020534 Joe: That's what it really is. That's the other thing is you are covering this as a reporter, and you realize a lot of times it's a story. But then, you say it's just a story in the paper but then something happens that reminds you, no that this is people's lives. One of the things that struck me, I guess I was lucky, I would deal with Fernald, but I got to drive home every night and I lived far away. It didn't hit me till many years later that these people that I was covering and who were there at the meetings with me, they didn't get to go home at night. Well, they went home at night, but Fernald was in their backyard. They didn't get to get away from it. And I always wondered what, you know, I always felt lucky, you know, I could deal with it and go away and they had to live with it and the impact on people's lives and what it does to them and for generations because you've got in many cases grandparents and parents and their children living in this vicinity and it's a human story. And often times you don't get to catch the human story, there is so much going on with the clean up and the funding and the meetings and the plans and all the studies, a very complex site. But every once and while I got to capture the human side of it and it was always the best part. But at the same time, you never really get the same sense I guess unless you live with it. I think that is what made the FRESH people so amazing. They lived with it and fought it and hung in there and it had to be hard on them, but they persevered. They are still persevering.

020731 Interviewer: I would like to take you through some of those experiences. I want to start sort of with some biographical information. Tell us who you are, where you grew up, where you went to school, that kind of thing to start with and I'm going to try to wait a beat after you stop talking when I start talking.

020800 Joe: Well, I'm Joe Feiertag … (Tape cuts) … Fernald was like this ghost. It was always there, but always sort of in the back ground, almost invisible. Doing this very important, dangerous, and later we would find out horrible work at times. Not a lot of us were aware of it. When I got to my job at the daily paper up in Hamilton, Ohio, I was a assistant city editor, bureau chief, running their Fairfield office, which meant I put out a special edition of the paper in addition to some of the weekend papers in the Fairfield area. From there I went up to the Hamilton office full time about '89, and they wanted someone to cover environmental issues and it wasn't long before I started covering the Fernald plant and really didn't know anything about it. I'd read a couple stories, we maybe had a couple of stories in our paper and quickly got educated about it and tried to keep up with it and started going to meetings. And got to know Lisa Crawford and a lot of the other ladies out there, Edwa Yocum and people like that. They were very helpful and I was learning along with them. We were all kind of learning at the same time, trying to deal with these technical issues, these scientific issues, and trying to figure what were the real important things. I just remember at Fernald, whenever anything was done it was never done in a small way. Whenever there was any report, I mean it was always four inches thick and six hundred pages and I remember some reports that would be four binders four inches thick, you know, thousands of pages and you would try to decipher through that. I learned a little trick and I've used this all throughout my life and I even taught journalism at Northern Kentucky University and I've passed the same thing on to some of my students which is: When you want to get to the heart and soul of what something's about, always go to the charts and graphs. Fortunately with government documents they always have a table of charts and graphs at the front of their documents. Sometimes I suspected that the DOE had this planned. They knew

that they couldn't hide information so they just threw so much information at you hoping that they would bury you with the information. But I learned quickly that if something in the studies, say you would have literally a 1,600 hundred-page study in front of you or report , the government had a way of always being through in a way of documenting things. So if something was important enough they would put it in a chart or a graph. And then all the charts and graphs would be listed at the front index of the first book. So I would get this report, open it up to the third page, just read where the charts and graphs were, which would always summarize everything, and flip immediately and find the ten or so pages in those 2000 pages or whatever that would summarize everything. I got them every time doing it that way. If there was a 200-page report or a 2000-page report on the cost of clean-up there would be a few charts and graphs that would show the different alternatives and the comparative costs. So there was a report on different alternatives to accomplish the same clean-up task or a report on how much contamination had been released in this period or that period. There would always be a chart and a graph that would spell it out in plain English and we used those quite a bit.

021127 Interviewer: Can you tell me sort of either if you were in high school or college what was it about journalism as sort of a profession or something you would do with yourself as a career? What was it about that area, or communicating with the public, what was it that in general appealed to you?

021152 Joe: Well, maybe I shouldn't say this on tape but I remember, I think I was in high school and I remember maybe about a sophomore or a junior a teacher saying to me, "You have a talent for writing. You could do this." And I think he called it a spark. He said, "You've got the right spark, you could really develop that into something." And I thought "WOW, that's really cool. I've got something I can do." I was taking studies and studying foreign languages, and science and different things, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I said, "WOW, that is something that I could do that would be really unique. And I thought this is a talent that I've got; maybe that's something that I should go towards." So I did. Well, I got to college and I still didn't know what I wanted to do so I went over to the school paper and see. And I went over to school paper in College, I said, "WOW, I can do this, this is kind of easy. It comes naturally to me." So, and I liked the inquisitiveness, I liked learning and meeting people and just learning about all odd manner of things. I was always fascinated in that way and journalism kind of gives you the exposure to do that and at the same time gives you a sense that you're accomplishing something important, you know, a task that benefits people in society and so I guess that is where it all got started.

021309 Interviewer: Can you remember, maybe not necessarily the very first time you went on the site, but just any kind of early experiences or impressions of going out to the site and also early impressions about attending community meetings, which were often held, you know, at a local school or local area, and sort of the atmosphere of those early meetings, and what you thought about that, and what you thought you were getting into in terms of this as a beat as an area for you to do reporting?

021341 Joe: Yeah, well, I am trying to remember my first exposure to Fernald was probably some press release sitting in the newsroom, uh, maybe some report that I had requested and had

gotten. And, I'd probably been to a couple of community meetings, which would never be held at the site. They would always be held at a school or something nearby that could accommodate a large number of people. So I was probably covering the site for a good amount of time, weeks or months, before I actually physically toured the facility. I'd probably been to the facility and some of the offices and things, but hadn't really been out in the plant and in the production area. And I recall vividly my first time going in, and pretty much whenever I wanted access I got it. They were very open that way. Uh, but I remember my first time going in. It was sort of a mysterious place. It's a government installation, it played a part in the production of nuclear bombs and you didn't know what to expect. And I think had a vision in my mind it would look a certain way, very James Bond-ish. I don't know what I would have expected. But what I didn't expect is what I saw. And what I was so surprised walking through it the first time, it just looked like any other old run-down factory that I had ever seen. It was a turning point for me and I realized that this isn't all that high-tech. In fact, it really wasn't high-tech at all. It was a metal foundry. Uranium is a metal. I imagine if I had gone to Pittsburgh and have gone to a steel plant it wouldn't look much different and yet here was this thing that was so important to the nation's history and so top secret. And it kind of looked run-down and dilapidated, and a place where a bunch of people worked. I'll never forget that image.

021546 Interviewer: Can you recall going to a community meeting, I've been to some where sort of the emotions run high or there is a Q&A session or a presentation and the public gets their chance to comment and it gets a little bit testy or emotional. Just any experiences of meetings when you first got out there and you got to meet some of the key players and all.

021612 Joe: Yes, uh, I was somewhat prepared for it because I had, and this sounds funny, but I had covered a lot of zoning and development issues in Northern Kentucky, Northern Kentucky being a very fast growing area. Zoning, it sounds odd to compare it, but zoning meetings are always very controversial, because at times they always say "it's not in my backyard" is kind of a theory. Of course Fernald is the ultimate thing to have or not want to have in your backyard. But people get very sensitive to anything that is proposed near them. And, so I had been to many meetings where factories had been proposed near people, strip mines had been proposed near people and people were very emotional. And at times when there's factories there's chemicals and processes going on that people perceive as very dangerous. So I've been exposed to that. And, so when I came to my first Fernald meeting it wasn't a whole lot different. Obviously the scope and the scale of it were much different, but the emotions were still the same. And I saw a bunch of people that were just common everyday homemakers, business people and farmers, just like people I'd met all throughout my life fighting this thing and very similar to the many other things that I had covered. Only of course in this case the stakes were much higher. And these were people … but I think the big thing was that this was something that the people thought had been done to them by their government and that they had been deceived. And particularly Lisa Crawford who had found herself in a situation, living near the Fernald plant, finding out that she and her family and her husband and her young children had been drinking contaminated water for years and that the government had even known about it and hadn't said anything to them. So in addition to the emotions that you typically get with these things, you had the sense of betrayal. It was very intense. And you really felt sorry for these people that they

were betrayed by the government and what do we know the government is supposed to be there to protect us and take care us.

021821 Interviewer: You covered Fernald for a decade. (**Joe:** Close to it, yeah). Did you see that sort of atmosphere or sense of relationship between DOE and community evolve and change over time?

021835 Joe: It did. I think that in the very beginning there was a lot of anger and the people would sit impatiently waiting for the government and the DOE the make their presentations and wait for the opportunity to get up and just blast them because their emotions were very high. Toward the middle and end of the time I covered it, which was from about '89 to about '97 or so, the tones would change somewhat. I think the residents, after having a working relationship at that time then with the DOE of many years, they were a little more patient. They were hopeful, they saw it moving toward a possible clean-up and so what would happen is people would get actively involved and try to lend constructive comment and criticism. But then invariably something would happen, a budget wouldn't come through, a deadline wouldn't be met. There's always competing interests, you know, the government was trying to clean this up at the same time there is a push to try and balance budget and reduce government spending. So things would happen to throw it back into the old mode and the residents got impatient. The residents also got a little more educated in the processes. They, like myself, studied and became familiar with these different documents. And the government wouldn't be able to pull the wool over their eyes as easily, and whenever there would be an attempt, or perceived attempt to try to hide something or the residents would immediately lash out and say, you know, "No, we know what you're trying to do and it is not going to work and we are not going to put up with it." So, it got a little more cordial, but it would at times lash back to the anger in that sense. There was never that 100% trust. There was a guarded trust maybe later on, but they were always on guard for the inevitable let down, occasional let down, maybe.

022034 Interviewer: When you were covering Fernald, what sorts of sources did you work? You had community members, workers, government officials, what were some of the sources …

022039 Joe: That was the beautiful thing about Fernald, there was never a shortage of sources. It was really a reporter's dream and if you had any technical aptitude and you had the desire to learn and had interest in a lot of esoteric things as I did at the time there was never a shortage of information. So, studies would come out and I would always rush down to the Fernald offices and get a copy of whatever latest study was out and go look at those tables and graphs and executive summaries and things like that. But also I would talk to the residents who would keep you informed. Later on the workers started feeling very disenfranchised. I think some of the workers got a little jealous; the residents were getting a lot of attention, there was a lawsuit filed in their behalf. At the same time that the clean-up was being discussed, some of the workers felt that they were going to be let go and laid off because the production had stopped. And the workers wanted to be made part of the clean-up. Their view was "We had given our lives to this place and were exposed to the contamination as much or more than a lot of the residents." So they wanted to be, you know, made part of the picture and made part of the clean-up for some sense of job security. When they'd feel that that was not going to happen they would get very

upset and angry and the way they would fight back to the DOE to get attention would be to feed me information. So any little spill, any little thing that was going on, I'd have a union member or union official or a plant worker on the phone with me. I'd go to their homes and talk to them, learned a lot about the history of the facility that way and I spent many hours at different workers' homes talking to them. So that really made a complete picture. You had the residents living around the plant; you had the workers inside the plant. Of course I also talked to the DOE officials quite a bit, the contractor officials (Fluor Daniel or Westinghouse) and other scientists from around the region, or around the country, even around the world. You'd run into them at meetings, or hear from them at meetings, and you would call them. I made many calls to England to interview Doctor Alice and I forget her last name at the moment, but she had done some early research for Fernald, I am sorry, for the Department of Energy and had some certain views on things, some different views. So information came from all over the place.

023020 Interviewer: You had stories that were sort of technical day-to-day news type of stories, and then you occasionally did some more human interest, or a little bit longer stories sometimes either about individual issues or individual people. (**Joe:** Not as much as I would like to but yes, some of that.) Can you recall one or two issues or people that you really thought were sort of symbolic of the overall problems or people you always found interesting to talk to or issues that you really gained a personal interest in kind of tracking. .

022400 Joe: Well I think that people like Lisa Crawford. The Lisa Crawford story was probably the most poignant because of the experience of her family being exposed so directly to the contamination. There was a lady I believe was, because I'm not real great with names, uh, but I think it was a Linda Smith and she was an early fighter and had really gotten a lot of the ball rolling in the very early stages. Of course, Lisa Crawford took over for her and really led the charge from then on and she had a similar experience. And other people who just lived around the Fernald area, just farmers. It was funny because the contamination that was being let out over so many years, in the air mainly, the people weren't aware of it. Their stories were funny. It was stories of farmers and stories of shop owners and stories of just business people going about their everyday lives and this radiation and radon was mixing amongst them invisibly and they didn't know it was going on. Really it was a story of everyday life. And everyday life with this little twist that nobody knew about until many years after the fact. And it was ironic that by the time anybody became aware, whether it was residents or reporters or the general public, by the time anybody became aware that this had been going on, it had pretty much stopped. It was only after the plant was mostly in the shut-down mode that any of this leaked out. So there was two types of things leaking out of the plant: the contamination for decades and then later on information leaked out or came out and it was all after the fact. The damage had been done so to speak. And maybe it was easier for the government to allow the information to go out after its mission was over, you know, unfortunately.

022619 Interviewer: Can you talk little bit about the story that you covered concerning the sites, off the Fernald site, smaller plants in the area, or milling or manufacturing plants that later …?

022634 Joe: Yes, before and after Fernald plant was in operation, or I should say before and after Fernald plant started up, there were smaller sites around the region that were used for

uranium machining and milling. And one of the earliest ones was the Harry Hall Marvin Safe Company, which later became the Mosler Safe Company on Route 4 in Hamilton. And it later became, I have to double-check on that, my memory is lapsing here, the Diebold Safe Company, excuse me. It actually participated in the Manhattan Project, was something that we actually uncovered. The government knew about it, but the government wasn't saying anything about it. What had happened was we had found out that there were these little sites around the region that had been investigated by the Department of Energy for possible contamination. Actually we only found out about one. It was up in Oxford, Ohio, which did do some contracting type work for the Fernald plant. We found out that this site up in Oxford, Ohio, a small little machine shop, had been investigated, it had been found to be contaminated, discussion was moving along about how to clean it up. And I got a phone call from a gentleman who had read that story and he was a very elderly, 80 some years old I would estimate. And he had said to me in a broken voice, "That place you wrote about in the paper, that wasn't the only one. there was more of them." He said, "I remember the one that I worked at." And I said, "Who are you and what are you talking about." And he said, "oh," and he was kind of calling about almost with pride the work he had done for the government. He said, "I've got all the papers and things like that." So I had gone to visit him and I said, "Are you at home right now?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Could I talk to you." He said, "Yeah." I said, "How about in twenty minutes." And he said, "Sure". I rushed over to his house and found out that he had some papers. But he couldn't piece together the exact location for me, his memories were a little shaky. So I worked through the DOE who denied or just said they didn't have any information to that effect. It was only working through this gentleman and then going back to some of the people that worked at Fernald and thought maybe they had friends or had some recollection, did quite an intensive investigation over many months. Only once I had come up with the actual names of the… You realize that we are going back 50 years and this was the late, mid to late 1990s and we are talking about some things that happened in some cases in the '40s or even in the '50s, once Fernald had gotten going, so we are going back half a century. So it was really hard finding recollections, names had changed, places that existed then weren't even listed in the phone books anymore. But any way, through a long period of investigation we found out and I came up with the names and addresses of these facilities. And only once I had done that and presented with the DOE, "Well this is what I know and these are the locations, this is what they were called, these are the years they were supposedly in service," did the DOE come forth and acknowledged that this had happened. (Tape change).

030014 Interviewer: What was the problem with DOE subcontracting?

030031 Joe: What was fascinating was that these workers in little machine shops all around the tri-state area, the Hamilton/Fairfield area, uh… Of course, the Diebold was a full-blown factory – but they hadn't signed up to do government work and they typically worked on any number of different of things and had no knowledge or recollection of what they were being exposed to, at least not the full knowledge and recollection. And whatever paltry safeguards that were taken at the time for maybe the government workers, certainly these people didn't have the same advantage and wouldn't have known about the same precautions. So their exposure was short at times and wasn't as large-scale maybe as some people at the Fernald plant. But these people didn't really know what they were getting into. Even the people who had worked on the

Manhattan Project at the Harry Hall Marvin Safe Company were never informed that they …, we the newspaper informed them that they had taken part in the Manhattan Project. They had gotten certificates congratulating them for government service and toward the war effort, but a lot of people did. They had no idea what they were working on was unique or special or they were exposed to anything. The problem, uranium is not the most dangerous, in fact it's metal, radioactive metal. On the scale it tends to be really less radioactive than a lot of other elements. It's the starting material that they start with and try to increase the, enrich the radioactive properties of it. But it is dangerous and in some cases it is not even dangerous to be exposed to the skin. Obviously the type of radiation that it emits. But it is extremely dangerous when you breathe it in, and when you ingest it into your body either through your digestive system or through your lungs. And it can stay with you and over a period of time being embedded in the lungs, it bombards your body with a low level of radiation and can obviously lead to certain cancers. And these people weren't made aware of that and they were working with this stuff and exposed to the dust and the contamination and we'll never know what happened to these people. A lot of this work went on in the '40's and '50's and these people were adults at the time. So by the time that we had uncovered this, a lot of the people had already moved away or passed on through natural causes. The world will never know what kind of sacrifices these people made.

Some of the stories were fascinating. I remember one gentleman telling me this was going on during World War II and a lot of people overseas, and there was a gentleman I had talked to who he was probably about 17 at the time and he was working in this factory (probably filling in for someone else who had been drafted and gone overseas). And he would tell me stories that he'd work on the farm all day. I think his father had passed away. He would work on the farm, go to school, work on the farm all day and he would ride his bike down to the Harry Hall Marvin Safe Company at night and worked like a second or third shift to help support his family. And when they would leave at the end of the shift, one of the unique things that I heard from a number of different workers that I interviewed in different locations was that they would file out of the plant and they would have the uranium metal embedded in their shoes, the metal shavings, just like you would at any metal working shop. And they would walk down the street and there would be sparks flying off of their feet and off their shoes from the uranium hitting the pavement. And thought wow, this is pretty amazing stuff and they always expected they worked on something unique and top secret. There were even guards posted at the facility. But they weren't told that they had worked on the Manhattan Project until we informed them of it. And it was amazing, it was absolutely amazing and shocking and I thought one of the things that I was really proud about in the stories was not that we had broke this or uncovered this, but we'd given these people after 50 years their first due. And, in some ways they got their first congratulations for working on something that was such an important part of their nation's history. They felt kind of validated for what they had done and what they had worked on. But I'm sure some people probably hated them for it because the Manhattan Project has negative consequences. But what they had done, they had taken the uranium metal and milled it into the rods, into maybe a kind of ingot, but a little bit round, like a cylindrical ingot, I forget what they used to call that. And those would have been …, they're called slugs I believe, and those would be the slugs that would have been put into the reactors and irradiated through the reactors and made into and eventually processed into plutonium that went into the first atomic bombs and that work took place right here in Hamilton, Ohio.

030535 Interviewer: In USA Today last year they had a story updating what's going on…

030537 Joe: You can see how slow that moves. We wrote that in, that was really toward the end of my, probably about '96, '97 when we did those stories I believe, and here we are four or five years later and the DOE is still forthcoming with information about that. There was a gentleman who was the Vice President of the plant at the time back in the '40s. He had actually secured the contract. How they got involved in it was the Harry Hall Marvin Safe Company was producing what they called field safes for the governments. The generals when they would be out in the field would have these safes, these portable safes that they would keep their secret war plans in and secret documents and the safes are heavy material. And, when it came time to machining the uranium, which is a very heavy metal, they turned to the Harry Hall Marvin Safe Company realizing they had experience with heavy metal. They also had done some things with gun turrets and things like that for the battleships. So that is how that particular contract landed here in our area to work with that metal.

030653 Interviewer: Can we shift gears a little bit and talk a little about the relationship you saw evolving over time between the Department of Energy, you as an individual reporter, and your newspaper, the Hamilton Journal-News. To what extent did you feel while you were there, you got cooperation or to what extent do you see that maybe the Department of Energy either was not always forthcoming or maybe there was some dialogue between the DOE and your paper about the kinds or extent of coverage or those kinds of aspects.

030727 Joe: Yeah, I always wondered. Actually what I was told and I was told by some union officials that the DOE had a way of dealing with reporters that were too tough or that dug too deep. And fortunately it was not what you would think about from the movies, you know, where you would be threatened. I was always told that you would always find a better opportunity and you would be moved on and some opportunity would be presented to you. And I do recall a time when I was queried if I wanted a job within the DOE. A lot of journalists go on to PR, as I ultimately did. And at the time I might have been exploring and I had heard about some job openings, PR public affairs-type job openings within the DOE and possibly at Fernald plant and gosh they paid awfully well, it would have been double my salary. And I remember the top official, there were a number of top officials at the plant I won't name them if you give the time frame, had asked me if I was interested in one of those and I told him at the time that I wasn't. And so nothing more came up so I always wondered if that was a thing to get me off the story. But not too much pressure that I was aware of. I know that the Department of Energy at Fernald did hire a couple of people from our paper who either had been at the paper the same time I was or prior to me being there. And I didn't know if that was maybe that was a way to get an inroad to the paper, some influence over at the paper. But I never felt any undue influence, I never saw anything dishonorable going on in that way. But I also was very careful and I don't think I made too many really … I was always careful to be right and I was always careful to make sure that I had the facts correct because you didn't want to leave an opening to be criticized. I remember one time I got something wrong. An Ohio EPA official had told me something and I had taken that to mean that, that was Ohio EPA's official position on something and it wasn't, he was just making an observation that other people had made. It wasn't an official position. But other than

I think I always tried to make sure that I was very accurate so that I didn't leave myself open to that type of criticism. And the paper was always very supportive. I think the paper sensed that it was something important in the coverage of the Fernald plant lent a sort of credibility to the paper and felt a good community service in that way so that they were very supportive.

031045 Interviewer: The major newspaper outlets around here over the years that cover Fernald are sort of the Enquirer, to a lesser extent the Post down in Cincinnati, and Hamilton Journal-News. Do you see any differences between how the story sort of factored in to the overall approach or sort of the agenda of the various newspapers? You have one that is a metropolitan, major metropolitan area, one is a little bit more smaller-town suburban. But did you ever take a look at sort of comparing how your paper was covering issues to how the Enquirer was doing it?

031115 Joe: A lot of times when we were covering it, the Enquirer really wasn't. The Enquirer had covered it very heavily prior to me covering it and then for whatever reasons, internal reasons they had it kind of backed off the coverage, maybe had lost interest in it. It's very easy to lose interest in the plant because like I said it has always been there, it has been there half a century and it always kind of operated kind of in the shadows, you know, so the plant always kind of drifts in and out of public consciousness. So the Enquirer kind of I stopped covering it just by coincidence or by whatever the time they were kind of losing interest in it we were gaining interest in it, or I was gaining interest in it. So I started covering it and maybe coincidentally as I was phasing out of the paper and I became a part-time reporter and eventually quit journalism, but as I was kind of getting out the Enquirer started picking up its coverage again. It wasn't coordinated that way, it just happened to be a coincidence. The Post was always there, doing a little bit coverage. Nick Miller I know did a lot of stories on Fernald, John Nolan at the AP did a number of stories and would also pick up on the AP Wire what ever I was doing or the Enquirer happened to be doing or the Post might be doing. But it was amazing, it kind of ebbed and flowed that way.

031244 Interviewer: Can you think of any particular issue or story that there was a really clear difference in the way it got reported in Journal-News versus the Enquirer?

031256 Joe: Let's see, there are a lot of stories … Media outlets are competitive like any business and so if you break a story or they break a story, the entity that misses the story will tend to try to ignore it until it comes around again in another form. That way you don't look like, you never want to look like you're following up on what someone else is doing. It's very, very competitive in that way. So if you happen to break a story on such and such, the competing paper might ignore it until another news event happens and they kind of pick it up again. So if there was a big spill and you report it they might not report it, but then, because they do not want to report it two days later. Things only have a news value of about 24 hours. Maybe the next time something happens that's related to that they want to beat you on it. So you are always playing that leapfrog in that way with other media outlets. So it was interesting I guess at the, the only thing I really know is that, I remember one time I reported, and I only bring this up because you asked, I was the first one to report that the plant was going to be shut down and was no longer going to be in the production mode. Now in reality it had all but ceased production for quite awhile. It was in a stand-by mode for quite awhile. I don't remember if that was a year or

two years. But it'd been in the stand-by mode and there was something that was said at a public meeting and I went up to the top guy, the top DOE manager at the time, and here goes my names again, I am terrible with names. Anyway, I have to go back and figure out the name. I had approached the plant manager who had confirmed to me that yes it was not going to be going back into production, which was the first initial recognition that this plant was going to be shut down for good. We ran a big story about that and I believe that maybe that I caught him off guard and politically they had wanted to announce it, maybe have a Congressman or higher official, somebody announce that and get better play than just a Journal-News, you know. For whatever reason, maybe they didn't want it out at the time, so other media followed up on it and weren't able to confirm it or the DOE kind of backed away from that and it was reported that it really wasn't shutting down. When in fact it never did regain its operation and did completely shut down. So maybe that is kind of an example in that way, uh, yeah.

031554 Interviewer: You were, you know, a professional reporter maybe occasionally covering other stuff besides Fernald during a decade, nearly a decade, where Fernald was a major story for you. While you were covering that how did that change or affect your viewpoint of your profession or the significance or importance of journalism or being a reporter?

031614 Joe: Well, I tell you sort of an interesting thing that happened to me. I was sort of in a bubble, or sort of in my little microcosm here covering Fernald. And, I didn't really know anything about environmental reporting. I was asked to be an environmental reporter, an investigative reporter, and I went to cover Fernald and that's all I knew. I didn't know what the rest of the world of environmental reporting was. And it was very important, I sensed that what we were reporting was very important to the community, and I went through some of my coverage of these other sites like Harry Hall Marvin, I had put in for an award and I won a fellowship to go out to the National Conference of Environmental Journalists conference and they paid my trip on a fellowship basis out to Utah. It was the first time I was exposed to other environmental journalism or other environmental journalists and I got the picture of what environmental journalism was all about. And this had been four years into my doing it. And I was shocked to find out the focus of this conference was that environmental journalism was in jeopardy because we as environmental journalists had come on too strong. Environmental journalism was a new field of journalism, and there was a lot of crying wolf that had gone on. We had the Alar scare and the asbestos scare and all these other things in the late '80s and the early '90s and the global warming and all these other things would be awful and the world was going to come to an end and of course the world didn't come to an end. The focus of the conference was that either environmentalists or us as journalists had maybe gotten a little carried away. I am really over-simplifying this, I know. My fellow journalists would kill me if they hear this. But that was pretty much the focus and how to get back on track. I was really surprised because … and I guess I felt fortunate that here in Fernald in our area we had a situation that you really couldn't over-exaggerate too much. You had a government facility that released tons and millions of tons of contamination. People's lives had been put in jeopardy on the scale of hundreds and thousands. And, it was certainly not the same as Alar on apples or different things like that and I'm thinking, "Wow," but at the same time it did make me aware of the fact that, you know, I myself at times had probably had come on strong at times. And as a journalist, you are kind of trained to go full bore and you are always aware that there's two ways

to report things and you had to be as … You always had to take with a grain of salt anything that you were told. Uh, and for instance, (and this doesn't have any reflection on FRESH because they never did this) a lot of your larger national environmental groups that rely heavily on the news for their funding would, the way things are… Perfect example would be … I will use radiation because that is what I am most familiar with. You can report radiation in degrees or in actual quantities. So, for, instance if I told you that the radiation level in your house is doubled you would be alarmed and you would be like, "Oh my God what's happened it's gone up ten times." And at the same time though I could phrase it another way, I could say, "You know, as you sit in this chair right now you are bombarded by 15,000 radioactive particles a second. It's just natural, it's going on all the time from the sun, from all these different sources, and now it's doubled to 30,000 particles a second, shooting through our bodies as we speak, these different beta, gamma, alpha rays. And uh, but your body and the environment around us is made up of billions of particles so that whether it's 15,000 or 30,000, it's such a miniscule amount that it almost means nothing. So there's two ways that you can phrase things and I learned that you have to be aware of that, how you quantify the danger, how you quantify the issue. And depending on how you phrase it you can either underestimate it or overestimate it. And it goes into that whole statistical thing. You can almost make statistics say whatever you want them to say. Now, let me just repeat again, I never, FRESH people, we never, it was not an issue with them. Because they dealt with human, real-life issues and they weren't too tied up in a lot of this nitty-picky stuff. But when you step back and look on often times a national level of environmental issues, it's all in how you phrase it and all in how you look at it and you really have to listen to both sides carefully. That's a long answer, but that's called my issue changed or my understanding of the issue changed as I became more exposed, more educated, and more familiar with other journalists.

032143 Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit …, now you've got the advantage of having a few years of distance and a little bit perspective, but you were there for 7, 8 or 9 years and you watched a relationship between a community and a government agency sort of all the changes and certain clean-up decisions get made and they're being implemented depending on what the funding level is, but, what role do you think community, either individual members or community groups had in sort of influencing the outcomes of some of the decisions out there over the years?

032218 Joe: Well, I can say without a doubt, if it hadn't been for people in the FERSH contingent and the FRESH group, Fernald wouldn't be on the path to clean-up and there wouldn't be the awareness of what went on. And not only was FRESH and the community members, not only were they instrumental in bringing this issue and this need for clean-up to our attention, but really they're instrumental bringing this slice of our nation's history to our attention. And so on a dual level, they really played a valuable role in making us all aware and keeping the government on track. If these people weren't out there making this an issue, that Fernald plant would be just fenced in with a padlock on it and nothing much going on out there today. When we look at the K-65 silos where you have a real prevalent, potential danger there. One of the largest sources of radium and one of the largest concentrated sources of radon gas probably in the country, at least in this region, part of the country, so it's a real issue.

032338 Interviewer: Did you do much coverage of the early years of what was then called the Fernald Citizens Task Force, later the CAB? They formed in 1993 and came up with their first set of recommendations in 1995, about clean-up levels and future use of the site and that kind of thing. How did you view sort of the unfolding of that organization?

032403 Joe: Yeah, they started with John Applegate and people like that. They started to, that was a good move on the DOE's part, both strategically (I meant to say that) but also on a community level that was good ... Because I think, I'm sure that DOE's, one of their purposes in doing that is to quell criticisms by inviting the critics into their circle and saying "here we are, work with us." So part of that happens, I think, on a PR level and I am aware of that being in PR now. But it's also a good thing because what you are doing is, and it's a credit to citizens and people like FRESH, because what they're saying now is the DOE saying, "Okay it's not just going to be an us against them." And you can only go to meetings and face off against each other and come to stalemates for so long. At a certain point you have got to say, "Okay, how can we do this? Can we work together?" So on the good side of that what the DOE is doing is saying, "We are going to take the citizens input seriously and we're going to make it a structured, formalized part of our process here and our clean up." And instead of coming to a meeting on a quarterly basis and having you scream at us, okay we're going to take you seriously and we're going to make you a part of the structure here." So I saw it working on two levels. I think at that point it was better for the DOE, has some selfish reasons in that, but it's also much better for the community to have a voice in there and affect more directly the clean-up, I think, or move toward clean-up.

032601 Interviewer: Did you attend FRESH meetings very often and what were some of the things you saw there? Because I've attended since probably '98, I see how they run now, but what were some of those meetings like early on? Not official DOE community meetings but meetings …

032615 Joe: Yeah, they were real grassroots. It was really funny. I remember, who was it that had the map with the pins in it? Edwa Yocum. They had the, uh, I mean it shows you how far that issue came. They went, the Fernald area, Ross area residents just were awesome. Back before the formalized, government-funded epidemiological studies through the Center for Disease Control, epidemiological study being study to try to trace a cause and effect between a particular contaminant or environmental condition and disease that might exist in the area. It is a very formalized process. Long before that was going on, the Fernald residents had their own little anecdotal version of that on a map where they would stick a red pin, you know, wherever there was a case of cancer or a death from cancer. And of course we knew that on that map there were a lot of red pins in a very concentrated area. It's not scientific and it will never prove anything, but it was an eye opening to see that map and at the FRESH meetings you would always see that map and they would often even bring that map to even the DOE quarterly meetings, the official meetings. It was that type of pounding on the issue and keeping the awareness of that issue alive that I think ultimately led to a chain of events. We started seeing the Centers for Disease Control come in and want to do it for real. So you saw these little things taking shape at the grassroots, very informal level, becoming, you know, bringing about, you know, real studies and hopefully real change. And that is a microcosm there, the same thing that

they did with that little map was the same way that these FRESH meetings grew into these formal DOE quarterly meetings and real reporting and real revelations about the Fernald plant and on a larger scale about our nation's nuclear weapons production. It really made a difference because of those little things that happened.

032833 Interviewer: When you went to these early meetings in the basement of the Venice Presbyterian Church, what was like the attendance?

032836 Joe: Well, it really varied. I mean, often times, and some of the meetings run together in my mind after so many years, but there'd be meetings where there'd be dozens or hundred or more people, and there'd be meetings where you'd see maybe a dozen or two dozen people that weren't DOE people, just residents. And that is another thing that I think the Citizens Task Force, the CAB and the FRESH groups did was keep this issue alive because there was many times when the issue could have just died and gone away. It's too important of an issue to do that. This weapons production went on for half a century and the clean-up of the damage from that will go on, you know, for decades as well and so it needs to be kept alive. And I think we saw, we've seen through the media, the public, even in the Fernald area itself, an ebb and flow of interest and it's through these different groups, though that, uh, first FRESH and CAB and things like that that keep it moving forward, they are the torch bearers so to speak. So, it's been an important role.

033011 Interviewer: Did you ever encounter either in the workforce or in the community sort of either a backlash or sort of a sentiment that says FRESH is hysterical or blowing things out of proportion or … (tape change)

040050 Interviewer: My question was did you ever encounter any either in the workforce or other community members that thought FRESH was out to lunch, was exaggerating …?

040100 Joe: There were times that FRESH came under criticism. Uh, and I don't remember a lot of specific, 'cause it didn't happen that often, but there were times that I know. I think there was a period where the workers were a little disgruntled, felt a little short-changed because FRESH had been so successful in garnering publicity. They had, were represented in the lawsuit and had won and the workers were kind of left out of that. The workers were really left feeling like they had been exposed to everything and they didn't have anybody fighting on their side. So, I think there were some real, I mean some of the workers in the unions, and labor leaders would call me and say, "Oh, damn FRESH," you know, "They were raising heck again, no one is listening to us." And in a way it was a testament to really how effective FRESH was. They were getting all the attention, they were the ones putting all their work into the fight for the clean up effort. So you had that going on. And I think there were at times, I mean, the issue went on just during the time I covered it, you know, 8, 9, 10 years. That's a long time, you know. Most issues, Presidents have come and gone, you know, and Congress has changed over and whatever, you know, that's a long news cycle. And people look back and even see other reporters, "Oh damn FRESH," you know, "They still raising hell and you still covering them." So you get that a little bit. But what people don't realize is that this is something that was going on in their backyard. Like I said, we all got to go home. I got to go home, and drive home, you know, 40

miles away and leave it behind and these people don't' get to do that. They had to … they were forced to live with it. Of course they couldn't even sell their homes, you know, once this became common knowledge who's going to buy a FRESH member's house? You know, a mile from the plant or across the street from the plant. So these people were literally trapped in an insidious nightmare. So, they didn't let up much. The core members of the group didn't let up and kept it alive. They did get criticism from it and you know they have their jobs. A lot of them have their regular jobs they've go to do and they are still doing this and I am calling them at their work, you know, Lisa Crawford and other FRESH members, call them at their day-time jobs and interview them about he latest thing that has come up. So they didn't get to escape when they left their homes to go to work. They had to live with this. And at night, when most of us take our kids to ball games or, you know, taking our kids to movies or whatever, they are attending myriad of government meetings, and public hearings. It was a lot, a lot to deal with. So …

040357 Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about sort of the day- to-day work as a reporter where your major beat is Fernald and dealing with DOE on a regular basis. How did you sort of sort out when you felt the information you are getting from DOE was sufficient on the up-and-up and when there were something maybe where more digging had to be done? How did you develop that intuition or that sense of dealing with DOE?

040426Joe: One thing the government does was put out a lot of reports. It loves to put out a lot of reports. If you know how to get the reports, where to get the reports, what to request, when to request them, you can keep up on all the information. The nice thing about Fernald was there's so many stakeholders. It was really hard, it was hard for them to hide information because you have the DOE there doing what it was required to do, do different studies, do different reports through the Freedom of Information Act. They knew they had to put this information out there. But then you also had the US EPA, and then you had the OHIO EPA looking over their shoulders, which didn't always see eye to eye. They are totally two different watchdog groups. And then you had the FRESH members and then the workers. So, between …, you know, you had the community and FRESH members and workers and through their unions and then the OHIO EPA and the US EPA, you had four really powerful groups constantly scouring thought what the DOE was doing and I could talk to any number of those. And then add the DOE in there, of course, and the DOE's contractor and sometimes the DOE and the contractors didn't see eye to eye. The DOE would hire a contractor like Westinghouse or Fluor Daniel to run the facility, but they were sometimes at odds over a budget or whether their contract would be renewed. So you always had a myriad of sources to go to, so it became very difficult for the DOE to try to hide anything or try to set the pace or set the agenda. Often times, the agenda was being set for them, which is very fortunate position for reporters, many sources and counter-sources to go to.

040620 Interviewer: Can you recall a story you were working on where you got a tip or a little bit of information and you went to DOE and just got a shut out or got no cooperation?

040631 Joe: Oh, yeah. I paid them back awfully for that and not intentionally. But the uh, Hazel O'Leary became the Secretary of Energy. And her whole mode was, you know, openness, this is when we had found out that handicapped children, retarded children, if you will, had been

fed contaminated food as a test and prisoners had been, you know, back in decades past. It was such an awful; much of it was true, I am sure some of it wasn't. But there were ugly, awful stories going on nationwide, revelations going on nationwide. DOE and Hazel O'Leary tried to bring openness and clean-up to the DOE. That was simultaneous, though, to me finding out about these other little sites, they were called FUSRAP. It was their acronym for the separate clean-up program. And like I said, I had DOE disavowing any knowledge of these places or disavowing that these places, if they did exist, had any contamination up until the point where I literally had spent months tracking down former employees, uh, tracking down blueprints. At one point on the Harry Hall Marvin Safe Company, the DOE has come in and said the building was clean and it didn't have any contamination. And they had looked the first and second floors. Through my interviews with different workers, I'd found out that all this stuff had supposedly taken place on the third floor. So how can they have given the building a clean bill of health? Then I had DOE telling me the third floor didn't exist in the '40s; that was added later. And I literally tracked down, uh, and the DOE even showed me some blueprints, was doing some kind of thing, and I literally tracked down a historian, who is kind of like an architectural historian who said, "No, that part of the building, the way it's designed had to have been built much earlier than the '40s." I even tracked down another guy, who was a builder, who is a general contractor most of his life in the area, who thought he remembered working on, who had done work in the plant and said that third floor was there when he did work on the plant and so forth. And he'd even grown up as a young boy near the factory. I had to track down all this stuff and only once I did that type of work that the DOE finally admit that, "Yes, the Harry Hall Marvin Company did do work on the Manhattan Project. It looks like it might have done on the third floor, which they never checked for contamination." I mean, I had to basically nail them to the wall on every little detail before they …, this was during the time when Hazel O'Leary was in charge and all the national media coverage was saying, "Finally the DOE is open. And changes has being made they are going to make a difference." I am, like, that's not what I am seeing. What had happened was in what I realized at that time, and still realize in hindsight, was that DOE like any big entity it's this huge culture, it's this huge organization. And you can't just change it overnight. So there's pockets of openness and maybe sincere efforts at certain places to be forthright where I can do the right thing. But it doesn't mean it filters down all the way through the organization, to every branch of the organization. So that is certainly what I found to be the case. When I was out in Utah, and I attended some conferences there with other journalists and there were people there from the DOE speaking. I stood up and I brought these issues out. That DOE was there armed with a big PR message. And even Hazel O'Leary herself spoke. She was kind of a keynote speaker in one of the big events. And her presentation was literally "This is not your father's DOE." Remember the old automobile commercial says "This is not your father's Oldsmobile, it's changed." She had this big slide show. And again, I got up and I said, "Wait a minute. Time out. What's going on here? I see this message that you're trying to portray here, and it's not always the case. When I am out there in the field working with some of your officers, working with some of your people, I'm getting the exactly the opposite impressions". So I said I paid them back, I mean … I wasn't there to be spiteful but I raised these issues in a very timely manner in front of I think a lot of, a lot of journalists. I said, "No, this isn't the case. You need to look more carefully through the levels of your organization before you claim, try to make those claims."

0041120 Interviewer: What was O'Leary's response or the DOE's response?

041122 Joe: Uh, she didn't like it. It was funny, there was a series of pictures. There was another person there who I kind of make friends with, another environmental journalist, who also turned out to be a photographer. And he captured a picture, a frame of a picture of me and Hazel O'Leary as I was at the podium addressing her. It's like a series of shots, one, two, three, four. And you can just see Hazel O'Leary like very attentive smiling at my question and you see the expression of her face changed to disbelief and anger. Just this look on her face that if she could have come up to the podium and strangled me she would have liked to. And what can I say. And I don't think my comments were appreciated by some fellow journalists either who would like to believe that maybe the DOE had changed. Because that is to imply that we're making a difference as people, as journalists, that we are forcing this, and I think that people wanted to believe that the DOE was different. And I don't disagree totally, I think in some areas, in some ways it wasn't but, it's not always so black and white, you know.

0412336 Interviewer: In your pre-interview phone call you characterized sort of the clean-up progress and progress at Fernald as undergoing sort of a two-step forward and one step back, back and forth. Can you talked a little bit about that, at least while you were covering it, how it was not necessarily a straight-line upward tick?

041255 Joe: Yeah, I imagine it's probably still maybe the same way, uh, you know. Ultimately you look at progress and it moves forward and it always moves forward slower than you wanted it to. And I think with the DOE, with the Fernald clean-up, you have funding issues, at the same time you have this desire for clean up and at the same time you want to balance the Federal budget. So, you have conflicting goals there within Congress, within the DOE and the federal government. You have hopes to clean up something that's never been attempted before. So, it requires a lot of new technology, a lot of experimentation. And then you have a organization that part of its culture, parts of it want to move forward, other parts are more entrenched and don't want to move forward. So, there was often a frustration, I think, within the EPA, within the residents, and even probably within the DOE itself where you would make progress, you would take a couple of steps forward then you would find your money is cut or you are not able to meet the deadlines in the way you thought you were. Or an experimental process like vitrification, trying to melt the waste into a less harmful glass form, you find that it doesn't work out or turn out the way you think it's going to turn out. So, you're constantly moving forward and taking a little step back or moving forward and finding yourself stalled. So that's probably the most frustrating thing for everyone involved. I'm sure it's still that same way. People think that things are either this way or that way but you find all the different entities, the residents, the Congress … You see then Congress, you see Congressmen come and beat up the DOE for not cleaning the place up, but then you see same Congressmen from other parts of the country not supporting clean-up funding. So you get even mixed, you know, messages out of Congress. So it's very frustrating I am sure for the people heavily involved in it.

041506 Interviewer: I want to give you a chance to sort of …, I think you said you teach, you have taught or teach class every once in a while. You know, if you're teaching a journalism class and have a little lecture on Fernald, you may even use Fernald in your class, what would be

some things you try to tell future journalists about covering environmental issues that have this sort of a long news cycle or fairly complicated aspects to them like Fernald. What would be some advice you want to give to a new journalist?

041535 Joe: I think mainly persevere, find a way to cut through the technical and all the government documents to get to the essence, that kernel that really matters, and never lose sight of the human aspect of it. What it's really all about is that there's people involved and people's lives here. It's not their actual lives at stake, their quality of life is at stake. And just not to lose sight of those two things, I think, are the two main points I want to instill in them. Try to cut through it, simplify it, so it's easily discerned what the issues are by the general public and then keep an eye for the human aspects of it.

041623 Interviewer: How long did it take you as starting out there until you felt comfortable with the lingo, and the acronyms, some of the …, and comfortable enough with the technical side that you could either, you know, digest the reports or can start to ask the intelligent questions.

041641 Joe: Yeah, boy. Uh, well, you always feel like you're learning, you know, just enough that you need to know, you know. So at anyone time. But then, I guess it was probably four or five years until I started to realize that "wow, I understand this stuff." I'm starting to understand this stuff, albeit not at the same level a lot of people even like yourself understand it today, but to be conversant in it. And I remember, I started to read up and became fascinated with the history of radioactive research and Madame Curie and things like that and started to understand that "wow, I can understand." You can even understand to a basic level Einstein's theory of relativity, you know, which was a founding concept to the atomic age. And you understand just the basic definition level of it, like "wow, is that what that meant all these years." So, you know, $E=MC^2$ is in fact that, you know, one of the tenets of that is that, you know, energy, not only can mass be converted to energy but energy can be converted back to mass. And that's pretty simple. When you start to understand the atomic realities you are like wow, that any element is the same as any other element if you add or subtract the right amount of particles to it at the atomic level. Uh, so, you know it's like at that basic level, but that's like 4 or 5 years in to it, I think. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

041818 Interviewer: How many reporters get stay on the story for that?

041822 Joe: Not many, not many. I guess. And I was very fortunate. That's one of the reasons I didn't …, one of the reasons I stayed at the Journal-News as long as I did. 'Cause I was there 4 years full time, then I went there part time then I stayed another 3 or 4 years. And so basically almost the entire time I was covering the Fernald. And that's very rare. And I realize I could go to a lot of other papers, another media outlets that might even be bigger. But I'd had to move which is why I didn't want to do that. But I realized I was really in a lucky spot. I kind of got to cover what I want to cover in the way I want tp cover it and investigate things the way I want to investigate them. And you don't, that's a very rare thing in journalism, and so I kind of saw myself very fortunate. I think that's why I stuck around so long and after I have done that for so many years, I decided I'm going to go and get out of journalism now because I really felt I had been in a fortunate situation to kind of do it and maybe try to make a difference in some small

way, to try to make that small difference in my own way. And a lot of reporters don't get to do that. So once I've had the opportunity to do that in my own small way, I'm like, "I can get out of journalism now, I've done what anyone could try to accomplish in terms of trying to make a difference in a few people's lives." And once you've done that, it's like you feel satisfied and you say, "Okay, I've done that." And a better opportunity came up at the unit of PR at that point and I was like I was ready to go.

042006 Interviewer: Let me ask you, it's kind of wrapping up here. But you kind of mentioned it in the kitchen before we started. You kind of feel yourself as a witness and you were kind of covering along while you were witnessing something. Maybe at a time you thought had some significance but now with a little bit of perspective again you can say, "Hey, I was really there at that important time and place in history." What would you say about that?

042030 Joe: Yeah, I tell you what. It's exciting that I can say that as a lot of people can say that about the Fernald plant that I got to, you realize that day to day you're doing a job, you're hoping you're making a little bit of a difference, you're covering a issue from day to day. But then once you've done that, you look back on and say, "Wow, that was a little bit of history I got to witness, and I got to see it close up." And that was fascinating, not a lot of people can say that. And, so, I felt fortunate in that way. And one of the things I didn't get to accomplish was I was working on when I quit, I wanted to do a five-part series of stories on the history of Fernald, covering the various decades, from the '40s, from the atomic age, up to the '50s when Fernald was actually built, then the '60s, the '70s, the '80s and the '90s. I got the first story done and uh, started to work on the second two, the '60s and the '70s, and that's when I got out of journalism. So, it was getting that sense of that history and trying to document the bigger picture of what it was all about. And, then you guys called and talked about you were documenting in a video format that same history. I am so excited to be a part of that. Because I thought that was so important and needed to be done. I'm glad to see somebody committed to doing that. I think you guys are doing a great thing.

042156 Interviewer: The first story got …

042200 Joe: No, 'cause I was trying to get it done and have it published as a series. And it never …, it's buried in a filing cabinet somewhere, and I'll have to find it. I want to find it because think at the time, I remember at the time, I thought, "Wow, this is kind of good," you know. Now I look at it all these years later, I might read it and go, "Oh God."

042219 Interviewer: What were you are working on, a chronology? On the website, the Ohio, uh, Office of Federal Facilities Oversight website, they got a nice chronology that they worked on that starts in 1985 which is sort of when regulatory agencies started to take a look on what was going on. But theirs starts in 1985. I'd like to get a parallel chronology of key things, like ground was broken this date, this date the site started production, and also certain aspects of the mission changed a little bit over time for a while for the amount of product they put out was down, but they started storing waste and started doing other things. And it really jacked up for a few years, ebbs and flows.

042305 Joe: It sure did. Yes. And anther thing that happened was the nature. I think at one point the nation was building up a storehouse of nuclear material and Fernald was really the first step in the long process. Fernald took pretty much the ore, or a lot of the raw uranium and processed it through different processes: through green salt, then through the ingot and the slugs and the big discs whatever those are called. Basically Fernald was a foundry, taking the ore, making it into raw metal that would then go on to the process to eventually become plutonium. So, I think at certain point the nation built up so much plutonium that it didn't need that raw ore anymore and got into the process where it was just working with existing metal, refining existing metal, trying increase the plutonium content in the metal and things like that. So, in a sense maybe Fernald wasn't later, in later years wasn't always as needed as much as it was needed early on. But then I think with maybe the Reagan White House, a lot of nuclear weapon complex geared up full scale in the way it hadn't. And that might have been the downfall of Fernald, I really think in hindsight, if my recollection serves me right. You had this aging facility that hadn't really been kept up because its mission was diminishing, and diminishing, and diminishing. And then with the beefing up of the Cold War, I think, in the Reagan era, they tried to bring this aging facility up to full production again. And it's just cracked, I think, under the pressure. I think if you looked at, you know, historically, that might have been some of the worst contamination that took place during that period. Uh, the early 50s which I documented in the story that I had completed, was a fascinating process because I talked to people that were there and whose families had sold their land and become… And you had this, out in the middle of nowhere, this government just converging in with military officials, and heavy equipment, ripping down houses and converting these farm fields into this huge industrial complex almost overnight. I mean it was a matter of years but it was at a speed where we don't see things are built today. And it was a fascinating story how this whole complex grew up out of these cornfields. And I remember when they were working and finishing it up people would point out how it was raining, it was just a city of mud. But the construction went on and heavy equipment sliding, slithering through the mud and building all this stuff. I was fascinated by that and then in later years when it got into production I talked to a lot of workers who were telling me these anecdotes. I don't know, you know, some of them may get exaggerated in time. But they talked about, you know, you would drive to Fernald plant in the morning and how you'd be used to seeing a fog over the landscape that Fernald having been in production all night long. There would be a fog or a haze, a yellow haze, you know, of an uranium acid mixture … the buildings and the cars. You know, through the process of turning uranium to a concentrated metal form uses a lot of processes that are just not radioactive hazards, just chemical hazards, and heavy acids and heavy things like that. So there could be a haze of acid over the factory. That's what I was told, you know, cars, and paint would be pitted. People even told me about, you know, it wouldn't be unusual to walk through the plant and see dead birds because birds flying overhead would hit this acid haze and would just die on the spot. Some of this might have been a little exaggerated, but this is part of the stories of the workers and what they remember. I think there is some truth in some of that.

042705 Interviewer: So what is the status of the writing project?

042708 Joe: This project?

042710 Interviewer: Yeah, the writing project you just described.

042711 Joe: Oh, well, it was something that I was working on in my last year and by that time I was only working part time at the Journal-News and consulting on the rest of the time. So I just never got to finish it up and never wrapped it up. I got the first story totally done and satisfied with that. The second story on the '60s I got written, but it was kind of in a first draft form. And then, I left, I printed out copies of the story when I left and I think I kept some of my notes, but I'm not even sure where they're at now; I think in a file cabinet at home somewhere.

042748 Interviewer: Well, the reason I ask is because …

042750 Interviewer 2: Excuse me, do you want us to keep rolling tape on this question? We are about to run out of tape. So if there is any other question, I think …

042755 Interviewer: I'm done.

042758 Joe: No, I'm fine. I hope that's helpful.

042800 Interviewer 2: Any other thing you would like to add?

042803 Joe: No …