inch and a half in diameter. And those were called slugs. But when you went through the extrusion press, you more or less, uh, (demonstrates with hands) pushed out the center of the metal, and you came up with uh, say a casing.

01:07:52

A:

And uh, it's been a while since I uh, had anything to do with this. It was like a casing, and then the one would fit into the other. The inner would fit into the outer uh, casing. But no, we had no means of extruding at Fernald. All the rolling mill did was take the larger ingots, rolled it out into a solid piece. And then we cut 'em off to certain dimensions.

01:08:17

A:

There were machined and cut off to certain dimensions and then sent on to Savannah River, places like that, or Richland, Washington.

Q:

Now the casings you mentioned, was there a reason for making them that shape? And, was there a special use for them?

01:08:38

A:

There was a special use for 'em, but I don't think I could tell ya exactly what they were used for, how they used them at the next stop, which would be mainly Savannah River.

01:08:51

Q:

When you started your job at Fernald, how much did you know about the process?

A:

None. Nothing at all.

01:09:00

Q:

And what kind of training did you get before you launched into your career there?

A:

Really, not much uh. When I started, I started as a clerk on the second shift at uh, back in the maintenance department, back out in the plant. And as far as education, it was mainly high school, and I just happened to have typing which is what they wanted, at that time, so that's what really got me in the, in there for employment.

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01:09:33

Q:

Great, and while you were with the maintenance department, tell us a little bit about your responsibilities. What did you have to do?

A:

A lot of it was uh, on the second shift it was uh, issuing job orders, typing job orders, and do odd jobs that the uh, day shift didn't have time to do. So they would pass them on to the second shift, and we would finish 'em up, and then did a lot o' clerical work for uh, the instrument shop and the uh, electrical shop. And then from there, I went to planning and scheduling.

01:10:13

A:

No, I'll take that back. I went to Plant 5 as a clerk in Plant 5 for maintenance. And I, there you take care of records, time cards, job orders, preventative maintenance programs. And stayed there for I don't know, I think a year and a half. From there I went to planning and scheduling, where we worked with a guy by the name of Freddie Rau, who was uh, in charge of planning and scheduling.

01:10:41

A:

And we would plan and schedule all the maintenance work that came out of the shops, that was to be done in the shop or out in the plants. Even though they did have maintenance people in the plants, they took uh, have some of your bigger jobs, they would come to the plants for them to do out in the plants, so uh, I stayed there until I got my notice from Uncle Sam. So on June the third, 1958, I went into the Army.

01:11:10

Q:

Tell us a little bit about mil-, your military service.

A:

It was uh, I found, interesting. I started out in Fort Knox, Kentucky. I took my basic training there, and from there I went to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and where I joined in with the United States Army Power Research and Development Center.

01:11:35

A:

Which you would plan during the uh, the winter months, and we would go to Greenland in the summer time, up at uh, Camp Tundo, Greenland, which was not, about 14 miles west of Thule Air Force Base, we were right next to the uh, ice cap. And they had researchers from almost all over the world up there, just looking at different things.

01:12:01

A:

We had people from Japan, they were uh, watching the snowflakes as they come down. They would record that, we had the quartermaster crew for the uh, the clothing. Different types of clothing, and uh, how they would wear 'em.

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01:12:21

A:

And then they would bring some soldiers in and they would wear them for a while and just test 'em. They built a uh, what they called Site 2, which uh, was an underground camp out on the ice cap, 110 miles out on the Greenland ice cap.

A:

And the people there would stay there for about 4 months, 5 months, and do research work and then they would come back to base camp which Was Camp Tудо, and that's where I was at. And they would go back to Fort Belvoir and then prepare for the next winter.

01:12:54

A:

But also at Camp Tудо we had an ice tunnel which was 1100 feet long, and uh, in the summer time you would have a lot of melting, and we almost had a flood one year it got so warm up there, but uh. We also got ice outta the ice cap for the cold drinks for the officer's club too (smiles). But there was also a lot of research, work back at the Camp Tудо also.

Q:

Wow, that's really neat (laughs). Now I can say I know somebody who's been to the polar ice cap.

A:

Yeah, we were 700 miles from the uh, from the ice cap. (Response: Wow.) And while we were there, there was a family of Eskimos came through. And it was a, two dog sleds, there was two single guys and a family, they had two children. And one, we seen them come through, they were right on the edge of the ice cap.

01:13:54

A:

We all went over there, the camp cleared out and went over to see the uh, the Eskimos. That was interesting while we were up there.

01:14:04

Q:

Now since you spent time in the military, when you got back to Fernald, um, how did your military training help you with your job?

A:

At that time it was a lot of uh, more clerical experience in the clerical field, administrative, uh. You know, 'cause I was uh, chief clerk in the S-1 section is administrative section for our uh, company. So when I came back, I was back into clerical and administrative work.

01:14:35

Q:

How did it feel after being in the polar ice cap (laughs)?

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01:14:40

A:

I think I was very privileged. To go up there and see something that there's very, very few people that have ever experienced, just seein' the ice cap. And the one thing up there, the ice cap shifts, several feet every year. And they have what they called the Ramp Road then from the base camp up onto the ice cap. And it would shift every year, and then they would have to go back and rebuild it.

Q:

That's neat.

A:

Oh, I could go on and on about Greenland.

01:15:12

Q:

Oh, yeah. I gotta go up there and visit some time. So you came back to Fernald in 1960. (Response: Right) Now tell us about the transition from maintenance into the materials control and accountability department. When did that happen?

A:

1961, I think it was September or October of '61. Maintenance was cutting back on help there, and they needed help in accountability, so I was transferred up to the materials control and accountability. And at that time, well, my typing and clerical work helped out. And I was in charge of the uh, all the transfers from our site, uranium transfers from our site to other sites throughout the United States.

01:16:05

A:

From Washington, to Savannah River, RMI, Oak Ridge, Paducah, Good Year, and many other places. And we sent a lot o' special shipments, to maybe universities, uh, research and development companies, so uh, we stayed there, or I stayed there for some time. And, and then from there I went over to the accounting group within materials control and accountability.

Q:

And you worked with Don Dunaway.

A:

Well, not yet (both laugh).

01:16:52

Not yet, I'm not at that point yet. Tell us a little bit about responsibilities there. What was the job like?

A:

Where, in the uh.

Q:

In the accountability department. Well, actually, one step back from that.

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01:16:56

A:

Back to when I first started to.

Q:

Was there a job in between there, you say?

A:

No. When I left maintenance.

Q:

When you left maintenance, you did go. Okay, yeah, tell us a little bit about the material account-, accountability, what your responsibilities were there.

01:07:06

A:

It was, like I said before, I was in charge of the, they were the 101s, they were the transfer forms between Fernald and other sites, such as Oak Ridge, RMI, Savannah River, Sylvania up in New York, Hicksville, New York, Paducah, uh, Richland, Washington. It was General Electric at that time out there.

01:17:31

A:

So I was in charge of all of these uh, transfers, getting them prepared and make sure they're signed and then mailing 'em out. And then balancin', every month, to make sure what you had in the computer balanced out with your paperwork, so it was more of a checks and balances.

01:17:51

Q:

And you're pretty much talkin' about nuclear materials.

A:

Right. All nuclear materials.

Q:

So did you ever lose any?

A:

At that point, it wasn't my responsibility. Several years down the road, then it became my responsibility, but at that time, no. It was mainly a lot o' the people in the plant, and the accountants uh, that kept the records of the material. They uh, if they found a discrepancy, then they would have to go to the plant.

Q:

Wow, that's a lot of work.

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A:
Yeah, responsibility.

01:18:28

Q:
Urn, how did you ship stuff out? How did that happen?

A:
What, the mode of transportation?

Q: Um-hmm.

A:
Uh, by rail, and mainly by truck. Almost everything that went to General Electric, out in Richland, Washington, went by rail. And all the close areas such as Savannah River, Paducah, RMI, was all by truck. So uh, yeah. At Paducah, we would ship out the uh, empty hoppers.

01:19:06

A:
I don't know how familiar you are with the uh, green salt we got from Paducah that came in and we blended it and went to Plant 5 to make derbies.

Q:
The green salt that came in from Paducah, was it in like a block?

A:
No. It was in hoppers. What they call T-hoppers.

01:19:23

Q:
In hoppers. Okay, we had talked to another interviewee that told us about a paraffin block that came in from, I can't remember which one of the sites that encased it all in paraffin.

A:
With green salt?

Q:
Uh huh. With maybe some sort of centrifugal force to get rid of the paraffin. That's enough -- (undistinguishable) (laughter).

A:
There wasn't much, too much of that. We used to get uh, metal chips from Hanford that was encased in uh, cement. And then we'd uh, have to take it over to five and break it out in the jaw crusher, so.

Q:
How did that work?

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01:20:04

A:

It was like a jaw crusher, a big hammer mill. You know what a hammer mill is? They would put it in there and then break it up and then send it down to Plant 8 to extract the uranium out of it.

Q:

Now Plant 8 was part of the chemical process?

A:

Right.

Q:

So, when you've got something encased in cement, did you know the chemical process for releasing that from the cement?

A:

No. At Plant 8 no I didn' t. Bob Gardner would be a good one for that.

01:20:35

Q:

That' s interesting. Uh, tell us a little bit about any anecdotes, anything unusual happen while you were working at Fernald?

A:

Unusual? Well, I think some of the unusual was the guy that was supposedly burnt in the salt furnace. In which they, somewhere up there, I don't know what they did with the box, but, they had a little box of salt, where it's at now I don't know. But uh, if the guy went in there, we'll never know.

A:

And the other thing was, was a man that, how did tha-- (thinking) that mutilated his son and spread his body parts from here down to Georgia. And uh, he cut 'em up, mutilated him in the bathtub of his home. That' s some of the gory things. I know of another man that was very upset, I guess he was under stress. He put a shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger. So, I don't know if Fernald caused this but it never affected me that way.

01:21:55

Q:

So the gentleman who mutilated his son, was it his son, or his son-in-law?

A:

It was his step-son.

Q:

Step-son?

A:

Step-son.

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Q:

Uh, when that whole news broke, how did everybody that worked at Fernald react?

01:22:08

A:

Shocked! They couldn't believe it. A guy of this build could do anything like that. Because he was a small man. He was maybe on 5'3" or 5'4" and weighed maybe 120 lbs. If he could do so much to someone else.

Q:

Wow. And of course, were always in the limelight in the media too which is (laughter).

A:

Right!

Q:

How about when the Plant 7 nitrogen generator blew up. Tell us a little bit about that.

01:22:43

A:

Somebody told you about that did they (laughter)?

Q:

Pre-interview.

A:

Yeah, we had just uh, this was back in the 50's. We were going to lunch from the maintenance building, and we usually just cut the corner, the road between Plant 5 and Plant 7. We just cut the corner, we walked past it. We got up to the cafeteria and all of a sudden we heard an explosion. And that's where it was, on the eastside of Plant 7. And just how lucky we were that we weren't there at that time, so.

01:23:20

Q:

And what was the problem that made it blow.

A:

I do not know. I was just there maybe a year or so and really didn't know what all went on. But uh, somebody in maintenance could tell you that probably.

Q:

How did the rest of the site react when that happened?

A:

Probably cautious for a, awhile, walking past a building or any kind of piece of equipment - what's going to happen. It made you stop and think that accidents do happen. But, you're very lucky.

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Q:

Wow. And how about when the helicopter landed in the parking lot?

01:23:59

A:

That was a surprise. It just came down, well it was in the parking lot, well it's the parking lot now. You know where the grassy area just south of the admin building. It went out so far, and then there was an enclosed area on the other side, south of that yet, and that was all fenced in.

01:24:22

A:

And uh, the helicopter, uh, if I can remember, it landed in there thinking he was someplace else. So then security uh, impounded to see what was going on. But, uh, eventually they left it go. When they find out where he was going, and uh, what his idea, uh, where he was going, so.

Q:

Was that at night or during the day?

01:24:44

A:

During the day.

Q:

(Chuckling) That's great. Um, let's back up a little bit; when you first got to the site, what were your very first impressions of the site? What was it like? It was probably, our, most of the construction was finished by the time you got there, but um, just, just how busy was it? Just your general impressions of the site at that point.

01:25:08

A:

It was very busy. There was always, wherever you looked, there was activity. But as far as the plant, the plant was just about completed. When I got there, there wasn't any Health and Safety Building there yet.

01:25:21

A:

It was bein' built, and medical department was on the west side of the Service Building, before they put that new addition in there, and that's where I had my physical was in the uh, really the Service Building. And I think it, probably about '56, '57, they completed the uh, Health and Safety Building.

01:25:45

A:

And from there, everything moved from service building over there and then all the health and safety people moved in. And as time goes on, there's probably very few health and safety, (chuckles) and so everybody else is in there. Yeah, we were in there at one time, material controls and accountability. That's where I was when I left was in the Health and Safety Building, and out in the plant.

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01:26:10

Q:

Now you saw three transition, transitions of companies. One from NLO to Westinghouse, one from Westinghouse to, well I guess it was, would've been two really. What was that?

A:

It was a wasp (both chuckle).

Q:

And then one to uh, one to Fluor Daniel Fernald. Can you tell us a little bit about those, those years um, in transition?

01:26:34

A:

Well, National Lead was a very conservative company. Uh, everything went by the book, they were very strict. And uh, they had the plant mainly when security was very tight. And you had to do everything by the book. And then when Westinghouse came in, it got a little more, I say they were a little more liberal, they were more liberal than what National Lead is, was.

01:27:04

And uh, and then from there to Floral Daniels (Fluor Daniel), Floral Daniels (Fluor Daniel), uh, brought in a lot of, what do they, what do ya call it the three companies that went together?

Q:

Subcontractors?

A:

No, it was uh, (Response: Teaming Partners.) Teaming Partners. That's what I'm tryin' to say.

01:27:25

A:

Teaming Partners, they uh, brought all their people in who supposed to been experts within their field and they came in and uh, took over, but they was a little more conservative than what Westinghouse, Westinghouse was more liberal than uh, Floral Daniel (Fluor Daniel).

01:27:45

Q:

Tell us a little bit a d-, uh, about the process years and the cleanup years.

A:

(Pauses) Well the, process years, uh, especially out in the production area, I was out there quite a bit, well I was in accountability, and production. The uh, in comparin' accountability with production, we were tryin' to keep track of material. And then other places or other departments or divisions, they had to meet a schedule, production schedule.

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01:28:28

A:

Well, they were production oriented, and we were accountability oriented, so it was kinda (chuckling) hard to try to get everybody to mesh, uh, when ya had to stop for an inventory, which was required by DOE, or AEC back in those days, too.

01:28:44

A:

But uh, you uh, had to go out, inventory and then reconcile your inventory and see if there was anything missin', and if there was somethin' missin' or big inventory discrepancy, then you would have to possibly go out and re-inventory.

01:29:04

A:

Or sometimes you would, they would start up production, and then, you had a good idea where some missing material is, and that's where we, a lot o' times would find it, after we had started production. But majority of times, we uh, had to have almost everything inventoried before we would leave them start up production.

01:29:26

A:

Great, we're gonna take a little break.

Tape FLHP0110

02:01:12

Q:

Great, um, in the mid '80s, a lot of media attention was focused on Fernald because of dust collector releases in Plant 9. Can you tell me what those years were like for you?

A:

I think the news media misrepresented it. The actual happenings on what went on at the plant. I don't think they knew enough about it to write a good story. And I think they slanted it so much and I think they was in, influenced by some individuals outside the plant. And I think it was very unfair to the people that worked there, and uh, how mean we were, that we weren't good citizens or somethin' like that.

02:02:01

A:

But I think the, it was influenced by some outside people, and you probably know who I mean (shakes his head, smiling).

Q:

And what did the media say, and then on the flip side o' that, what really happened?

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02:02:22

A:

Well, they just weren't getting all their facts. And I think if they would talk to the right people, I think they should've, instead of goin' out on their own, now this is just my opinion, instead of goin' out on their own, they should've got their facts from within the plant. And uh, and if they did give press releases, they always didn't come out the same. Which I, which is wrong, is bad uh, reporting.

02:02:53

Q:

And since you were in uh, the accountability department at that point, the materials and accountability department, did uh, was there a lot of media attention focused on you guys, at the time?

A:

No, not, I think that the attention was more at the plant, the plant personnel, even though we had records of this, and we had to report a discrepancy. And this goes all the way to Oak Ridge, 'cause we were under uh, Oak Ridge at the time, which, now I think they're under Ohio, uh, Department of Energy, so uh.

02:03:36

A:

Yeah, the plant got the biggest part of it even though we had to report the discrepancy to Oak Ridge. So yes, then you go back and say, "How can you lose this much?" And I still don't think as much went out as they say did, because if there was that much, I think you'd have said, seen black oxide all over the place, and you would've been able to detect it, which they never did, so.

02:04:09

Q:

Wow. So would you consider those hard kinda years?

A:

Oh yes. Yes. I think it was a lot of stress on the people because you were tryin' to do a good job, and you read in the newspaper, and well, you were more or less downgraded. That it was a very loose run plant which, or operation at Fernald, which it wasn't. So, how can you write a story when you don't know the full details of it?

02:04:43

Q:

Looking back, um, how could the plant have handled anything differently, at that point?

A:

Do you mean as far as the release in Plant 9?

Q:

Well, as far as the media attention, was there anything they could've done to straighten the story out or?

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A:

Well, I think uh, the people in charge, there was a lot of negative reporting, but, by certain papers around here, and I think the company decided not to go after 'em? What was the use? We knew what we was doing. We knew what was right, what was wrong. And even though what the, they put in the paper, the whole area believed the paper, they wouldn't believe you.

02:05:36

A:

So uh, they just chose not, the way I understand, they chose not to fight 'em. You say why? Because the more you fight 'em, I think the more uh, problems you have.

02:05:50

Q:

Let's talk a little bit about the class action suit that happened shortly after that, and some of the surrounding communities. Urn, what was your reaction to the way the surrounding community reacted to that particular thing happening?

A:

(Pauses, smiles a bit) Well, I think some people over-played it. I have talked to some of 'em. I, we was on a trip last year with uh, some people around there, and they thought it was, it was a farce for some of the people within their community doin' what they did, and especially several individuals.

2:06:33

And uh, this, the one individual who was livin' close to the plant, and chose to build a house not too far away. I can't see uh, much credibility in her, excuse me, in that person (chuckles). But uh, a lot o' people thought it was unfair. Some people I think were just out for money. And uh, even though.

02:07:04

A:

Then there was a class action suit for the workers there. But uh, I still think it was uh, unfair. I don't think it should of been done, but.

Q:

How do you feel about what's going on at Fernald now?

A:

Oh, I'm all for it. I, you gotta clean it up. You just can't leave it as is. You gotta clean up the environment. I was, and when I was in materials control and accountability, I was, went through all the beginning of all the RCRA material. And uh, from the starting of the, all the inventories and all the uh, warehouses I was right on the ground floor. And you have to do it. You can't just leave all this go to the environment and I'm all for it.

02:07:59

Q:

What do you think the hardest job is going to be?

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A:

What, as cleanin' up? I think the hardest part is gonna be tryin' to clean up the pits. Tryin' to, uh, which they're supposed to, I understand uh, mine the pits and then dry it and send it out on rail cars out to uh, Utah. I think that's gonna be a long hard process. Even though they've taken many samples of the pits, it seems like they don't have a clear cut sample as to what's really in them.

02:08:36

A:

But, I think a lot o' people know what's in there, but did it get mixed up? There' s from uranium to thorium in there. In some of 'em, not all of 'em, but uh. There's a certain amount of uranium in all of 'em. Yes, I think they should do it. I'm all for it.

02:08:59

Q:

Now when they moved into the cleanup years, what was your job then?

02:09:04

A:

In the cleanup years? Well, since 1984, somewhere in there. I was in accountability, workin' for Bernie Gessiness that time. I don't know if you have his name.

Q:

I'll write that down.

A:

He, he's a very knowledgeable person. And then when he retired then, is when Don Dunaway came in. At that time, I was in, I had well, the accounting group.

02:09:34

Well, before that, was, go back a little bit, I was in accountability, and then I was the, the accountant supervisor. I had all the accountants. Then after a while, I was put in charge of all the clerks out in the plant, who record and keep track of all the materials, the uranium, and all the RCRA materials, within the plant. And I done that until I retired in 1996.

02:10:09

A:

So, my duties there was, tryin' to keep track of all the materials in every plant in every area in the plant up there and try to supply personnel to help the uh, people keep track of the material. And at times, it got to be a challenge. Especially in your RCRA areas. The EPA was very strict when we first started up. And we had to do things just so.

02:10:44

A:

So uh, I think we accomplished all o' that. And without uh, my people, we couldn't a done it, so I gotta praise my people that worked for me. So I gotta give them credit. And I had some very good people.

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02:10:59

Q:

Who were some of your favorite people on site? Down through the years.

A:

Favorite people? Well, Don Dunaway. He was one of my favorites. He was a very good supervisor. Uh, Don Nelson (pauses) Whew. Bernie Gessiness, he helped me a lot. Arnold Capano. Charlie Hannon. So I'd say, those're probably then ones' that influenced me more than anybody.

02:11:39

Q:

How do you feel that Fernald contributed to America's mission in the Cold War?

A:

It's something that had to be done. And if we did not have it, where would America be today? So, even though people are complaining about it, how big a cleanup they gotta do and all the tax dollars they gotta spend. If they didn't do that, would they be free today? Where would they be? They might be speakin' a different language for all you know. And uh, it was a necessary evil, and we had to do it, and I'm glad I was a part of it.

02:12:24

Q:

What was the typical American's mindset during the Cold War? I mean, what was so frightening about it?

A:

Well, it was the tension with Russia. Mainly with Russia, not Chinese, because you never knew what Russia was gonna do. So we had to prepare. We had to be one step ahead of them all the time. And this, and we were a part o' that. And if we did not have this, Russia might of done something, you never know, so.

02:12:55

Q:

Were you ever aware of any uh, surrounding areas defense for Fernald itself?

A:

Such as what? Defense?

Q:

Um-hmm. Mainly Nike missiles, that're in the area.

02:13:14

A:

Well there were some missiles, but I don't think it was mainly for them, was it? I don't know (both laugh). I, I have no idea. I know there were some around here. But I, I don't know. I couldn't answer that.

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Q:

Now you were here for the implosion of Plant 7. Were you still working at Fernald? (nods head yes)
Um, a lot of people say that that was a testament as to how well these buildings were built, that it didn't go down all the way the first time (laughing). Can, can you tell us about that day? I haven't really asked anybody that question, but you know, it's, it was sort of a well-publicized thing.

02:13:55

A:

(Smiling) Well, I don't think it was a testament how, they were built well, but also I don't think the contractors quite had the experience in to implode somethin' like that, at that time. I think they missed a few areas, to why it went down on one side.

02: 14:14

A:

So no, I don't think it was, well, I don't think they were built any better than anything else, but it was just a experience, and ya learn. They didn't have enough in and they went back and that's the way you do it. You learn upon your mistakes.

Q:

Of course succeeding implosions went really well (laughing) so that must be true.

02: 14:39

A:

Yeah, after that yeah. So you see all the implosions today around the country, they're up there and they come right straight down. So I think they've learned a lot in that time. And I think they learned a lot in the first one, when Plant 7 went down. Because the next ones, they didn't have that much problem, so.

Q:

Great, now you know they're tearing a lot of buildings down awfully quickly out there and soon, I guess, Fernald will be gone. And first of all, how do you feel about that?

02:15:09

A:

Well, it's an outdated plant. I don't think it could be used today. Because everything uh, the life is something that always ends, but uh, I think if there's no use for it why not tear it down. And try to make some use out of it. It's government land, it's taxpayer's place and if you can do something for the taxpayer I'm all for it.

Q:

What would you like to see done with that land?

02:15:50

A:

Well, I think there's a certain amount of it that uh, you'll never be able to leave people in it. Especially within the perimeter of the production area. I think on the outside, if it's good enough for

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uh, park, golf course, uh, baseball diamonds, what have you, or recreational area of some type. I say go for it.

Q:

Now something they've been talking about a lot on site, as uh people like you, who spent forty some years at a facility like that, especially during the Cold War. They're calling you "Cold War Warriors." How do you feel being called a "Cold War Warrior?"

02:16:47

A:

Doesn't bother me (laughter). I, if you're called this I think it means you did a good job. We were there for a purpose and we carried out our function as well as can be expected, so. And we followed the guidance Oak Ridge, Department of Energy, or the Atomic Energy Commission. So we were doing everything they requested. I don't know where they came up with this "Cold War Warrior" but uh, if that's what they want to call us - fine! It doesn't bother me.

Q:

Great! Uh, generally uh, how do you feel about having worked at Fernald?

02:17:34

A:

I feel very good about. I felt that I done a good job. They treated me very well. And the people I worked with, the majority of them were very nice people. And uh, I think the company treated us very well. So I have no complaints.

Q:

Are you in the medial monitoring program?

A:

Yes.

02:18:06

Q:

Can you tell us a little bit about that, how it works and what all you have to do and all that?

A:

You're speaking of the one at Drake Hospital?

Q:

Uh huh.

02: 18:15

A:

Well every year we have our physical, which is part of the class-action suit. And uh, before you have your physical they send you a questionnaire, which some of its repeat from the year before. It's just, they're trying to get an update on you physically as to how you feel today, versus what you did last year at this time. So they can do a lot of monitoring with that.

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A:

And upgrade their records and I guess, they're using that for an overall project with all the people working there and how much effect it really has had on the people that work there. So, no, I think that it's very good and without the monitoring, uh, I had uh, radical surgery which they caught up there, two years ago, and now everything is fine. So I believe in it.

02: 19:13

Q:

Great! Let see, uh, is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to cover. Anything that you wanted to add?

A:

No I think you've covered my life, from '55 to '96. That's 41 years and 2 weeks. No I don't think I've got anything to add.

02:19:38

Q:

Great! Okay we're gonna do something now called nat sound. And all we just need to do is just stay quiet on the set for about 30 seconds. We'll get those nice birdies back there. This is nat sound.