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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

Name: Charles Young

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Tape: #31

Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0063

16:01:05

Q:

And uh, the first question is always the hardest right?

A:

What's your name?

Q:

What's your name and spell it so we know we have it right. Go ahead, any time.

A:

Charles Young. C-H-A-R-L-E-S Y-O-U-N-G.

16:01:21

Q:

Great. And uh, we'll start with a little background. First of all if you can tell us um, where you were born, where you went to school, little bit about your family and that kind of thing, why you moved to the Ross area, if you could start with that.

16:01:36

A:

OK. Well I was born in Dunlap, which is about 3 miles from the Ross area. Uh, went to Colerain High School and basically during my younger years I worked on farms in this area and that area just doing farm work, that's about all there was to do. We didn't have a farm; we just had small area so we worked on others, worked for other people, other farmers.

16:02:02

A:

Uh, and uh then got married in '51 and I had been doing carpenter work in Mt. Airy area for John Robers and um then we, my brother had been in the funeral profession in Mt. Healthy for a few years and we, we decided we'd build one, try to get down in the Ross area because we knew a lot of people here in this area.

16:02:33

A:

And it was a rural area and there was no funeral homes in it. And uh, so I having been in the carpenter trade built the funeral home, quit my job and built the funeral home and then went back to college to get my degree in, in mortuary science. And uh, that's how we moved into the Ross area. We just knew a lot of people from this area to begin with.

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16:02:59

A:

And uh, so that was the beginning of our life in Ross. Then I went and finished my college and we started a family. In fact, as we had our opening here at the funeral home, uh, on a Sunday and the first son was born on Saturday. So we started a new vocation and a new family all at the same time.

16:03:32

Q:

Great. And uh, since you've been here since the '50's, do you remember the days when they were building the plant?

A:

Uh, yes. My father worked for Warner Elevator Company. He did installation of elevators and he had worked out there at that time installing elevators in some of the buildings and about the only thing, well during that period, well we were used to security because of World War II. We grew up during that time and of course you didn't go anywhere that you didn't have, well he didn't anyway that they had security.

16:04:08

A:

So security wasn't a, a major object at that time. But I remember him remarking about the plant and how heavy the elevators were built and they had like 3-inch oak flooring in it and things like that. They were big freight elevators at that time. But that's all I remember you know in the '40's. That was in the '48's and '49's at that, he discussed that.

16:04:34

A:

And then we were friends with a lot of people that worked in the plant when we moved here to Ross. Uh, there were, we had a small apartment here that we rented and one of the fellows that we rented to worked there at the plant. And he unloaded a lot of the cars and worked in the rubber suits and all that stuff.

16:04:54

A:

And he just told us about what was going on. And then we had another friend that was in the maintenance program and he even had some people from the plant come into our Lion's Club at that time and they showed movies and uh and explained what they were doing and what was going on. The uranium processing plant and that they brought in the raw uranium and processed it into these ingots that they had there at that time.

16:05:20

A:

Uh, I guess the first time that I run into anything that, that on the real negative side of it was that the gentleman that we rented our apartment to developed lung cancer. And uh, you know it's hard to say whether it came from there, but he was a heavy smoker. He smoked a couple of packs of cigarettes every day and so you know, it, it's hard to determine there what really the cause was.

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16:05:52

A:

But I think the thing that disturbed me about it was the fact that after he really got lung cancer bad, they went back and looked at his x-rays which they took at the plant every year and said, oh yeah, you've had this for about 3 years, we've just missed it. And uh, I guess that's the first thing that really felt you know they're not doing their job like they should be.

16:06:17

A:

And then I don't think they really backed him up and gave them the family support, it was sort of like oh well you know you've got it that's it. So I think that's about the first time that I really became aware that National Lead was not really doing, or that the plant itself was really not doing what it should be doing for the people working there.

16:06:40

A:

But uh, you know there was not at that time I don't think there was a fear of, of living off the plant site or not working on the site. And a lot of people you know around here worked there on the site. I don't think that there was a, maybe the fear was from an explosion and the radiation coming over, but I don't think anyone had any idea about the dust or the problems that it would cause.

16:07:14

Q:

Sure. And uh, during the years that they were thinking about building the site, did you have any contact at all with the government?

A:

No.

Q:

Did they ask you about?

A:

No.

16:07:26

Q:

Did you know anybody who lost their land to eminent domain?

A:

Uh, I knew them but I was not involved with them at that time or they never discussed it, the Knollman family or the others. I never, never was involved with any discussions with any of them about that I just knew that they lost it.

16:07:46

Q:

And uh, once they started building the site um, in the early years especially, how did that start to change the community?

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A:

Well, I, I really wasn't in this community at that time because I was early '40's. The plant was already built and I guess it was a positive. It increased the traffic, which was bad, because we weren't in a position to, to take the amount of people through the community. Uh, it, it did bring a little more business to some of the areas, probably the taverns and some of the eating places and such as that.

16:08:27

A:

Uh, it started building as far as the community's concerned as far as the people moving in and looking for homes and building, and the community then at that point started growing in the early '50's. Um, and it's been a fairly decent growth, you know I mean it's been a steady growth, there's not been other that the Dry Ridge subdivision there's not been a real large growth and that's been a good steady growth over the last few years.

16:08:54

A:

Um, I, you know I don't know, of course we moved in and started our business and of course grew with the community and it's needs. And uh, so as far as the growth in the community has been, I guess it's been a positive but then you look at the other side of it as far as the problems they've caused there's been a negative to it also you know.

16:09:24

Q:

In the early '50's um, how much did you and your family know about the plant as far as what they were doing there?

A:

Well we knew that they were processing uranium and that was about it. Uh, we had no idea of, of the problems that uh has shown up in the last few years with the dust coming off site or uh those types of problems there. And probably if what we know now what we knew back in the early '50's we probably would not have located in the area because of the damage that would possibly cause the children.

16:10:04

A:

But to my knowledge anyway, no one knew that, and if they did they sure didn't make you know didn't make it public.

16:10:15

Q:

Now that you know what you know, and we'll get into a little more of the types of effects that your family has experienced, um, how do you feel looking back at the way, how do feel about the American government?

16:10:38

A:

Well, it uh, it's politics. It's, it's no different I guess then that it is really right now. You know they, the deals that are going on in our government now with the spying and the other things that sort of gets

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pushed aside for political purposes rather than the good of the country. And I think this is what happened out there at that point in time.

16:11:05

A:

You know the waste that we have in the silos out there was something that was sort of a political deal probably that was made that if you do this I'll do that and uh, they really weren't concerned about the people that lived in the community or anything else involved. They were concerned with what they could do politically to, to make a gain in that area.

16:11:30

A:

Unfortunately that's, that's been politics and seems to be getting more politics. The American people are sort of getting left out I think in what government's doing, they're doing it for government gains and for political gains more than they are for the people that's involved. Um, I you know you feel that you trust government officials and I guess you, we still do.

16:12:02

A:

We probably hold them a little bit further arm's length now than we did in that period of time. And I think that after World War II I feel that the people were, uh, used to, our age group was used to secrecy and not saying anything and not doing things. And I feel we probably accepted it then more than we would at this point in time now. Uh, people you know, we were just used to it growing up in World War II.

16:12:36

Q:

And what was the typical America's mindset, you're talking a little bit about that period of time, uh especially during the early '50's, during the Cold War. What they would call the Cold War now, of course Fernald was up and functional mostly during the Cold War, what was the typical American mindset about the threat of Russia and those types of things during the Cold War?

16:12:59

A:

Well I don't know about typical American but it, I feel, we were concerned in this area about it and especially about the missile crisis in Cuba and such as that. And uh, I think to a lot of people's mind about a nuclear attack I think was very prominent. You know they put missile sites in Oxford, which was close to us.

16:13:27

A:

And our feelings were at that time were you know you sort of hated to live close to the plant out here or the missile site 'cause if they're going to attack this is a couple of places they're going to attack I don't really like to be that close to them you know. Uh, and a lot of people looked at shelters that, that they could build or ways that they could do and thought about it and stored water and things of that nature.

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16:13:50

A:

And we thought about those things too and was concerned about them. Uh, and I guess us, the family thought about it, simply for the fact, at least I did, because we were close to those 2 sites and concerned about it.

16:14:10

Q:

Tell us a little bit about the missile sites up in Oxford?

A:

Well I don't know much about them except they were there. Uh, they were out by Houston Woods out in the north side of Oxford out in that area and if you went to Houston Woods you went past the missile sites. And there were silos there that they had missiles in for, uh, at that time. I don't know, I think that was probably the closest one in this area here. That's really all I know about it.

16:14:39

Q:

What was the purpose of having a missile site there do you know?

A:

They, I guess for planes or other missiles that would come in that they could shoot them down or whatever. I, you know, I'm not it's a little far back, I'm not even sure what kind of missiles they had at that time you know. I think they were just basically short-range missiles that would, but I really don't, I don't even remember that really.

16:15:07

Q:

OK. And uh, have you heard many myths or legends about the plant at all? Just uh different things people have said through the years?

A:

Well, you always hear stories of all kinds sort of uh, I guess that most of the people that at that time worked there, uh really didn't have, that I was associated with, did not really have a big problem with what they were doing. They were maintenance and uh I think that the typical thing that the government wasting a lot of money doing things that maybe didn't need to be done or could be done easier or simpler.

16:15:57

A:

And I think that's always been a, a story with any government project then as it is today as we feel about that they do studies and restudies to restudy the studies. And uh, other than probably the fact that they were, it was just a lot of secrecy involved in it. People didn't do a lot of talking except general and I didn't associate with a lot of people except those who were in maintenance and a few of the others.

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16:16:31

A:

That you know that actually worked there in that area. I was in school and busy and just didn't get a chance you know to do a lot of that.

16:16:46

Q:

In around 1984, uh, there was a lot of press about certain dust collector leaks and those types of things and I'm sure you've heard about all that? (Right) Tell me what your impressions at that point and time were.

16:17:09

A:

Well I think it was a, um, sort of a period like disbelief. You like say, well you know they were saying it was a heavy material, didn't make any difference it didn't come off site. And we being on the side, the prevailing wind side, you sort of wonder and then you start thinking back a little bit about what's happening and looking at people's lives.

16:17:42

A:

And then you get, I became involved with the plant because they were then started the 2-mile and started all of the warning systems and things of that nature. And being involved with the fire department and life squad, I was involved in a lot of meetings with them at that time. And uh, I think that you know, on one hand they said oh no it's really nothing to worry about these things.

16:18:14

A:

And then the other side of it, the press and the other people saying you know this is a lot worse and so I guess you get into a period in between where you'd like to believe one and you think well the other is over playing you sort of like to believe the lesser of the two evils rather than the other. But I think as time went on it was well proven you know that it did result in a lot of damage.

16:18:39

A:

Not only the people on plant but the people probably off the plant. And there again it's one of those situations as I think is very difficult to prove. Um, and as a result of this I think that probably a lot of things have happened that they sort of gotten by with just because of the difficulty of proving of situations.

16:19:07

A:

And uh, and only because you feel that they've gotten by with it you know that I guess that it's doing more damage than what's really being acknowledged what's being done.

16:19:20

Q:

Now you've been involved with uh the fire department and the area emergency type squads; can you tell us a little bit about that?

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A:

Well the, I've been with the fire department since 1953 and ambulance and life squad fire department. Uh, the uh, when they first started talking about it a lot of the firemen were concerned about going on to the plant site, or plant area. It was an educational program for us to get on site to see what they actually had, know the hazards that were there.

16:20:06

A:

And by this time really the, most of the hazards are gone you know. Back in the '50's and '60's was the time when it was really a dangerous situation when they had a lot of things on site. By the time they got to this point there were some things on site, other than the silos, that were problems but they were not near in the amounts that they were before.

16:20:35

A:

Uh, and it was an education for us. A lot of the firemen said you know if they have a warning and they want to talk to me about fire out there they're going to have to call pretty far away because I'm not going to be here you know. Uh, and then they sort of got us into the role of being backup decontamination crews and things like that rather than actually going in and doing the work, fighting the fire in the plant.

16:21:01

A:

They have their own fire protection, their own people, and they would be the ones doing that. And basically what they were looking for us to do was be a backup for decontamination of the people that were coming out and things of that nature. Uh, and I think they had made a good effort that they would not put any of them in harm's way.

16:21:24

A:

Uh, of course when your working in those types of situations, harm's way can come up pretty quick. Uh, and there's always a, a group of people, and I have no problems with that of not wanting to go on site. I've been on there quite a few times. Uh, I've not been worried when I was on; usually I was in the Administration building.

16:21:49

A:

I have been out on, on the plant side toward the plant and been there for mock disasters and things of that nature. And of course during those periods of times they were always, but we had never really been on site for an actual fire or anything of that nature. We've been put on standby or something like that.

16:22:10

A:

But when they had the big fire there, the equipment that we had was not large enough to handle it so they had to call in Colerain and Fairfield, places like that, that had larger equipment for the, for the aerial trucks to fight the fire they had there. But uh, it's been a learning experience. I guess I've, I

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really don't want anything to do with the silos or cleaning them out or anything like that.

16:22:45

A:

I mean you know I think that's nasty stuff as far as that's concerned. And I, you know, I don't think those problems are over with yet. Um, I would have much rather seen them not build the pits here and have the low level radiation thing moved off site and, and there again, as I understand it anyway, that politics played the point of, of well you created part of this so everybody has to keep a little bit of what they created.

16:23:13

A:

Well, we really didn't create any of it. The silos was shipped in here to us to begin with, we didn't create any of it. And uh, we didn't manufacture any of the low waste it was just the buildings and such. And I don't, you know, they say we're going to do all this protection and we're going to do, and I've seen all their plans.

16:23:36

A:

They run all the models. And of course the models are only as good as those people putting the numbers in the models and they all feel that they're well qualified to do that. However, the pits, the rubber lined pits that they had at that time was good too and now they're finding out that they're not any good you know.

16:23:59

A:

So are we going to you know 30 years down the line find out well gee you know what they decided to run then and the models now really aren't going to work either you know. And I guess that's the thing that's sort of still preys on your mind. Because even when we have a mock disaster and we run, we run a weather model of what comes of the plant and they generate a make believe plume that comes off the plant.

16:24:30

A:

Uh, what the one the plant runs and the one the EPA runs, or the weather runs, they never seem to agree on any of it you know. They all run different models and they all come up with different answers. And so in the back of my mind at least, not being real close to it, you still say when we're running a model you say okay, whose model and what answers do we want to get, do we run what model you know.

16:24:58

A:

So, but um, I'm still active in the fire department and I go out to the plant every so often and we have a meeting. And they and I will say that they have been extremely helpful to this community and in the fire service and life squad service. We have a mutual aid agreement with them, and during the daytime from 6:00 in the morning to 6:00 at night they automatically run a life squad crew to help us.

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16:25:30

A:

Because we're short of help during the day. And when we have a fire run they run a pumper and men or a tanker whatever we need. And if we need rescue equipment they're there with that or if we need gas monitoring or anything of that nature. Uh, they're always willing to help. They always send people to help.

16:25:49

A:

And uh, they've been a big help to the community in that way. Uh, of course this has nothing to do with the contamination part of it or anything like that but I mean as far as being good neighbors to us in that area, over the years they've been very excellent in that. Sometimes it gets a little difficult to get through the red tape but the people who've been in the fire service have been real strong in that support.

16:26:20

Q:

Terrific. What, (cough) excuse me, what is your biggest worry on site?

A:

Well the silos is the largest worry at the present you know as far as size is concerned. I think the, the dust collection and that is all past history you know that whatever damage that has happened there is past you know. And the effects of that will only be know probably years to come because they still change the numbers all the time now.

16:26:55

A:

And for some reason they always get a little larger than what they were before the model new model they run. Uh, as far as, and I have not been active in what the future of the grounds is going to be or things of that nature, um, I would not, not because I didn't have the opportunity to, I just never did get involved in that.

16:27:25

A:

And I, the only remark I heard about it was a lot of the people that did not live in the area were making decisions of what was going to happen to it. Uh, that were not really involved in the community itself. But there were opportunities for people to get involved I think and probably people like me just didn't get involved.

16:27:51

A:

Uh, probably because of time wise and just, just didn't do it. And maybe that's wrong so I have no, should not criticize you know what those decisions are. Um, but the silos are still the concern. I'm really not a bit concerned about the shipping of it. I think they have pretty well worked hard to make the shipments safe. And I don't think that they, that's been a big problem.

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16:28:24

Q:

OK. We're going to pause right now and change tapes.

TAPE FLHP0064

17:01:05

Q:

First of all let's get, let's get backpedal a little bit, and um, contact with plant workers, you had somebody that lived close or knew a couple of plant workers um, I understand they did talk a little bit about what was going on at the plant.

17:01:23

A:

Yeah, uh, Pat the one that had lung cancer as I said you know he smoked a couple packs a day and he worked hard out there. He unloaded a lot of the cars with the rubber suits and such. And as I said before, I think that the plant was lax in their not catching the lung cancer at an early stage, that he had to be pretty far along with it before they even recognized it.

17:01:50

A:

Then went back and looked at his x-rays and said yeah, you did have this before, we just missed it. Uh, but then other people that I talked to that like was in maintenance and such, they felt that, that the people that got in trouble were those people that really didn't follow the procedures of, of wearing all the safety equipment that they had.

17:02:15

A:

You know they got hot or they did this or they did that. And like in all places there's always a little bit of horseplay here and there and that if they really followed the rules and regulations and stuff with it that, that the hazards, you know that they weren't really, that they were exposed to it, they would have been protected.

17:02:39

A:

And that was their feelings about it as far as what, what happened. Uh, because they said a lot of them were, you know they send you in an area that seemed pretty clean and no problems and they say you have to do this and do that and some of the people wouldn't really do them. And they wouldn't have their eye protection on or their respirators on or something like that.

17:03:02

A:

Wear their gloves or they'd sit on piles of things that they shouldn't be sitting on or doing things of that nature. But he was a strong believer if they followed the rules and regulations, that they'd be OK. Of course that was his opinion and I wasn't there so I can't really say what you know. He worked there for a good many of years. Retired and still in good health today and he's probably in '70's or '80's.

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Late '70's.

17:03:34

Q:

And out of those people that you had contact with at the plant, were you aware that they were under Q clearance at the time?

A:

Well, I don't know what clearance they were under but there were a lot of them, I mean I knew they were under security clearance that they really couldn't talk about it. Uh, but I think there was always somebody you know when they were making the tips for the, uh, guns that were shooting the, anti-tank guns, they were shooting the atomic tips and things like that that they had that contract.

17:04:09

A:

But that was in the newspaper that they were doing that when they had that contract for awhile. And uh, the actual operations of it you never really heard too much about but you sort of knew what was going on in a general, general form.

17:04:27

Q:

Great. Um, how has the Fernald plant affected your family's life?

A:

Well, I guess that uh after all of the situations and the dust and people you know started discussing this, our children, we had two boys and a girl, born '53, '55, and '59 were in that age of puberty, I guess when all the dust and all the problems and all the things were happening. We didn't know it; we didn't think anything of it.

17:05:18

A:

They played outside all the time, did all the things that kids do outside. In later years as we knew more about it and they got married and they started to run into a few problems as far as birth problems were concerned, then you got a lot more concerned about it. And started to backtrack and say you know this must have really had an affect on them.

17:05:48

A:

We have never, in my wife's family or in my family, have never had any birth problems or birth defects or anything of that nature that would you know be genetically followed through. But our children and some of grandchildren all have, just about high percentage of them have had some type of problem.

17:06:12

A:

Um the, 2 of the grandchildren were, one was born with like 2 or 3 bones in one of his toes, had to be operated on to be taken out. This of course falls back to if you read some of the things that have happened from radiation fallout, this is one of the things that happened. One of the other grandsons had

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a bone marrow problem when he was first born, has a lot of allergies connected with it.

17:06:51

A:

His bone marrow situation finally short of, of having had a transplant did start straightening out, he had only had like a week to go before he was going to have to have a bone marrow transplant. And uh, then I have another grandson that has a, what they call, a pierradow syndrome which is very few cases in the world that has this.

17:07:22

A:

He has a twin brother that is OK but somewhere along the division of the eggs of the cells a cell did not develop the way it should be. And it affected the median line of his system along with part of the defects was, was that he didn't have any femur bones. In other words his knees are attached to his hip area. They're not in any joint; they're just in the muscle area.

17:07:56

A:

He can walk, he can run, he rides a bike. Uh, he doesn't have any shoulder joints, he can't put his arm behind his back but he can work his arms. One of the other things, the fingers, these fingers here, they can't, he had trouble closing them. Uh, and uh that's all part of that syndrome. He did have a cleft pallet, which they repaired early which was not real bad, which he succeeded.

17:08:28

A:

But it's just things like that that he has. He's always going to have a problem with that. He'll only always be, he'll be 1/3 shorter than, because not having those bones. It's been a stress on our family because of that. And uh, one of my sons also has reproductive problems. Sperm not being as active as it should be.

17:09:02

A:

And you know those are all things that are, if you go back and look at it, they're all tied to this. That was a time that they were going through their puberty. There's other young people in the community at that same time that have had problems. Uh, and uh, I think that it did definitely probably take a toll on the young people in the community at that time.

17:09:27

A:

Um, there again, it's one of those things that OK you can't prove it. Probably my daughter came the closest to it with the grandson that has the _____ thing. She got some genetic information; Children's Hospital did a lot of studying on it because it was one of those things that they hadn't seen. Good Sam did a lot of work on it, a doctor there, and he wrote the medical journal about it.

17:10:05

A:

Uh, and uh, she even had facts you know that said yeah this is a great possibility this thing was probably caused. And it was an emotional thing for our family, especially for her. And uh, yet when

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they did the emotional stress situation, whoever interviewed her didn't think much of it I guess. Uh, her reward for that \$750.00, which she sent back.

17:10:38

A:

And uh, I don't know, I think they sent her another \$250.00 or some amount, I don't know what it was. She documented a lot more paperwork on another interview and sent to them and still didn't get any satisfaction out of it. And I guess that was one of the biggest disappointments as far as the righteousness in the, in the awards that were given you know for mental distress.

17:11:12

A:

I felt that she definitely was, had a good, had a good case for being in that situation. And it's not that she needed the money, I think it was a bigger insult the fact that they didn't do anything, or didn't sort of blew it off as nothing rather than actually doing something about it. Um, one fellow said I really didn't have mental distress until I started looking at some of the settlements.

17:11:40

A:

And that gave him more anything else. What some people got and some people didn't get that maybe should have been rewarded. But you know that's the way things go there. But I think it had a definite affect on our family. Mentally, emotionally and physically.

17:12:03

Q:

With the genetic and medical difficulties that you've had in the family, what do the doctors attribute that to mostly?

A:

Well, it's a, I think if you read some of the papers that on some of the people put out over the years, a lady that, can't think of her name that came here. I think she was from England, that studied the fallouts on children and things of that nature and some of this. And I don't remember her name and what her studies were but when she was talking and giving her reports and reading some of the things there that a lot of these types of defects come from a fallout of radiation, low-grade radiation.

17:12:57

A:

Um, and uh, so you know it just puts you in mind that yeah, it's part of it but there again, I don't know. I guess it's my understanding about it the proving of it is a hard thing to do unless it's really something that's, that's real monstrous in a large group, in a large area you know. And I don't know if, if they've ever, you know they've studied the workers and they've, whether they've studied that age group, it's a new study for somebody.

17:13:33

A:

Uh, of that age group of, in the community, of children that grew up and what birth problems they really had or they had or their children had or grandchildren. Probably might be an area that they could look, would be the only way that they maybe could draw a conclusion that it actually had an effect on it.

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17:13:55

Q:

If you could kind of go back in time, and confront the people that some of the government folks that helped build Fernald and brought the factory here to this area, what would you tell them?

A:

Well, I think that, that they should then and now do things to protect their people. I don't feel that, maybe it's not necessary that we know everything that's going on but we need to know that they're doing everything possible to protect the people around them. And I don't think that is even being done today of a lot of factories that are being built and a lot of chemicals that are being used.

17:14:41

A:

I still don't feel that, that they are protecting people the way they should. I have, I feel that EPA, OSHA, and a lot of these other agencies that they create, all try to justify why they're there. And they, I think (cough) pretty evident (cough) excuse me. And the last thing EPA put out about dust, that they eliminated all _____ that they put this out that you shouldn't put any particles in the air.

17:15:28

A:

That they eliminated all outside barbecues and you weren't allowed to have any fires. There just wasn't anything that you were allowed to do because they lowered the standards so low. And fortunately Congress said you know, did away with these standards. It's a purely an agency that they can do whatever they want to do whenever they do it.

17:15:53

A:

And the only way you can do it is to take them to court and have a big fight. And I think it was quite evident a lot of times here in meetings I was at, that Ohio EPA and the Federal EPA and this one and that one was each trying to fight their own little battle and create their own existence, their own, why we have to have this agency.

17:16:20

A:

And this is, we can control this and you gotta do things the way we want it. And they levy these big fines because that's the only way they had to get money to run their agency. And I think that they get lost in this area before they even really look a lot of times at what, what good they're really doing for the people around them.

17:16:46

A:

And I think instead of doing things for government, or them, they should be doing things for the people. Of course I know that they're ultimate thing is yes we're doing this for the people you know. But that's just my opinion.

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17:17:00

Q:

You mentioned being involved in a lot of the public meetings, can you tell us a little bit about that, especially directly after the, a lot of the press in the mid '80's?

A:

Well, uh, one of the things I have to do is give FRESH a lot of the credit for what they did. If it hadn't been for Lisa and the FRESH organization, I don't think the plant would be in the condition that it is today. Uh, a lot of people made fun of them, a lot of people you know, did a lot of complaining about them. Uh, a bunch of crabby women, it's probably good that they were.

17:17:47

A:

Because that's the way that they got something done. And uh, as obnoxious as they were as times I think it was necessary to do it. And also I feel there was some people in there that, that had good college backgrounds, Vicki Dastillung, when they started talking about chemicals and started talking about, she was right there with them. And uh, so they couldn't snow her.

17:18:15

A:

And she was willing to learn. And so as a result of this I think a lot of the, that they educated themselves, FRESH educated themselves, to learn a lot of things about it. And as a result of this is where they got their credibility and so for that reason I think FRESH has been very valuable to the community and for the cleaning up of the plant.

17:18:40

A:

Uh, I'm not so sure they're so happy about the, and I really shouldn't say this for them, but I don't think that the class action suit sort of turned out the way they thought it would. I think they ended up, the lawyers ended up and a lot of other people ended up with money other than the people in the community ended up with it. But that's the American way of life I guess.

17:19:07

A:

Uh, I think there were a lot of studies that were made and I think they're, I guess they're necessary to do but I think they studied a few studies and then studied some more studies. I think people worked in the plant and decided well there ought to be a study made around this area and then they would go outside the plant, form a company and come back and make the study.

17:19:29

A:

I can't prove this but I think that a lot of these things happened. Because one meeting you go to they'd be working for somebody then the next meeting you go to they're working for somebody else. One time I went to a meeting a lady was working for EPA and was all gung hothat they can't do this and can't do that. Few meetings later I go to the meeting and here she's working for a company that's coming in and doing these things you know, have a different perspective on it.

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17:19:57

A:

I questioned her about it and she says oh no I'm still doing what you know what has to be done. I've got everybody's well being in mind and I can't question that if she was. But it still makes you stop and think about the people that were once working here and next they're working here, few months later they're working somewhere else.

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17:20:21

A:

And uh, you sort of like to go back and talk to the people that's been there that when I started with it 10 or 12 years ago that are still there and you can still go to and when they give you an answer you feel that, that they're telling you what's really going on.

17:20:36

A:

And Steve Wentzel and Steve Miller and some of those people in the fire service that's been there for years, when they tell me something I pretty well believe what they tell me. Some of the others, I most always think everybody else was sort of a far arm's length when they tell me something.

17:20:57

Q:

How do you feel about the work that's going on at Fernald right now?

A:

Well, I've sort of, the last couple of years I've not been going to near as many meetings as, as I had in years before. I do get their newsletters, I do read them, they send me a lot of material, which I do read all of them. Um, I think that their cleanups going good. I think they're making a lot of good efforts. As I said before, shipping material off-site, I think they really work hard to keep the containers safe and the shipments safe.

17:21:35

A:

Uh, and I think they're making good effort at doing this. It sort of amazes me, I wasn't at the meeting but uh, they were telling me that they spent a few million dollars on this arm to go into the silos and so that doesn't compromise the dome and go in and get this material out. And you know I guess that's the way it has to be done.

17:22:02

A:

But just amazed me the amount of money they spent for that. And for the vitrification and some of those other things that they did, the pilot programs, you know I guess those studies had to be made and there was some, there was some good things found out about it. And that some would work and some wouldn't. And the only way you can do it is run a pilot program and do it I guess.

17:22:26

A:

It's just that it's staggering to me and I think to a lot of other people, the amount of dollars that is spent on some of those things and whether they are really a necessity of it. Back a long time, I was sort of, of unhappy to the point that a lot of the things that when they were looking for office space and doing things that they moved a lot of them to Fairfield.

17:22:52

A:

They had to be without of the 5-mile range. Yet there wasn't danger to anybody, nothing, everything was OK but they wanted all these things 5 miles away. And uh, I felt that they probably could have put

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back a little bit of that money in the community and did some things for the community that maybe could have been done for them.

17:23:10

A:

But as far as their cleanup is concerned, I think they're doing a good, they are making a good effort of doing a good job at it.

17:23:19

Q:

Um, tell us a little bit about your involvement with the Center for Disease Control.

A:

Well, several years ago when they were trying to decide whether or not there was going to be a study, or whether CDC was going to do a study, I met with a couple of people who were from the CDC and because we had a, the death record of a lot of people. Uh, we tried to go back as far as we could in the '50's and with the cooperation of the, of the Board of Health of Cincinnati and Hamilton.

17:23:55

A:

And we tried to trace people that had died in the area and we compiled a list for CDC of the people's age, and they didn't get their names or addresses or anything like that, we just gave them an age, an occupation and a cause of death and the time they died. Of course this is all public record anyway, but I mean we, those are really the only things they were interested in especially the causes of death.

17:24:29

A:

And uh, so we put these all on a disk for their computer and each year we would compile this information and send it to them and we did this for 4 or 5 years. And then we, I guess they determined it wasn't necessary to do a study so we didn't, we haven't been doing it for the last few years. But hopefully that information was useful to them.

17:24:56

A:

It was all public information anyway, it was just that we, we were able to sort of put it together without spending millions of government dollars to do it. It really was not a real, a complete, I guess because we didn't do Harrison or but those that were on this side of it we did probably a good percentage of that.

17:25:26

A:

So that amount of it was. And another interesting thing, Ron Hunter, who was a professor, associate professor I think from Arizona, Xavier University, came in and was trying to do a study and I helped him do his. And he was trying to, he went to the Board of Health and got a lot of this information on his own, and he tried to strapulate out the amount of cancer deaths that was in different areas around Cincinnati and not only this community, but also Cincinnati, Mt. Healthy, Oxford, and all of those.

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17:26:04

A:

And that was sort of an interesting map, and at that time it really didn't show the Ross area any higher than a lot of other areas around. Fact is St. Bernard area and the Cincinnati was really one of the highest areas around for cancer rate. One of the problems with that is that the doctors that when they sign a death certificate, there's a place on there for actual cause of death.

17:26:33

A:

And then there's 5 or 6 places for contributing causes of death. And they just a lot of times are not very efficient in filling these out and someone may die of pneumonia or heart or something like that which really has other contributing factors of cancer or something that they really, of the lungs or something that they really didn't put in that certificate.

17:27:01

A:

So even the information I gave to CDC and even some of the information he got, as long as you took them off these public records really wasn't a hundred percent true and accurate. And even though someone may have died in this community here of cancer of the lungs, he may have worked at Cincinnati in a foundry all of his life or something like that.

17:27:32

A:

And so even though he died of lung cancer in this area really you can't say that Fernald was the factor that caused that death. And I guess that's the fallacy of these studies you know they really, truly takes an in depth study. You know, did he smoke 2 or 3 packs of cigarettes a day you know like Pat or was he a nonsmoker. You know those things all take into it.

17:28:00

A:

And I guess that's the fallacy of the studies unless you really get in depth and really look at them to see where their from, what they're doing, what all the causes were involved in it. And that takes a long time and a lot of money. I'm surprised somebody hasn't thought of that you know for a study.

17:28:22

Q:

What would you personally like to see done with the land that Fernald is sitting on right now?

A:

Oh, I don't know. I really haven't, I guess because it isn't in the community Ross and they gave us the, the only thing they gave us was the another dump for the low grade radium, radiation was the only thing we've gotten out of it so far. They put that in Ross Township, the rest of it, big percentage of it is in Hamilton County.

17:28:51

A:

And probably will never be a big asset to the Ross community. I'm not, depending on how clean they get it and what can be done with it. I've never really given it a whole lot of thought I'm afraid.

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17:29:10

Q:

So the public meetings that they've been holding lately about the future land use.

A:

I have not been to and that's strictly my fault. Not taking that interest.

17:29:22

Q:

Um, is there anything you'd like to add, anything that we didn't talk about that you'd like to talk about?

A:

No, I don't think so. I just feel that FRESH has been a big, dominant factor in the community. I think that parts of Fernald have been very helpful to the community. They've been very, in the Silver Queen and a lot of those things. They have helped the fire department financially in buying radios, they've tried to give scholarships and they've helped in the school system.

17:29:53

A:

You know a lot of those things have been positive out of it. I think probably a lot of people in the community don't realize what they've done. But this is an after fact of you know, the damage that they did before. You always wished it just hadn't happened. And they take precautions it doesn't happen in the future.

17:30:15

A:

And I think the politics need to be, I was quoted a long time back when Phil Donahue came here, the Cincinnati Enquirer pulled a little misquote out when they called me on radio, called me and asked me about what I thought about Phil Donahue coming here and this that and the other. And I said I thought it was a lot of bull.

17:30:39

A:

Basically speaking that the hype that he was giving it at that time was just a lot of politics and all the politicians were coming in and everything was happening. That that was just a lot of window dressing I guess would have sound better than saying it was a lot of bull. It came out in the big quotes in the Cincinnati Enquirer that I felt that it was, that Fernald was just a lot of bull.

17:31:04

A:

Well, I got a lot of repercussions because I remember FRESH and Lisa called me and said you really don't think this do you and I said...

TAPE FLHP0065

18:01:04

Q:

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Let's talk a little bit about your involvement with FRESH. When and why did you first get involved with the organization?

A:

Well, being part of the community, I thought I should and I was concerned about what was going on at Fernald. I think I helped them a little bit on the insides as far as the fire department was concerned and what was happening in those areas. Uh, I uh, I just felt it was necessary to do because it was part of the community and I've always been involved in community projects.

18:01:38

A:

Uh, and that's the reason why you know I went to a lot of their meetings and listened to a lot of their speakers and they had a lot of good speakers. And they forced Fernald or DOE to really come in line. I just you know, you just don't get hearings as Lisa did before Congressional hearings and things like that from being, not being well informed and not knowing what's going on you know.

18:02:10

A:

And I think that a lot of probably a lot of plants, people who have had dealings with DOE is trying to, to get information from, from FRESH as to how they did theirs. Because I think they've been one of the most successful organizations there's ever been with any of the ones dealing with the government or DOE.

18:02:39

Q:

And how did you first hear about FRESH?

A:

It was just community flyers and information and it was being held at the church that I was going to in our social room. And uh, had people that I knew asked me to come you know, Vicki Dastillung was a member of our church and a few other people that were involved with it. And so, I've been pretty silent in it, but I've been there.

18:03:15

Q:

And in fact I was just going to ask you, what was your role in the organization?

A:

None whatsoever. I didn't do you know, didn't help them organize it, they did it all on their own. They were just, just a bunch of women and a few men too I can't say it's all women. But I mean Lisa being the most vocal out of the group. But there's a lot of them that have worked hard at it.

18:03:42

Q:

What kind of difficulties did they come across in the early years?

A:

Well, I think their biggest difficulty was establishing credibility with FERMCO, or with DOE. And not realizing it was just another noisy group of people. And I think they did that through education.

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Their self education and what was going on and getting the credibility through that. And persistence and making theirself credible to that extent that they were at.

18:04:20

A:

They were, they educated themselves about what was going on. And they talked to a lot of people, got a lot of people in to talk to them and I think they, they earned that. I think the thing that gave them most trouble was probably uh opinion of other people in the community that you know, you're not going to amount to anything and you're not going to do any good.

18:04:45

A:

You know, you're fighting the government, you're not going to get anywhere. You're just a bunch of noisy people trying to cause trouble. But uh, I think they've earned where they are now.

18:05:01

Q:

And uh, now that the cleanup is under way, how has the role changed for FRESH?

A:

Well I think it has and I don't think it has either. You know I think at first they were really trying to get the facts and what was happening and what was going on, did you really do as much damage as you said you did? And I think it was a learning period of trying to get information together of what did you really do to us and what's going to happen to us.

18:05:36

A:

And I think now their goal to clean up is probably at the point that we want to be sure it's safe, we want to be sure it's clean, we want to be sure you're not doing something you shouldn't be doing. And that you're actually trying to bring it to a close and a safe and successful close. And I think they are still making DOE be accountable for what they're doing. And I don't think that's changed since their first incentive to be make them accountable.

18:06:18

Q:

Great. And um, I think, I want to make sure that we get a little bit of the story on tape because we had run out of tape earlier, um, with, during those years where Donahue came to town and those types of things, um, tell us again about the Enquirer and how they quoted you?

18:06:38

A:

Well at uh, unfortunately I usually say what I have to say and I guess I don't always use a lot of flowery terminology but and people usually never have much problem finding out how I feel about something because I usually say how I feel about things. And they called up from the Enquirer and said you know what do you think about different things going on.

18:07:08

A:

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And we talked awhile about different things and such. And they said what do you think about Phil Donahue coming to town and doing the show and this and that and so I said it's just a lot of bull, a lot of hype for the politicians and that's really not going to solve the problem. And the thing that came out in the Enquirer is quoting me saying long time Ross resident feels that Fernald is just a lot of bull.

18:07:32

A:

And, which is really not what I said at all and of course it was a catchy line and being in business, being known well within the community I guess that it was a catching line that they wanted to catch. And I remember Lisa saying to me she said you really don't feel this way about it do you? You know 'cause I was a member of FRESH. And I says no I don't, they sort of took it out of context of what was really being said.

18:08:04

A:

But uh, I did, I felt a lot, a lot of politicians when just started was on the bandwagon, they were down here all the time and doing all these things. And everybody was going to get it cleaned up and we were going to do all this stuff. And I still feel if it hadn't been for the persistence of FRESH, that it would never have been done.

18:08:26

A:

Because then it wasn't politically popular anymore. And it was going to take a lot of big bucks from a lot of places and they weren't willing to do that with not getting anything in return.

18:08:40

Q:

Great. And uh, you know one question I did want to ask you, generally how do you feel about having lived in such close proximity to the Fernald plant?

A:

Well, um, that's sort of dangerous question. We live within the 2-mile, we're right in the 2-mile range and we've lived within it for years. Then about 10 years ago we've owned a piece of property that was within a mile probably of the plant, which was a little bit more the east of it, and we built a house on that. But we weren't, I guess the worry from the plant at that point in time the damage from the plant was over with.

18:09:32

A:

Uh, was still concerned about the silos and such but I mean the chemicals that they had on, on the plant were gradually being taken off. And the dust collectors were shut down and you know these things were happening so I guess, in the family it was sort of a joke the fact that we felt all this damage done and here we are instead of moving away from it we're moving closer to it.

18:09:58

A:

But uh, as I said before, if we knew all the things we know now, we probably would not have moved in the area, if we had an idea that our families were in jeopardy.

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18:10:14

Q:

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

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A:
No, we'd better quit.

Q:
Okay, we need to get a little nat sound. So this is just room tone, if we could have quiet on the set for a moment. This is nat sound.