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FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Lisa Crawford

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Tape FLHP0166

03:01:06

Q:

As if we didn't know your name (laughter). If you could just give us your name and spell it.

A:

Lisa Crawford. C-R-A-W-F-O-R-D.

03:01:12

Q:

Great! And if you could give us a little bit of background about your self and your family, where were you were born, where'd you go to school, uh, how did you end up in this area?

A:

Was born in a little town in, right outside of Moorestown, Tennessee. Lived there for a couple of years and my parents moved to a little town right down the road here called Cleves, Ohio and that's where I was raised.

03:01:35

A:

And then when I was about, not quite 21 years old I married my husband, we lived in Fairfield for a little while. And then we moved here in December of 1979. And we had a two-year-old at the time. So that's pretty much me (laughter).

03:01:55

Q:

Terrific. And uh, in the early years when you first were looking at places in this area, uh, did you notice the Fernald site? Did you have any impressions of the Fernald site?

A:

I guess, you know, we, we lived in a one bedroom apartment in Fairfield, Ken and I did, and we had a two-year-old, and we had already bought this land that we have this house on now. And basically we were just, we were looking to kind of get away from the blacktop and the cement, you know, looking for a little place out in the country.

03:02:27

A:

Where our son could play in the grass, and swim in a little swimming pool, and you know, nice country air and good clean water and kind of a little country living. And Ken's father had mentioned to us that this house was for rent. And we went and looked at it, uh, pretty sad shape when we first looked at it.

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03:02:49

A:

And I was a little (chuckling) like, “oh God I don’t know if we can live in this place or not.” But they assured us that they would clean it up and paint it and do some work to it. And uh, so we, you know, the rent was what we could afford, and, you know, it's not far from where this land is and it’s where my husband grew up and it seemed to be a nice quiet little community.

03:03:10

A:

And you know, across the street was this big plant, you know, uh red and white checkerboard water towers, and a big sign at the entranceway that said ‘Feed Material Production Center’, with a little red and white checkerboard sign in the corner. Um, down at the bottom it said something about National Lead of Ohio and Dutch Boy Paints and had the little Dutch Boy sign on it and, you know, I didn’t pay a whole lot of attention to it.

03:03:39

A:

I think we just assumed that it was, you know, a dog food plant or a Purina Dog Chow facility, or whatever. Uh, through the, you know, the next few years I can remember people calling it the atomic plant, but not, from not living in this community or growing up in this community, I guess it just didn’t click. And it didn’t ring a bell, and it didn’t mean anything to me.

03:04:02

A:

I can remember after we, we had not lived there very long, it was still cold so it would have probably been in like you know, January, February of 19 um, 80. Uh, setting Kenny up on the table and tying his shoes and he’s like “look mom, look at the horses!” And he’s pointing and there were a bunch of deer across the street.

03:04:27

A:

By the mailbox on the Fernald property and that, that’s the memories I have of, of the early years of living out here. Of, you know, nice clean well water, you know, vegetable, a garden, a vegetable garden that we’d never had before. Uh, a good healthy place to raise a child.

03:04:46

A:

I mean, what more can a kid ask for than a nice big yard to play in, and you know, nice clean air to breathe and good things to eat. And you know, he always wanted a swimming pool, those little plastic things that you fill ‘em up with water every once in awhile. And, and it was great. It was, it was a good; it was good for us to be here. Until (chuckles) all hell broke loose.

Q:

Tell us about that day that you found out that the well was contaminated.

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03:05:14

A:

(Sighs) I was at work uh, and my husband called me and said, he was on his way to a doctor's appointment and, he said, "Byron Knollman called me and said that, that there's something definitely wrong with the well."

03:05:34

A:

And I, I guess we need to caveat that with, you know, this was um, early January of '85, you know. Prior to that there had been the 300-pound dust releases, uh, you know, kind of the word was starting to leak out a little bit that there was a problem over here.

03:05:49

A:

And I think even at that point through that fall part, that later part of '84, you know, I worked full time, I had a child, I didn't read the newspaper, I didn't watch TV, I didn't watch the news, and kind of an uninformed person. Which, you know, doesn't make you proud, but you have a life and you're doing what you think you need to be doing.

03:06:11

A:

And I can remember Christmas Eve, we were making cookies and a TV reporter knocked on our back door and said, you know, "would you like to comment to us about what's happening with the dust releases across the street at this facility." And I was like, "can't really comment because I don't really know anything." So it was after the first of the year, Ken always remembers the exact date, I never do.

03:06:35

A:

Uh, and he, Mr. Knollman had called and told Ken you know, that there was a problem with this well, it was gonna be made public in the next few days and he thought we should hear it from him. He was the old guy, the father that ran the farm. And uh, Ken called me at work right away and said, "something's wrong here, you know, when you come home tonight and you pick up Kenny, don't drink any of this water."

03:06:58

A:

"There's definitely something wrong here." And of course, it frightened me, it scared me a little bit, so I picked Kenny up at the babysitters and went on home and waited for him to get home. And uh, not much more information came through after that, it was just you know, you know, you might want to pay attention here, there is this public meeting, you know.

03:07:20

A:

I do remember going to the public meeting, I mean, Ken said 300 people were in the room, I would say more like 500. It was at Crosby Elementary School, it was absolutely mobbed, it was packed. I mean,

there was standing room only. And up to this point it had not been made public for the three off-site contaminated wells, and Tom Luken was our congressman and he was there.

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03:07:45

A:

And there was a table there with three or four DOE people and a couple of the NLO guys. Of course they're all men, no women (chuckles). And uh, they were sweating bullets, I mean, literally, you could see the sweat running off their faces. They were sweating bullets that night. And he, you know, very dramatically spoke and took the cover off of a map with three wells on it and pointed out the location of those three wells.

03:08:15

A:

And you could just feel the entire room go just kind of go (inhale deeply and sigh) "boy, it's not mine!" And we sat there knowing it was ours. And I think at that point it became very clear to us, you know, the well testing had begun like five years prior to that, uh, it was not shared with the neighbors.

03:08:40

A:

Apparently letters were sent to the property owners that the Knollman Dairy farm owners, uh, very vague letters I would say. Letters that probably would not make them think "well, I probably need to make a copy of this and give it to the people who rent from me." Um, we, you know, didn't talk to the media that night, talked to a couple in the hall, but had just kind of asked to please not identify us.

03:09:06

A:

Ken's family wasn't well and we felt like we really needed to go and talk to our individual, perspective families to let them know before this became a huge public knowledge issue which I knew it would. As a mother I was very angry to think that you could harm a child's life this way.

03:09:30

A:

And you know, you're talk to people here who don't know what radiat-, you know, you know what radiation is, but you don't really understand the ramifications of it. You know, what's a microgram? I didn't know what a microgram, or a milliliter, or a pico-curie, or, you know, or how many of this you could have, and that you can have. You don't know because you're not educated and it's not your field.

03:09:51

A:

And you feel very helpless. And we went home that night, and we, you know, talked to our families the next day. And, you know, whatta you say to a seven-year-old? You don't, you can't say anything to a seven year old because I, I knew he wouldn't understand. And, and I think the next day I called the EPA. I called the Ohio EPA the very next day and talked to Graham Mitchell.

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03:10:16

A:

And said, you know, "I want you to come and test this well." And then I called the Ohio Department of Health and said, "I want you to come and test this well, immediately." And I called a couple of people at the University of Cincinnati; we began, that was the day I feel like we began kind of of the educational process here.

03:10:36

A:

We began to ask a lot of questions, we began to try you know, put two and two together here, exactly what has happened here, and within twenty-four hours the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio EPA had come and, and took their samples.

03:10:50

A:

Uh, I was frustrated too at the time because no one at the site would talk to us. We had no DOE presence at the site at this point. You know, except for this public meeting they'd have where they'd drive up here from Oak Ridge or they'd fly one of the goofballs in from Washington, or you know, and then they'd all go back home that night or the next morning. So they didn't have to be bothered.

03:11:11

A:

But the NLO folks at the sight would not talk to us on the phone would not come and talk to us in person. I called and requested copies of the well testing letters. And they said oh we can only give them to the property owner.

03:11:23

A:

We called the property owner and asked them for copies and they said we don't have to give them to you. I mean, we're paying to rent this property every single month, but we're not being cooperated with. Uh, that's when we noticed the stake in the backyard next to the contaminated well not too long after that.

03:11:40

A:

Which clearly tells you something's wrong here if they're gonna spend the money to dig another well. Uh, we were informed that the current well was 85 foot deep and the, the new well was gonna be like 120 foot deep. And I was like "what the hell's the difference here? You know, if it's at 85 feet what's to say it's not gonna be at 120 feet?"

03:12:00

A:

Common sense would make you ask those questions. Um, it became clearly, became obvious to us in the next few weeks after that, that we were in trouble. Um, I had asked, specifically called NLO, you know, you need to remember they didn't have PR. They didn't have what, what we've established over the years.

03:12:21

A:

They were this company that was gonna do their work, by God, no matter what. They had a quota to

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meet and they were gonna meet that quota. And the hell with everybody else, and this is what we're gonna do.

03:12:32

A:

And I had called and ask them, said, you know, this, this well is contaminated, you know, well by this point EPA has come back and said, "it's a 190 micrograms per liter, don't drink, you know, don't drink this water. Find an alternate source of drinking water."

03:12:47

A:

The Ohio Department of Health letter come back a few days after that that said, "ah, well, it's within DOE's limits. You can drink it, I wouldn't worry about it." Now if you have two letters glaringly opposite of one another, which one are you gonna believe? You know. So, we opted not to drink the water any more. We began to buy bottled water.

03:13:07

A:

But every time you have to put your child in a bathtub full of water, you wonder. And every time you wash a load of clothes, you wonder. And every time you do a load of dishes in the kitchen sink, you wonder. And I called over there and said you know, can you provide us with drinking water since you're the ones that goofed up our well?

03:13:29

A:

Absolutely not, it's within DOE range limits and we don't have to do this. (Sighs) Um, so we just, we quit drinking it and we bought our own water. I think that's one of the things that years down the road that I resent. To this day I resent the fact that now, you know, five years later after all that happened, anybody who had anything above four in their well got provided drinking water.

03:13:58

A:

So I felt like we were hugely discriminated against in the early days. And I worried myself sick over, you know, I worry about my husband and I, but I worried about my son more than anything else. You know, I worried about his wellbeing and his, his health and his welfare, and you know, my God, what kind of an environment have we brought this child into.

03:14:24

A:

And is he gonna be ok? And if, if he's okay, will his children be okay? And the mother instincts kicked in and I became one very angry person. Very angry. **And the lawsuit was filed. We felt like we had no other choice than to do that, because nobody would talk to us, nobody would answer our questions,** uh, you know, DOE and NLO just sloughed us off like we were dirt, we were nothing, and, and the wrath of God came down upon their heads.

03:15:01

Q:

Tell us about your first contact with a uh, Fernald employee.

13:15:13

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A:

(Chuckles) I had stopped at the little corner store down here in uh, New Haven one day. My son, the babysitter that kept our son lives down there, and I had stopped in there – he wanted a popsicle or, something.

03:15:24

A:

We stopped in there and I come out of the store and this guy looks up at me and he says “you’re, you’re Lisa Crawford aren’t ya?” And I said, “yeah” And up until this point no one had ever really bothered me or, you know, messed with me and he said, “you need to go home and be pregnant and barefoot and you need to keep your mouth shut.”

03:15:43

A:

And I said, “really.” I said, “you know this is the ‘80’s. Women don’t do this anymore.” That was probably my first brush with a worker. Um, I think in the beginning, when the hell, when the hell broke loose, the workforce was sort of there. Um, a woman by the name of Kathy Meyer had already kind of started FRESH.

03:16:08

A:

Um, in the fall after the dust releases and she spoke very publicly at some of these first meetings that we had gone to. And, you know, my understanding is that her and Gene Branham and a couple of the union guys sat around a table and formed this organization, which I thought was great.

03:16:24

A:

And the workforce was in the back of the room at the public meetings, you know, basically pushing the issue and asking the same questions that the community was asking. So I felt like, you know, while we weren’t working hand-in-hand at that point there was an understanding that it wasn’t only a community issue it was always, it was also a site issue.

03:16:45

A:

Um, I became very active with FRESH, you know, in the January, February range because Kathy specifically asked me to, especially with regard to the well stuff. And, moved on through that year, you know, the lawsuit was, was a major turning point for us, you know, we had never talked to the media. We had never you know, I just never had, never stood up in a public meeting and spoke publicly.

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03:17:15

A:

And had never done anything like this. I was just this nice quiet little housewife, who minded her own business, and went to work everyday, and raised her family and did what she was supposed to do. Until they turned me into a wild person. And I think that the lawsuit kind of brought everything full circle.

03:17:35

A:

Because, you know, anytime you file a big federal class action lawsuit like this, it garners a tremendous amount of publicity. It kind of kicked the door open for the weapons complex across the country. Um, there was all these sites kind of tucked away in these little communities and nobody really knew.

03:17:53

A:

And I think, you know, when it, when it went very public and it began you know, began to go through the process of the lawsuit, there's interrogatories, and questions that you have to answer back and forth. And the whole legal system is like a maze to us as it is, because we don't understand it.

03:18:08

A:

And it's, there, there's discovery phases and all these legal terms that you have to kind of go through. And it became real obvious real quick that D-, the DOE lawyers were going to make our lives very miserable.

03:18:26

A:

So we, we learned, we educated ourselves very quickly, we learned how to talk to the media. We learned quickly that you don't say anything unless you know it to be an absolute true fact. You, you learn that pretty quick. (Phone rings) Want me to stop? I'm sorry.

03:18:48

Q:

Okay.

A:

I think it's, it's important that we had to learn how to educate ourselves, we had to learn how to deal with the media. We had to learn what we could say and couldn't say to the media. And we, we learned real quick too that you only, when you're talking with the media you only talk facts.

03:19:07

A:

You don't talk summations or questions or issues. You talk facts. Um, at this point, it's, our, our lives are, are a jumble at this point, you know, we're building a home, not far from where we are. We're, we're struggling with do we finish it, do we not, you know, do we really want to live this close, but, you know, we had bought this property before we were married and this was our dream home.

03:19:33

A:

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This is what we put our blood, sweat and our tears into. And, this is where we wanted to live. This is where we chose to live. Uh, took a lot of flack from a lot of people, of you know, if you're so afraid and if you're so scared, why are you staying here? And we figured they done contaminated us, they done did this to us and you can't, you can run but you can't hide basically.

03:19:57

A:

And at that point I said, "we'll stay and we'll fight." But, you know, and we said to our builder, "just get this house done as quick as you can so we can get out of this other house." So in April we moved into our new home. Which was supposed to be a wonderful day of joy for us and it poured the rain all day long.

03:20:16

A:

And it wasn't a joyful day, it was a, a day of, a breath of, a sigh of relief just to get out, and get away from there. I should, I should tell you to that probably one of the most awakening days of still living in the farm house, and it was sometime between January and, and April of '85, I came home from work one day and there was a man climbing out of our well.

03:20:45

A:

A man in a white, a pair of white, like a jumpsuit and a little white hat on his head, and uh, literally, cl-, the well was kind of made where you could climb down in it on these steps and then climb back up out of it.

03:21:00

A:

And I went up to the back porch and he's literally climbing out of the well, and I like, "excuse me, but what are you doing?" And he wouldn't talk to me. He would not answer my questions; he would not look at me. He had water samples in his hand and I dogged him all the way to his little white van that said "US Department of Energy" on the side of it.

03:21:19

A:

And he would not talk to me at all. And I think that played a part in making me more angry. You know, I am this ranting, raving, angry housewife now, who is furious. That no one will talk to me. No one will answer my questions. Um, I stayed with FRESH all through that summer and in September, Kathy Meyer went to have her third baby, I believe it was, and she said you have to, to take this.

03:21:53

A:

I, she said, "I can't do this anymore." She was having some trouble with her pregnancy and I think she was a little afraid. And she said, you have to, you have to lead FRESH you, you're it. You have to do this. And I said, "well, (chuckling) I'll give it my best shot." And we took FRESH that, that September and our goal was to move this organization into a grassroots movement that would make this a national issue.

03:22:22

A:

And that was a big goal for us. Um, I learned quick how to talk to politicians, who will help you, who

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will not help you. I will say to you that the Democrats were far more sympathetic to this issue than the Republicans were and that doesn't bother me to say that publicly. People say, "you shouldn't say that Lisa." And I say, "why not? It's true." Um, we moved along through that year. At this point, NLO was still the contractor.

03:22:57

A:

And basically they're not talking to anybody. They know their contract's not gonna be reissued or whatever their legal terms are over there. And they were, they had re-bid at that point, and Westinghouse was gonna walk in the door, like December or January. We were happy to see NLO go. They were the worst, the most despicable people that I have ever had to deal with in my entire life.

03:23:26

A:

They had no concern for my family. They had no concern for my child. None whatsoever. And I will feel very hard towards them for a really long time. Um, just real disappointed, I think is a good word. I think it was in, after Westinghouse took over in ear-, the early part of '86, the lawsuit's chugging along here. Kind of chugging through all this stuff.

03:23:59

A:

You know they've, they've made us give depositions that lasted 8, 10, 12 hours, where they asked you everything that you can possibly be asked from do you put your own gas in your car to how often do you have sex to, you name it. I mean, it was the most violating questions I have ever had to answer in my life.

03:24:20

A:

Um, very personal questions that no one should be allowed to ask you basically. Um, had to have a psychological evaluation done which um, the guy, the doctor who done mine looked like Trapper John MD. (Laughing) That's all I could think of that day was that's who he looked like. He was the most in-compassionate person, doctor that I've ever had to be in the room with for like 3 hours.

03:24:52

A:

He could have cared less about me. Um, we had to have ah, we had to have some tests done. I'm, they're like psych tests, I don't even know the names of 'em anymore. Um, we move through '86, I think it was in the spring of '86 I'd, I have never been on an airplane in my entire life, ever. Never flown anywhere.

03:25:16

A:

And I had been to see John Glenn here in Cincinnati um, I knew and FRESH knew; we decided back in the beginning that we were going to be an environmental organization. We were not going to be an anti-nuke organization. I have a lot of respect for people and what their beliefs are and how they want to run their organizations, this is a very patriotic community. Um, a lot of the people who live around here fought in the wars and one of the conscious decisions we made was to be not an anti-nuke group; to be just an environmental organization.

03:25:50

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A:

I also knew that when I went in to see John Glenn, or Tom Luken, or whoever was in charge at the time. If I went in the door screaming and ranting and raving, ban the bomb, no more nukes, you know, that I wasn't gonna get anywhere. That they were gonna just kind of disregard me and not listen to what I had to say.

A:

So we, we made a conscious decision when we began to talk to the, to the kind of the public arena here, that we gonna go in as concerned mothers, people carin-, that cared about our environment, and cared about our community and cared about our issue.

0326:27

A:

And that was how we kind of took the issue and moved it along and they listened. John Glenn is my hero to this day. He fought this battle right along our side until the day the man retired from the Senate. And I have so much respect for him. He's, you know, he's been to my house. I've seen him in his office on many occasions and, and he, he's one wonderful person.

03:26:55

A:

Um, I've got, I got on a plane; they called and asked me to testify before a Senate subcommittee hearing and another new thing that I had never, ever done. And I really struggled with, you know, the testimony of how, you know, wasn't real sure, how does this work, and again, you do the educational piece of how does things like this work in DC.

03:27:22

A:

And I got to the airport that day with two TV channels tailing me all the way, you know, literally watching me get on an airplane that I was terrified to get on and Ken just about had to put me on that plane that day. And I rode white-knuckled all the way into Washington DC, um, with a little boy, they asked if they could sit this little, young 5, 6, 7-year-old child next to me. Did I mind, and I was like no, that's fine.

03:27:51

A:

And he talked to me the entire way. He showed me his toys, he just talked to me all the way 'til we get into DC, and he's lookin' out the window and he says to me, "lady wouldn't it be really cool if landed on the water?" And I was like, "no, please" (laughing). At this point I'm really terrified and he was the cutest little thing. And as I think back on that, it was probably good that they sat this child next to me, 'cause it kept me talking to him and talking about his toys and my son and not thinking about this flight.

03:28:25

A:

Um, testified before a Senate hearing that day. It was a new experience. DOE always gets to go first. They can talk as long as they wanna talk, they can window dress and do what ever they wanna do. And the schmuckie little grassroots lady, you know, gets 10 minutes at 4:30 in the afternoon. And, and it was, it was a real experience for me.

03:28:52

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A:

Um, I, I think, if we move through '86, that was the first year we had ever taken a tour of the site. We had never, we had never even be allowed on the site.

Q:

Before we get into that let's change tapes.

A:

Okay.

Q:

'Cause I know we want to get into that one.

A:

I'm sorry. Oh, god I've got to scratch my leg.

Q:

Oh no, you're fine, yeah, we only have 30 seconds or 30 seconds, we only have 30 seconds on the tape.

(Tape ends)

TAPE FLHP0167

04:01:01

A:

Okay (sighs). We, well we toured, we toured the site. First time we had ever toured the site and we got permission, Tom Luken, our Congressman went with us. We all met in the site, in the parking lot that day and 'course everybody had a camera, and I had a tape recorder and somebody else had a Geiger counter. And we were really prepared, it's like, "boy we're gonna go on a tour. This is gonna be so cool."

04:01:25

A:

We're gonna actually see what goes on over here now. And we got to the, to the gates that day and the first-, the Westinghouse guy came out and said, "well, no cameras, no tape recorders, no Geiger counters." And I was like, "excuse me? You know, you didn't tell us this when you offered this tour to us today." And ah, all the news media were in the parking lot. Every, I mean, every TV station, every radio station, every newspaper, they were all in the parking lot because this was like a historical moment here.

04:01:53

A:

You know, this little organization gets to tour this nuclear plant. And I said, "well, okay, fine. We'll just go out into the parking lot and we'll have a press conference then. We just won't go on the tour today." "well, wait a minute." And he goes around the corner and they dicker and talk and ney-nay, ney-nay, ney and he comes back and says, "yeah, well you can bring just whatever you wanna bring." So we went on this tour.

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04:02:14

A:

Um, it was an amazing tour. Everything had been painted; they had attempted to clean the site up. Attempted, it was a very poor attempt. Um, if it was where they worked with green salt, everything was painted green. And if it was the yellow cake building and I don't remember all the building numbers, everything was painted that color of yellow.

04:02:38

A:

I mean, you could just see where they had like spray painted everything; pipes, everything. And it was so obvious that it was just recently done, I mean you could smell it, and you could see it, and if you touched it, it was tacky and all that. Um, but we learned a lot. This was a very dirty, dusty, antiquated, ugly, old factory.

04:03:01

A:

That became glaringly obvious very little upgrade and maintenance had taken place here. Production had been its number one priority from day one and it continued to be its number one priority. We move through '86, we go into '87 and '88 the lawsuit's running rampant. You know, again there's this, the legal system is back and forth, and there's this and that and you gotta, it's all these little hoops and jumps you gotta go through to kind of get to the end product here.

04:03:33

A:

And we're learning as we go, and FRESH is raising hell. FRESH is screaming and yelling, if you can't, you know, you cannot produce here unless you clean up. You know how, and, and the, the demands and the questions from the community are what are you gonna do about clean up. 'Cause your primary production, your primary focus has always been production.

04:03:57

A:

We're gonna clean up while we produce. We knew they would never pass that test and we thought we'll let them trip over their own feet. Okay, fine you know, you, you do clean up while you do production and we'll see what happens here. Production always took precedent over clean up. Um, we had a consent agreement that had been approved to between the community and the EPA's and the DOE and all that, they missed their very first milestone.

04:04:25

A:

They renegotiated it, they missed the very first one again, you know. It was obvious to us that it was a façade it, the PR people, I mean, Westinghouse had brought in the awfulest PR people I have ever seen in my entire life. I mean, phony, you know, the manager tried to act like Phil Donahue, at the public meetings. We were just rolling in the floor, in our chairs, having a h-, hilarious old time here.

04:04:55

A:

Going ah, what is wrong with these people? And lying through their teeth, totally. We um, we know their days are numbered. We move into ah, I think I testified yet again in '88, flew to Washington again.

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By this time you're a seasoned flyer and you don't care anymore and went up there and you know, same old routine.

04:05:19

A:

You get there, you wait around, they talked; DOE and everybody talked all day long. It's like 5:00, you're tired, you're hungry, you know, you're sick and tired of sitting in this velvet curtained room; and sick and tired of looking at all these people. And finally I get to talk. And you know you get like 15 minutes, and I'm reading through my testimony and kind of going on and on.

04:05:44

A:

And, and uh, they've got the little box with the red light, and a green light and a yellow light, you know. Well, the green light's off and the yellow light's on and I'm still talkin' and the red light's on and I'm still talkin'. And this little old geezer of a congressman says, "Mrs. Crawford, your time is up." And I thought, you know, I've had it.

04:06:11

A:

I'm a tax-paying citizen of this country and I stood up and said, "excuse me sir, but you paid to bring me here today, you know. The taxpayers of this country paid for me to fly here and for me to spend the night in a hotel and for me to eat. I've got two more pages of testimony and I think I should be allowed to finish here."

04:06:31

A:

"You know, DOE and all these people have talked, you know, all day long, it's 5:00, we're tired, we're hungry, and I think I deserve enough respect to be allowed to finish today." And Luken was, it was not his committee, but he was there, said, "please finish." And I thought good, you know. And in the record, it, it, it talks about in the, in the Congressional Record how (chuckles), I may, you know, they caught me making some remarks, you know.

04:07:06

A:

That DOE gets to talk all the time, you know, you can hear me in the background making these little comments. Because by this point I'm getting really upset, I, I, I've just had it. So, I, I think, you know, we learned to be more aggressive as the years went on too. And, you learn that if you really want something, basically just you'll say anything and you'll do anything and you'll stand up and fight anyone to get you there.

04:07:30

A:

'89 came along, the lawsuit was hot and heavy. And we'd all been put through the ringer, the 12 or 14 of us who they called bellwethers. I mean, we'd been beaten and picked on, and talked about and they've walked through our houses and evaluated our property, evaluated our brains. Asked us everything they could possibly ask us.

04:07:52

A:

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And it was in June of '89, we got the news that production would cease at Fernald. And it was a very happy day for us. Very happy day for us. Um, we actually went to one of the FRESH member's houses and cracked open a bottle of champagne and said, "we won." We thought we had won by this point. You know there would not be any more production at this site.

04:08:16

A:

And it was about a week later when the DOE come back and offered the settlement and they started very low. And we had originally sued for \$300 million knowing that we would probably never get a penny of money. And it didn't, it wasn't the money, it never was the money. It was the principle, it was the point. And Stan called and um, said you know they've offered a settlement, we're negotiating.

04:08:46

A:

It was like 21 million. And then they come back and they'd say 36 million. And then they'd say you know this much, that much. They, they come you know, they offered like 68 million, and then uh two days later and said, "oh no we're just going to do a million." And, and you know we're kind of laughing because we don't understand this whole negotiation process either.

04:09:08

A:

And finally they called and said you know, "they agreed to 78 million dollars, we think it's a good fair offer. And broken into emotional distress, and um, medical monitoring, property evaluation." And he called and said, "what do you think?" And I'll tell ya, we were tired. We were all very tired. We were really tired of our lives kind of being an open book and being splashed everywhere.

04:09:35

A:

And kind of having our privacy violated. And I said, "if you think this is good then you know I can't make this decision, you know." I, I just felt like I couldn't 'cause I didn't know exactly what we were deciding. And they assured us that this would, this would be good, this would work. Um, we had went through a mock trial a few months prior to that. Uh, that was quite interesting.

04:10:00

A:

Uh, it's kind of like a real trial but they do it to save money and they also do it to try to get people to settle out of court is kind of the, the whole goal. And we sat through that trial um, the jury come back and awarded us like 120 million dollars or something like that. But 78 million was fine. Like I said, it was never the money. It wasn't you know, if I, if we never would have gotten a penny from the lawsuit, it wouldn't have mattered.

04:10:30

A:

The point was they admitted that what they had done was wrong. They admitted that they had knowingly and willingly contaminated this community but there wasn't a damn thing any of us were going to be able to do about it because they were the government. I think that, that admission was, caused a huge media uproar that spring before the settlement actually came through.

04:10:59

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A:

Um, people from all over the world called here. In three days we had 140 phone calls on our answer between the answering machine and us answering the telephone. Um, we wore, we wore answering machines out like on a yearly basis. They just died after about a year. And we did our very, very best to accommodate them the best we could but there's no way physically possible that you can return 140 phone calls.

04:11:33

A:

Time Magazine was here, *Newsweek*, *48 Hours*, *60 Minutes*, the *BBC*, you name it, they were here you know. It's unbelievable list of folks. And we dealt with as many as we possibly could deal with. Um, this also caused a stir from around the country. You know, that's when the folks began to call from the Hanfords and the Savannah Rivers and the Oak Ridges around the U.S. saying, "will you come and talk to us."

04:12:03

A:

You know, "will you come and tell us how you did this?" Um, I did a lot of travelling for a few years. And how do you tell somebody how you did it? It's really hard. Um, we did it on a wing and a prayer basically. And we did it because we were committed, because we're, we cared about our kids. And we were just angry mothers who said, "this will not happen again, not here."

04:12:31

A:

I think if we move through the rest of the years, FRESH played a huge role in defining what public participation really meant. What it really means to a lay community person. DOE can define it you know, however they want to define it. You know, the picture of the guy in their magazine holding a raw steak in his hand which I hate the term stakeholder. I hate that term.

04:13:03

A:

We're community participants, we're not stakeholders. We have a st-, you know we have a stake and a say in it but a stakeholder takes away the, the personal part for me. I think you know, we worked with the EPAs, U.S. and Ohio EPAs, we worked with the site, we worked with the DOE. I think we saw a new regime of people come in. Um, come what '90, '91 I can't remember the years all flow together after a while and we all get older as we do this work.

04:13:35

A:

Um, we saw Westinghouse leave which was fine 'cause they wanted to produce, they didn't want to clean up. There's a lot more money in production than there is in cleanup. We heard workers say, "I'm not a, you know I'm not a broom pusher, I'm not a shovel person, I'm a scientist and that's what I want to do." Um, the workforce at this point is very leery of us.

04:14:02

A:

You know, no more production, they're talking cleanup. They're thinking, we ain't gonna have a job

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(chuckles). And they're angry, they're very angry at us. Fluor Daniel Fernald comes in with a new contract. The great, wonderful Leo Duffy from DOE headquarters arrives on the scene you know, to save the day. To tell us all our workforce will be gone and they will bring their own workforce in.

04:14:32

A:

And that was a very defining point in, in the struggle for all of us. FRESH and the workforce aligned themselves together to save their jobs. You know, if we're going to clean this site up, these workers have been here all these years, they know where the bodies are buried, they know where everything is. And our fear was that we would lose that institutional memory.

04:14:58

A:

And we needed to keep that. And we, we mounted a joint effort which really brought the community and the workforce kind of together. And it kind of mended those broken fences that had been there for a, for a pretty good while. And we were able to do that. Um, Fluor Daniel had to keep the original workforce. And Leo Duffy went back to DC with his tail between his legs, which was fine.

04:15:26

A:

Um, you know, I think it defined, the early '90's defined for us what we were actually, how we were going to clean this site up. You know, we, we have a new consent agreement, we've records of decisions that we've walked through and worked through. This community has given so much of their time and their energy. Um, especially the FRESH folks and I have to really give the FRESH crew a lot of credit.

04:15:56

A:

I mean meeting after meeting after meeting you know, learning and educating, and reading documents and commenting on documents, and you know, arguing amongst everybody of what's clean and what's not clean. And how much waste and, and it gets a little contentious at times and uh not everybody agrees. You can't put this many people in a room and expect them all to agree.

04:16:21

A:

So I think we had to all learn to agree to disagree on occasion. Um, the FCAB was coming up at, at this time, which was very good for us. I think when you do this work for as long as we've done it, you begin to get some blinders on your eyes and you only see what you want to see. And I think when they, when the idea of the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board kind of got floated out there, we were very overwhelmed.

04:16:50

A:

And thinking, "boy you know we need some help here." And you know, "how clean is clean?" And you know, "we, we only have so many resources to go to." And they seated the CAB and it was a very good thing for us because it brought in some people who hadn't been involved. And John Applegate, our chair was just the most wonderful person.

04:17:13

A:

Um, such an understanding person who really had to (snaps fingers) come up to speed pretty quick and he

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did an excellent job there. And that helped us finish that defining process of what are we gonna actually you know do with the site and how are we going to clean it up. And um, it, it defined the public participation piece for all of us. (Comment – great) I don't know where to go from there.

04:17:45

Q:

Um, I am real interested in how, you mentioned the education process, you all had to educate yourselves. I know from working on site that it's, it's, it's very complicated and especially anything having to do with radioactive material and those types of issues. Back in the beginning of FRESH, how on earth did you educate yourself about all those things? How did FRESH, all of them, how did you all educate yourselves?

04:18:17

A:

We read a lot of books and we found friendly people. We found the Argen Mockajohnnys of the world and the Dave Fenkhousers of the world and you know the Carl Johnsons or Carl, whatever all their names are. You find these people or they find you. And you forge relationships with them and they help to educate you.

04:18:41

A:

You learn quickly who you can trust and who you can't trust. Um, and you read a lot. We read documents until we were blue in the face. And we checked facts and we double checked facts and um, more than I ever wanted to know. But in order for us to make a good conscious decision we felt like we had to do that.

04:19:05

A:

And part of the piece for FRESH is you know, the core group of FRESH, it's the officers. And the board, on a lot of occasions had to read a lot of the stuff and then kind of water it down enough so the average person sitting in the audience at these meetings could kind of get it. And for some reason, we always found the resources or the material to enable us to be able to do that.

04:19:28

A:

But it was, it was a massive amount of work. You know, a lot of evenings spent on a computer. A lot of evenings spent with your nose in a book and many sleepless nights. And you know trying to hold down a full-time job and raise, raise a family is, it's a lot you know. Quite a bit to ask of somebody but we felt that strongly about it. You know, that by God this wasn't going to happen any more.

04:19:51

A:

You know and it, I think this issue, people say, "how can you be so passionate about it 15 years later?" An issue like this has to touch your life in some way and it touched us very personally. And you, it doesn't go away and along with it touching your life, you make a conscious commitment you know, that I'm going to do this and I'm going to give it my best shot, and I'm going to move on.

04:20:26

A:

I didn't think it'd be 15 years down the road but you know, um we'll see. I think we got maybe 10 more,

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maybe, maybe less we'll see.

04:20:40

Q:

When you got tired of the whole mess um, what was your major motivating sense to keep going?

A:

They'd just tell one more lie. We caught them in so many lies and it's almost like they would set themselves up. You know, they'd be going along and doing pretty good here and the public's kind of moving along, right along with them, and then all of the sudden they would do something so stupid and they would tell a huge lie.

04:21:12

A:

And three or four weeks down the road the huge lie would come out and it would just, it was the motivator to keep this organization kind of moving. You know, "we can't trust you for a week without you telling us another damn lie." And it took them a long time to kind of figure that out. And these are the, supposed to be the smart folks.

04:21:33

A:

You know, and, and we, we of course were laughing, thinking (chuckles) this just plays right into what we want to do here. So it, it's and we can still do that to this day every once in a while. They just trip, they trip their own selves up every once in a while. Not quite as frequently as they used to.

04:21:59

Q:

Now you mentioned the term a couple of times, "mad housewife," (chuckles) and uh do you think that it was beneficial to be a woman or do you think it was harder because you're a woman?

A:

I think it could be both. I think it's, I think as a, as a woman, as a mother you know, as a, kind of the core of the family issue is a good thing for us. And that's the positive side.

04:22:30

A:

The negative side is all the blue suiters, that's what I like to call the folks up in DC that you know they all live inside the beltway and they all wear rose colored glasses. And everybody wears a blue suit, a white shirt and a maroon tie. And it's very hard for them to look at a woman and take her seriously. And we were, you know, we were called crazy housewives you know, lunatics.

04:22:57

A:

Um, you know, they don't have enough to do. It's real obvious they don't have enough to do, they just want to go out and rant and rave and raise a little hell and blow a little steam off every once in a while. So I think it's, it's a positive and a negative. And they can call me what they want to call me 'cause I don't care, you know.

04:23:16

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A:

I've been called a lot of things and I know what I am. I know what I did and I know what we did was good and positive. And we made some good changes and we've made a tremendous impact at this facility and that's fine. That's all I need. Um, I don't pay people to like me, you can either like me or not, that's fine.

04:23:38

A:

I used to really care, I used to really be hurt when people would talk about me behind my back and other people would come and tell me you know. Um, call me all kinds of things and it used to really hurt me but it doesn't hurt me any more. Because I know what we did was right and that's all that matters.

04:24:00

Q:

What was the worse moment during this whole ordeal?

A:

The worst, the very worst moment for me, was the day, not long after we found out about the well being contaminated, that my son got up on a Saturday morning and said to me "mommy I had a dream last night that I drank the water and I died."

04:24:22

A:

And that really hurt me, it hurt me very bad (tears). And it was a huge motivator to move on and to do what we had to do, because this is an innocent child that we're talking about here. And um, that was probably the hardest thing for me.

04:24:48

Q:

And how has this whole thing affected your son?

A:

(Sighs) He, he was very intrigued with the media I think in the beginning. Um, I think you know at seven they're like, "oh, we're going to be on TV, this will be so cool." And after a couple of times of that, he didn't want anything else to do with that.

04:25:16

A:

Um, I'm sure he took a lot of, of ribbing at school you know over this. And I'm sure that you know there were probably some arguments and I'm sure things got said that he never came back and told us. We would just always make sure, because you know, mom was busy now. Mom was working and mom was doing this and trying to run Fernald and everything else.

04:25:42

A:

And we always made sure that we were there for him. We designated Sunday as family day. Um, we wouldn't do you know, basically Sunday was an off limits day, we made sure we spent it with the family and that was it. And it's amazing to me when Vice President Gore, this was before he was Vice

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President, when he was, him and Clinton were running for election that, that September, he came to Fernald to visit.

04:26:12

A:

And uh, we met with him at Stricker's Grove that day and we took Kenny with us. And at that point he's pretty grown by this point, he's like I don't know, 14, 15, 16, whatever. And he sat at the table that day and Al Gore said to him, "what do you think Kenny?" And this child spoke so eloquently about Fernald. You never think your kids are really listening or paying attention, or kind of getting it, but he spoke for like five minutes very eloquently about Fernald.

04:26:46

A:

And how it had affected our lives and how it had really kind of scared him and, and Al Gore you know, just put his arm around him and said "this is amazing." And that was a defining moment I think for us too, as we sat there with tears in our eyes. Because you just don't know if they're really understanding and getting it. But I think this child got it.

04:27:09

A:

Uh, he doesn't say a lot about it. He doesn't, he doesn't, like he wouldn't sit here and talk to you probably today. But if you ask him about Fernald he knows a whole lot more than you think he does. Um, he came home from school one day, we had been in a Good Housekeeping magazine, there had been a story about all of us and a picture of Ken and Kenny and I.

04:27:37

A:

And he must of not told the teacher and this what like a year later. And they were looking through magazines making collages and the teacher came across this article and she said "well Kenny, you never told us about this." And he said, "wasn't no big deal." So, but he, and he's fine and every day we thank God that he's fine.

04:28:03

A:

And I still worry about him though. You know, he's 21 ½ and I wonder some day, I think he's, he's gonna be okay, there are no guarantees. I think my other worry is when he decides to have children you know there's always that nagging thought in the back of your mind, will his kids be okay? And these are the trials and the tribulations that we will go through for the rest of our lives.

04:28:33

A:

Always wondering, you know if 20 years down the road something happens to one of us you'll wonder, is it because of this? Did this have an impact? Did this play a role here?

04:28:48

Q:

What do you consider your crowning achievement?

A:

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(Sighs) Gosh. The biggest I guess, I'd have to say, and it was a tough one, when we would sit through meetings and they would talk about how they were going to ship everything off site to the Nevada Test Site or to Envirocare or wherever. And I was sitting in a public meeting one night thinking this isn't right.

04:29:20

A:

We cannot and we will not basically, take everything off of this site and dump it in somebody else's backyard. And that was, I really put my reputation on the line that night. Myself and another FRESH person did. Because we publicly stood up and said, "we can't do this." I guess we had been activists and angry housewives or whatever they want to call us you know, if you're an activist that's a bad thing.

04:29:53

A:

To me I'm really proud to be an activist, I think it's a good thing. Um, and we said, you know, "we can't dump on somebody else's back yard." We had learned what a NIMBY was a long time ago, not in my backyard. And I think that began the process for us as a community to have to think about that. What, what are we going to do here? Are we going to dump on somebody else just to clean up our own backyard?

04:30:19

A:

And we took a lot of heat. FRESH took quite a bit of heat for that. Um, but we.

Q:

We need to change tapes.

TAPE FLHP0168

05:01:01

Q:

Okay.

A:

Um, where were we?

Q:

You were talking about the shipping waste out to NTS issue.

A:

Yeah. That was probably a crowning moment, I think. When you know, we put a lot of people in a room to hash it out to make that decision that we were not going to dump on somebody else's backyard.

05:01:22

A:

Um, consciously we decided that this would be our burden that we would bear. This would be our little piece of the nuc-, of the nuclear weapons age and of the Cold War. And you know it wasn't an easy

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decision but to me it was the right decision. And, and it, I think it brought, it opened people's eyes and it made them think, and made them be more aware that you just can't be a NIMBY any more in this country. It's not cool, it doesn't work. So that's probably the, the biggest one I can think of.

05:02:01

Q:

What was your most disappointing moment, any lost battles?

A:

It's, it's a very recent one and it just happened a few weeks ago. I think when they decided to recompetete this contract, that was a very disappointment, a very big disappointment for, for me personally and for FRESH.

05:02:26

A:

Um, you know we, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. You know we're talking 8, 10 years max and we're gonna be done. And I had written, Secretary Richardson had been here to visit the site in March, um we knew the recompetete of the contract was being talked about. We wrote him a letter in March and here it is August and he never answered my letter.

05:02:51

A:

No response. They never asked one of us what we thought or how we felt or you know is FDF doing a good job or, nothing. It's almost like they took all of our hard work and just kind of swept it under the rug and said, "well we don't need to talk to them. We're going to make this decision on our own." So that was a huge disappointment.

05:03:19

Q:

What's it like to be in a grass roots organization where you can call on the phone to somebody like Secretary Richardson or Al Gore and he knows who you are, what's that like?

A:

It's fine (chuckles). It's, it's nice to be able to pick the phone up and call, although I don't think Richardson would talk to me. Um, Hazel O'Leary I mean, I could call her (snap fingers) just like that.

05:03:50

A:

You know John Glenn, and it's great to have friends and people like that. Um, but it, it humbles you, I mean it doesn't make me feel like I'm real important or anything. It's just my job and it's what I do. And if I need to be in their face and call them on the phone, then that's what I'm going to do you know. But it pays to have friends, never hurts.

05:04:17

Q:

Now you've toured a lot of the other sites. (Comment – uh, huh) Um, what's the worse thing you've even seen at any of the sites?

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A:

Shew, horror stories. And we think Fernald is bad. Ide-, I was touring the Idaho lab, Idaho National Engineering Lab, whatever it's called out there. They just literally dig a great big hole in the ground and bury stuff.

05:04:40

A:

I was appalled. You know, and I'm on a bus with 40 people going, "how can you do this?" And they're looking at me like, "it's the desert lady, what's your problem." But it's an ecosystem within itself and I don't understand that. And you go to the Nevada Test Site and they do the same thing. They dig a great big huge hole in the ground and they bury everything.

05:05:02

A:

And you go to Hanford and they've got submarines buried in the ground. And I'm appalled that we as a country have allowed this to happen. And I look at Fernald and think it's going to take so much money to clean this 1,050 acre site up. How in the world are they ever going to tackle a place like Hanford, or Savannah River, or you know, Idaho or Nevada Test Site, or wherever.

05:05:30

A:

It's mind boggling to me. I think this country gave the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense a free hand and said, "go build us these bombs. Don't worry about our people or our environment or anything else. By God, damn the torpedos, full speed ahead, this is what we're going to do because the Russians are coming and they're after us and they're on our tails."

05:05:58

A:

And we as a country has left this horrid legacy for future generations. That I wonder if it will ever seriously be taken care of. We can take care of the Fernald's because they're small and kind of concise and little. But I'm not sure you're going to be able to take care of some of those bigger ones.

05:06:23

Q:

What's your vision for the future for Fernald?

A:

(Sighing) Oh, I really want to see, and I don't like to call it a greenspace, I don't like that term. I want to see, I want to see it just taken back to it's natural, kind of the way it was before this site ever was here. We will always have our waste cell. And that will be a legacy that we will have here.

05:06:54

A:

I just want it, I don't want to see people walking around on it. I don't want to see bicycle trails or I, I don't, I mean I don't want to say nobody can ever go on this site because to me it's an individual choice.

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If people want to go ride a bike or picnic on it, you know it's going to, to be their personal choice that they have to make.

05:07:13

A:

Personally I don't want to. But I don't want to see any industry. I think we saw what industry did to us. And I just want to see it go back to as much as it possibly could to its natural state.

05:07:29

Q:

What do you think are the biggest cleanup challenges facing Fernald the next couple of years?

A:

I think the Waste Pits will be a huge challenge. I think they're going to find things in there they never even contemplated that would be in there. And I think the silos will be our biggest one. The silos will be the biggest and the hardest and the most challenging. And, and it'll be interesting to see where it kind of flushed out there.

05:08:00

Q:

Is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to cover? Anything you want to say to people that you didn't get a chance to?

A:

I know that there's people out there who don't like FRESH and who don't like me personally and I just want to say to folks, that's okay, you know. 'Cause we did what we thought was right and we've got a huge approval rating for doing what we thought was right.

05:08:28

A:

And it's okay to not get involved but it's kind of like a friend of mine says, "if you don't vote don't complain." So if you don't exercise your right to be a public participant in a process like this then don't complain when it's all said and done and over with. And I, I think folks will think about this over the next few years and you know 10, 12, 15 years from now um, I think people need to seriously think about that.

05:09:00

A:

Is you know they're going to live with something they chose not to be a part of. And they may like it or they may not like it but it's an individual choice here. And we all have those choices and some people chose to exercise them and some people didn't. And it's okay to not like me.

05:09:19

A:

That's fine, I'm not here to please anybody you know, long as I please myself, and I support my organization and I go and do what my organization tells me to do. And we fight the good fight and win the battles, then that's what's important to me.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

05:09:38

Q:

How do you feel about preserving the history at Fernald?

A:

I think it's very important. We need to preserve every piece that we can preserve here. Photographs, you know some of the equipment, the tapes you know, everything. Because the goal here is to make sure that something like this never happens again. And hopefully, we will learn from mistakes like Fernald. And that's real important.

05:10:10

A:

You know 50 years, 100 years from now I really hope people will come back and say, "you, know, gosh, look what happened here, but they fixed it." Maybe not 100 percent but they did what they could at that point in time and that will be our legacy. That will be our defining moment.

05:10:35

Q:

Great, anything else?

A:

Nope.

Q:

Do you want to get nat? Okay, we're going to get nat sound here, 30 seconds um, this is nat sound.