090100 Interviewer: Let's go ahead and just begin with some background. Can you tell me your name, where you grew up, and where you went to school?

090107 Al: My name is Alfred O'Connor and I was born in Lynn, Massachusetts. Went to St. Mary's High School--St. Joseph, then St. Mary's Boys' High and then, uh, I worked a little bit there, and then I went into the service, the Marines. And then when I got discharged, I went to work up there as an apprentice plumber. And then I got wanderlust. I was living with my sister and brother-in-law. I was going to California because I thought it was nice there and I got as far as here. My brother was on strike at GE, so I was stickin' around, helping him out. Then I met my first wife, and now I'm still here.

090214 Interviewer: How long have you lived in the Cincinnati area?

090217 Al: Since I was about 23, I guess.

090222 Interviewer: So you settled here and started a family? What was your line of work then?

090227 Al: I was a plumber and pipe fitter. I did various jobs until I went on to General Electric.

090235 Interviewer: O.k., tell me a little bit about your employment at General Electric and how long you worked there.

090241 Al: I worked at GE for maybe 35 years or so. And I was a pipe fitter, plumber, and welder. That was my job. And then I became a union steward and then later on I was going to school. The AFL/CIO was putting on a school for community services, which I attended pretty regular. So did a lot of other guys. Not just our union, but every union. We got into everything, like Social Security, Red Cross, workers compensation, just about everything. They run the gamut, uh, at that time it was run by Xavier University. The program was set up by Professor LaGrange. It was very rewarding and stimulating to get you to do things for your people which normally they didn't do before that I know of. And, they went every week, I think it was once a week, every week, for I think pretty much the whole year. Then they later moved that down to a community services building on Reading Road, which is, I think they still have it there. So, that's about what, I later became a committeeman. Then Chairman of Bargaining Committee. And then I became President of the local 912. And then our district of the International Association of Machinists had 8 locals, and I became President of the district.

090444 Interviewer: What were your responsibilities as President?

090447 Al: Well I sat on a bargaining committee at General Electric, but as President we used to meet with all of them, all the locals in our district, in our halls down at Colerain Avenue. And it was just like a mutual thing, kind of help each other, you know, do things and be one big family, more or less, to speak. We was a member of the AFL-CIO, which had all the rest of the unions, more or less, every union almost belonged to it. We're very conscious of them, in other words, again helping each other. That's the name of the game, helping people you work with.

090540 Interviewer: During this time you were working with GE part time and working with the union part time. Can you explain that?

090546 Al: At the time that I was committeeman and president, I got 20 hours union time that I was to meet with the company at different levels and process grievances and all that. And, if you had owed, that union would pick up that excess time. So, either that, or I'd work, you know, at my trade. So, any job is not very well rewarding as far as monetary gains go. It's more or less you do it because you like to do it or you just don't do it.

090635 Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about how you got employed in worker compensation issues.

090642 Al: I got involved in that because, naturally, we had 1600 people, skilled tradesmen, construction more or less, construction and maintenance, and you got an awful lot of injuries. So that's where I first got involved. And the reason I got involved was because I learned about workers compensation, among all the other community services, through the AFL-CIO. Their schooling, then every year we held, and it was in Columbus, mostly all the time it was in Columbus, a two-week school put on by the workers compensation office up in Columbus. They were the top dogs. And, they'd come, and actually said to us that we work for you and we'd be glad to help you, you know, as union representatives. They did the same thing with employers. They'd say we're here to help you, we're your servants, and if we can help you in anything, feel free to come over. Which I took advantage of that, every time I had a question, so went to them and asked the experts. So, again, with the end, helping your people, that's what it was all about. So … The laws change every year so we had to go to school every year. It was well attended, not only by our union, but all the unions so that they could do the same thing for their people.

090825 Interviewer: How do you think that worked? You know, did you see some benefits from going to work there? Can you illustrate this maybe with an example?

090835 Al: Oh, we had thousands of cases, probably millions in the whole district. We learned to file the claims ourselves. We learned to get dispensary reports. We learned to get reports of accidents which the foreman had to make out and the union had to make out. And we got letters from all the witnesses who was available, you know, if the guys was working by himself, which was very rare. There would always be somebody there. Because we did that, we won about 99% of the cases, 99.8, because we had all the facts. And the Bureau, whether it's at the first, second, or third level, that's what they had to deal on. So you gotta be pretty good. And you can't be afraid 'cause it's like going to court. So, you can't be afraid to speak out. There's a lot of attorneys that I'd run up against as adversaries, in other words, representing the company. They were all, that was their job to get you ruffled to make a mistake so that they wouldn't believe you. You had to be pretty good. I've got a lot of guys help me. A lot of them quit because it just wasn't in them, and it was time-consuming. Because when you're working, you don't have too much time to do all of this. Most of the work you do you do at home. Or going to interview the guy at his house or woman or whoever it happened to be. The reason we did it mostly is when a guy is hurt or injured, he needs every dime he can to raise his wife, family, pay his bills. And the system in the old days, until it got changed, wouldn't allow that. It wouldn't

pay the guy until sometime after the hearing. Sometimes it took a year before they would start paying the guy. Then, their attorneys or the company appealed it then they would cut off the payment until the next step. And then, if you won that one and they appealed it again, well, they had to pay from the second step, Dayton Regional Board Review, up until it got to Columbus. Now, if you won it, they had to pay them and pay a lot of back pay. If you had a lawsuit and had to go to court, you had to get an attorney 'cause as union representatives we weren't allowed to go to court. Although, I think personally because I have a better job.

091146 Interviewer: I was gonna say, let's talk a little bit about Fernald. When and how did you first get involved in Fernald issues?

091154 Al: Well, one of the plants that we had people that we represented was the National Lead of Ohio. And they would, uh, some of those guys had quit and come to work for our union who were skilled people. And they told us a few things. But when people out there started getting sick, one of the business agents, David Day, I think, he was the president of the council, I don't remember exactly which one it was who told me, any way they told me about this fellow by the name of Ed Reid. They asked if I could help because they didn't have anybody in that local that did workers compensation. So, I said I'll see what I can do, I'll go talk to him. He was in Veteran's Hospital at the time. And I went and talked to Ed and he knew he was dying. He wanted to look out for his wife and family. He said look, he said I want, if they tell you they gave them guys a Q-clearance and if they said anything about anything, they would lose their job. Well the guy was never going to go back to work, anyway. He knew that. So he told me a lot of things. And I know one thing, I know when you are on your deathbed you ain't going to lie to nobody. You are too close to the other side. So anyway, I filed a claim for him. And I kept getting put off by the company. In fact, about emissions, about everything, about a walk around the plant, and all that, they denied us … In fact a guy I that was named Weldon Adams told me, "I'd never get back in that plant, never, never". I just looked at him and said don't bet me. So we had some friends at NIOSH, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, we also had some friends at OSHA. I mean we went there all the time to find out things about different chemicals, what it'd do to you, what type of agent it was, what'd it affect, the whole thing. They would give us all kinds of information if there was any, and it was all through the computer, I guess. They were very helpful, to all citizens, and all companies, and all unions, whoever. And so I went to NIOSH. I tried to file a health hazard evaluation, that's what they call it. That's when they go in and look for themselves. The guy's name was Phil Landragen; he used to be the big cheese down there. He was the head of the whole thing. He said he wasn't allowed to go in there, in the, uh … to OSHA, it's also federal, they said they weren't allowed to go down in there. That's when I found out that DOE exempted themselves from Federal, o.k., OSHA and NIOSH, from the State Health and Safety and Health Organization. Any other organization at all, they relied on themselves. That's what they told me, and that's what the bill said.

09154820 Interviewer: In terms of regulations?

09154901 Al: Yeah, from regulations, safety.

091550 Interviewer: Now describe how that would differ from OSHA and NIOSH's rule in terms of another facility.

091601 Al: They would have to comply with OSHA, NIOSH, EPA, State and Federal Health, all of them. And that's what the laws were made for. Not to exempt any one company from anything. But anyway they did, anyway. So I couldn't get any help from nobody. Everybody said they couldn't get in there. I got a hold of, I say I, I say we, our union did, I got a hold of Senator Glenn and Howard Metzenbaum, and Tom Luken, who was a Congressman at that time, and raised so much hell. They finally insisted, and Governor Celeste at the time, and he wrote letters to everybody, so did Senator Glenn and Metzenbaum. And we finally got into the plant for a walk around. This is three years, about three years after we first started raising hell to get into the plant and walk around. We finally got in there and had a tour. And right about that time, it was in all the newspaper articles, they had some spills. The equipment they had, the instruments weren't able to be calibrated or reset or anything ... In other words, they didn't work. So, the people in the community never knew when there was a spill and when there wasn't. One of the things they wanted to point out first denying any spills other than 240 pounds here and 300 pounds there is that they acknowledged that this is through the Senators. One of the things that came out in the paper. This is not final, but it says their estimate was 3 million 80 thousand pounds of emissions. Not only in the plant itself, but the community as well. So with that they really started to having to own up to some things.

091844 Interviewer: Is this the reason that you were talking about the laundry? Could you tell that story for us?

091850 Al: A lot of things. We're talking about two governmental bodies here. The Department of Energy owned all the plants across the country. They exempted, absolved the company from any responsibility, which I still today think that's wrong. Saying they could do anything they wanted to do, they had their own health and safety, and all that, which was wrong. They never had health and safety. They made sure of that. DOE rewarded them every year with a bonus program. Uh, I forgot the first part of the question.

091939 Interviewer: Oh, I was saying, was this visit you were talking about being there Luken and Glenn and Metzenbaum, was this visit you you had previously told me about the laundry.

091948 Al: There was number of things wrong with the visit to start with. And I because I filed it and the business agent, I think his name was John Nickel, he came along, and David Day and then there were company representatives. There were a number of problems to begin with. Number one, NIOSH and OSHA both government agencies. Well the first thing you think of to come into a plant to check, when you enter an atomic plant, a nuclear plant, you bring a Geiger counter, well nobody brought a Geiger counter. The report we got back from them, I think, is mostly all on company records, which was all completely wrong. They'd been hiding it for years, the contamination, the sicknesses, and illnesses and so forth. So, I had very little faith in the guy that was doing the interview, o.k.. We wound up, we pointed out a lot of things to them, first, the paint peeling off the walls, all the buildings made of asbestos. It was a steel frame with asbestos enclosure, just like all the old buildings in World War II. They had glass for light. So

we took them to the process room and the paint was coming off the walls and the exhaust fans over these processes tanks, which had highly toxic fumes coming out of all of them, except for the rinse tanks. They are supposed to have a fan to exhaust that fumes up the duct. Well, the duct had big holes in it and the fans didn't work. Well, that was one thing we pointed out to them and we never heard anything about it. We pointed out they used in the process room trichloroethylene, which had been outlawed for years in most other industry. They said they quit using it and, Christ, right in front of us, the whole bunch, Senators and everybody, there was a fifty-gallon drum just opened. I said "well how long has it been there, open like that?" They said, "I don't know." I says, "it evaporates, and it causes cancer." So, I said, "Well if it was there, even at the time, opened, it would evaporate in the air." They, you know, fluffed it off like it was nothing.

Then we went to a section of the plant they had the story of, it's one of the biggest thorium repositories in the world. Well, it had so much. It's supposed to be in steel drums. Well, the bottom of the drums had rusted out and the stuff was just coming out on the ground. All over the place, it's still there, asbestos was all over the place it would just falling off the pipes and stuff. I'll tell you everything because it's all written down in here. One of the last places that we went in the plant, and if I remember correctly, I think they had a spill and didn't tell a Congressman or Senators about it. They let them walk right through it. It was in the paper too. But the last place we wound up in was the laundry. They washed their own clothes. So supposedly the guy would go in in the morning and they'd given them a set of clothes. He'd take his own off and wear the coveralls that they gave him and turn them in at the end of the shift, you know, when they were going home. Now before they went home, they'd have to take a shower. They had these scanners, radiation scanners. Just like a … fit in your hand, a hand scanner is what they would call them. You're supposed to scan your whole body, you know, make sure you got all the stuff off before you went home. So I was talking to the laundry guys there and asked them where the drain water went. Just down the common drain or Paddy's Run or something? Just carrying all this waste right down into the ground into sewers and then Paddy's Run. And so I said, "Give me a set of old ones that you got off a guy." And, uh, this is in front of everybody to see it, NIOSH, Senators, Congressmen, everybody. And I scanned a uniform, and it just got readings, high readings all over it. And then I told the guys running the laundry, "Now, give me a pair, three or four pair, I don't care. Give me a pair of new ones that have already been washed." I said, "Let's try that." He picked it out, I didn't, and he gave me a couple pair and I scanned them. I got just as high a readings off of them new overalls, or coveralls, or whatever they had, then I get off those ones that were dirty. So the washing didn't really make any difference. The guys told me, "Well we're thinking about getting a new laundry." They thought about it, too, it was God damn long because they wasn't doing anything. There was a lot of things. And, I would have to go through here to refresh my memory. I was not a bit satisfied with the OSHA examination, uh, their results, because they strictly went on the company's data which was false. Always was false. I don't mind telling you my feelings. The company lied just as well as the DOE lied, and they lied plenty. They tried to cover it up and they have been for years.

092649 Interviewer: Let's back up a minute, the inspection that you were describing was the first time that you had entered the plant? Right?

092656 Al: I had gone into the plant the first time in a conference room, not into the work area.
Interviewer: O.k. So this was the first inspection.

Al: That was our first inspection. They called it a walk around.

092710 Interviewer: Sure. After you saw sort of the health and safety conditions there, from a union point of view, what were you able to do in terms of protecting the workers?

092719 Al: It was the worst I'd ever seen. I mean, they didn't … they never even, the time we had the first meeting and three years later when we finally got the walk around, I couldn't see any difference at all. I don't think … they were so sure that they was going to get away with everything that they didn't even bother cleaning the place up. 'Cause the stuff was still on the rafters. All the uranium dust, the toxic chemicals, they never give these guys no masks, no protective clothing, no nothing. In fact, the first thing I asked everybody on the first walk around. I said, "Those things look new, everything they're wearing, and they had plastic shields, they had gloves, they had eye goggles." I said, "How long you had those?" They said, "Well, these are brand new. They knew you were coming." I made him say that in front of the guy from NIOSH, and the Congressman and the Senators, too. Then we went to another building. I might be getting these mixed up… Did I tell you about the glass? About how the buildings were made with the glass on top? O.k. We went to this place, it's where they, they use a, they call it the green salt. They had a big bridge crane, it's like a big swimming pool, it's full of molten salt, among other things, o.k. Well this glass, in the old time, was just clear glass, and all the other buildings, most of them were clear glass. But this building and it had maybe two or three stories of glass all the way around. And they were all acid-etched. In other words, with clear on the outside, on the inside you go in there and you'd see glass that's been acid-etched, it's like white-looking and you can't see through the glass. But from the fumes in that area, it had done that to every pane of glass in that building and there was a ton of them. **(Tape change).**

100020 Interviewer: So you were telling us about the glass.

100025 Al: I didn't work at that plant. All I did was, I was president of the district. I filed the health hazards, and that's why they let me in. I had no authority in that plant at all myself, but others did: the business agent, the president of the union, which was a consolidation of a lot of unions, the council I think they called it. So they was the ones that that really, you know, the ones that tried to enforce some of the rules that should have been in effect that weren't. They were more or less ignored. And they were very vociferous not only about their plant because we had meetings, I think down in our district. When they started giving us the run around, and I'm talking about NLO and DOE both, uh, we, our union had contact with a lot of other unions across the country: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Pantex, Texas, there were five plants in Oak Ridge. We contacted Mound and Piketon, okay, because we knew they were doing relatively the same type of thing we were. Everybody we could find out, and I found out who done the first actual meeting, I mean testing for documentation. The guy was named Dr. Thomas Mancuso; he is president, I mean president emeritus or was still working, but teaching health and safety at Pittsburgh University. I think the department was safety and health. And he wrote a report,

initially at the DOE's expense, and when he first, I think it was on workers from Hanford, and really explained it out like it was. How dangerous it was, low level radiation, high level radiation, the whole thing, and he was in concert with Dr., I think he was from England, or somewhere, Canilian (?), and there was another one but I forgot the name. But anyway, the first part of that program was issued, DOE cut off his funds and tried to discredit him. That guy was a professor, he did health and safety before he was a professor he was a public Ohio Public and Safety administrator for 15 years. So, I mean, he knew where he was coming from. He knew what he was doing. They cut off his funds, and gave it to a guy by the name of Dr. Lauschbough (?). He was head of Oak Ridge National Laboratories, I think it was ORNL, or something, I forgot the … something like that. Anyway, he was strictly a DOE man and a company man and never would admit to any of this stuff hurting people, as bad as them plants were. So what he said and what, if I'd had a choice of who to believe, I'd have to believe a Tom Mancuso. He was the one, he came to our first meeting and told us a lot of things. And so did every place that we'd contact had some things to say. Different types of cancer, like leukemia's a big one. A lot of plants had a lot of leukemia problems. But you don't get that just walking down the street or just going to any other place. But after that first meeting, we kind of digested what each other had to say. It was just a learning experience. Trying to find out if it was as bad there as it was here. And that's how it was across the country.

100445 Interviewer: Was the meeting that you're talking about the union hall meetings that you organized? **Al:** Yeah. **Interviewer:** This one you had Dr. Mancuso come in for the first meeting?

100459 Al: Yea, first meeting. I think he was in his nineties then I don't even know if he is still alive. But his study is… uh …

100508 Interviewer: Now what were you trying to get accomplished?

100510 Al: We was trying to find out, DOE was given in the plant, who ever was running it. Different people run different, you know, plants. But it was all DOE-owned and DOE was calling the shots from behind the scenes, anyway. They was letting them do what ever in the hell they wanted to. They weren't policing them selves. You could take like NLO had regular plants as well as Department of Energy Plants. They couldn't run any of their other plants like they did this one. Absolutely do nothing. No safety protection, little to no monitoring, and whatever monitoring there was, as far as I'm concerned, was phony. But uh, we found out that they were all doing the same thing. Intimidating the people with a Q-clearance. That's number one. Don't say nothing or you're fired, o.k. That's the same thing Ed Reid told me. So after that, then we really started to, you know, we was telling them how we were being held back in investigation and company… How we got the Senators and Congress involved. I think it was Pantex, Texas, they had a guy by the name of, I know it, he was a Congressman and became a Senator, well anyway, he started raising hell about Colorado. Then we got the guys in Oak Ridge to start raising hell. They get one of their main safety man the name was Sam Fife (?) and he started doing some things and questioned things and everything. He finally got so frustrated, he quit. So most of the other plants were doing the same thing. Now, Hanford, Washington is a giant place. And they are probably one of the worst polluters. They got more stuff they dumped on

the ground, ninety holding ponds where this waste was just up towards the air and then leach into the ground. And we treat them all. All the plants across the country, including Savannah River. I could name them all for you. All these plants are around big waterways and have polluted every stream, the land, even Indian land. Contaminated the soil, thrown millions of pounds of contaminated wastes straight into the rivers. That was one of their favorite things. And as a result, over the years, if they want to do something with the extra money they said they have in the government. They ought to use it to clean up the God damn mess they made. Because it's not just the drinking water. It affects the food, it affects the animals, it affects everything. And we won't have, we won't have a country if things keep going on and keep getting covered up. The only guy that ever said, kind of admitted, I think he was forced in to the corner by all the investigations of different things, different states. Bone marrow was another one where they exhumed a body, I think it was either from Paducah, or one of the other places. And they found thousands of times over, above the regular limit. In the federal cases, I mean not Federal, but cases by attorneys all over the country, and more and more of them are getting won because there's a he ll of a lot more out there than when I started digging. And I got a desk full of studies, General Accounting Office say that their safety is terrible. But, every year the government gives them a, all the plants, a raise, you know. When you know someone is absolutely not living up to all the other laws that the American people put into effect, the government put in to effect. And exempting these plants. And, then giving them a bonus, it's ridiculous! Ludicrous! It's, it's … I could use a lot more adjectives, but I don't think you'd want to hear them.

100956 Interviewer: Sure, sure. Let's return for a minute. You were saying you called all these other … these union plants and invited representatives and they came to the union hall meetings that you hosted. At those meetings, were there same similar sentiments of "we have things to tell, but we can't tell or being held back or health concerns" Can you characterize a little bit the discussions that took place, you know, in the union hall meetings and what came out of those?

101022 Al: Not only a lot of the people that worked in the plants, you know the safety and health people came. Their representatives who didn't work in the plants, some of them, they could talk. It was all hard, it was all the unions, I don't care who they were from or where they were. When people are told not to talk outside here or you're fired, and they have good paying jobs all of them, they did that for a reason. To keep the people, keep them shut up with a Q-clearance. And when a guy's wife, family, kids, house and bills and everything is all at stake, they are very reluctant to talk, they are very reluctant for guys like me to raise hell. Because the first thing the company tells them is that "you're going to get the plant closed down." So you are really actually fighting you own end, the company end, the DOE, and everybody. It's a thankless job, and I did it for many years, and I am not sorry for one minute. The only ones that really get the most out of it is the guys that was sick and disabled and couldn't work and they knew that their health was because of where they worked.

101150 Interviewer: Let's go back to before we talked about the inspection you were telling us about what was called the first order comp claim. What was the gentleman's name again? **Al:** Ed Reed **Interviewer:** Ed Reed. O.k. You were talking a little bit about him and how he was willing to talk to you. Can you tell us a little bit did he suspect, did he know that something at the plant directly caused the health in him?

101218 Al: I'll just name a few of the things that he worked with. I think he was a de-greaser operator. They did …, they used everything, caustic soda, nitric acid. There was various chemicals, another one was that trichloroethylene. I had a folder, I wish I had it in front of me because I didn't just list uranium, and thorium, and plutonium. I also listed all the chemicals and I got that list from OSHA and NIOSH. What does this affect, you know. A lot of it affected the lungs. The bronchial, gives you chronic obstructed pulmonary disease is one thing. And the plant at that time, had x-ray, that guy had to take an x-ray every year. And we got his x-rays from when he started to when he finally walked, had to go out on sick leave. Well, anyway, it showed on his lungs, he had what they call interstitial fibrosis. What it does is eats the lungs until they are almost transparent and there's nothing left. Could have been any one of the chemicals. It could have been all the chemicals plus the uranium, thorium, because they does that, too. So anyway, after we won his case, I think we lost at the first stage. There are three steps a union rep. can go to: first, second, and third. The regional board was next, and I think we won that one. So then, they had to start paying them. So then, he was in Veteran's Hospital, like I told you. So if you prove it's work related then they have a right to charge because state pays the bills. So I went over and I told, they were good enough to let me interview the doctor and them, hell if we won the case then you're entitled to get the payment from the state for his illness that you've been treating him for. He'd been in there for quite a while. So I've got the name of the, their legal people over there, the woman I talked to. But I don't have it, it's in this, or someplace. And I don't really know if they ever got paid, but I know they billed him. And I'm sure they had to pay them after that second hearing. So, then they took it to court. And, well, the guy died. So I had to start this claim all over again for his wife as the beneficiary. And she was a little country lady, nice woman. Well, she only had a third grade education, wasn't too swift on laws or nothing like that. She did believe us, anyway. And so we filed for her and she finally had hearings. They went on for a long time. Finally it had to go to court again. And by the time we filed for her and by the time we finally got it adjudicated in court, the attorney, I won't forget his name, it was Bob Welch, called me up it was right around Christmas time, best Christmas present I'd ever had. He finally won the case for the woman. In the meantime she was, didn't have no income, and she was legally blind. So, we called the Senator from Indiana, I should remember his name, anyway, he helped us and helped get her Social Security, which she deserved. That's another thing that we learned in community service school is Social Security. We used to take guys down, they had to get disability, Social Security, if you run out of money … you gotta get them some help from Social Security one way or another, o.k. 'til they can get back to work, which again it was rewarding in itself. And as long as we did it ourself we couldn't charge anybody nothing. We never charged a dime for anything. Neither did none of the other guys that are doing this. And, there were plenty of them, plenty union people.

101738 Interviewer: In the process of winning his case, were you able to get a doctor in and conclusively say what he was exposed to caused that was part of the process of …?

101754 Al: Yeah, One of the ones that we got was his family doctor. The guy's name was, I'll never forget it, he was a nice guy. Jale Jocko his name was. He come right out and said it. That this was definitely caused by exposure to chemicals at work. That's basically what the doctor from the Veterans Hospital said. It's hard to get anybody from the Veterans Hospital to say

anything because they are not supposed to take stands. But I showed that doctor that guy's history, what he was exposed to, and how many years he was exposed to this. It was a woman doctor, and she was very good, too. Again, very reluctant, she was kind of wishy-washy, but she finally had to admit it: from exposure at work. That's how we finally won his case the first time. And like I said, he died before it ever got to the third level, I think. Again I don't have the case in front of me, so I don't really remember. But, it's been years ago.

101905 Interviewer: Can you recall any other like major cases that you think are good examples of these issues …?

101916 Al: I think you interviewed him already, this Kelley, Mrs. Kelley. **Interviewer:** That was his wife we interviewed yes. **Al:** He came to me first. And I did the same thing that I did with Ed Reed. The same stuff and everything. It's awful hard to get a hearing, so I guess he got a little nervous because we weren't going fast enough. We were going just as fast as the system would let us. I said, "Look, I'd be glad to give you what I have, a copy of everything I've got and you can go and get you an attorney then if you want to, if you think he's going to spend more time than me, which I doubt. Any way he got his own. For years he fought this, the company. He gave testimony, he did everything. He was a good guy. He was a good guy in court Stan Chesley. His wife begged him to quit. In fact, his daughter brought him to me a lot of the times because I guess his wife was, it hurt too much for her. She's watching her husband die. Well, anyway, he came back to me and wanted me to take his case back, after, uh, the Reed case, I guess. I said I couldn't. That's one of the things they taught us in school: if an attorney gets a hold of a claim, then don't take it away from the attorney. In other words, they're afraid of the attorneys, I guess. I never been afraid of anybody in my life, except my wife. Sorry dear. But anyway, I told him I couldn't. I'd been told not to and I gotta rely on their expertise. We were always friends. He knew all the guys that I had filed claims for. Unfortunately, a lot of the guys died.

One of the guys, I'll never forget, he had a damn good case. His name was Virgil Esterich (?). I used to call him Jake because everybody did. His niece used to bring him to the hearings and so forth. And uh, she was very nice. But the wife was a shy woman and she didn't want to rock the boat. And he had to get an attorney because it had already got to three steps and it was time for her to get an attorney.

VHS TAPE SLIPS—THE BRACKETED SEGMENT IS DELETED—

{Well, when he died his wife refused to get an attorney. So I couldn't do nothing. I had to drop the case and so did the attorney. So, there was a lot of good ones. I run across some yesterday in the stuff, it's downstairs**. (Some guys name?)** that we lose **(?)**. **(Guy's name again?),** his wife Joy, this guy was all eat up with cancer. Same thing with the lungs, you know, **?** fibrosis**.** I'm not a doctor, so I might be saying it wrong. But he also died. Again, like I say, I don't think they wanted him, his wife wanted to press it any further, whatever. He wasn't afraid to talk either. He blew his own horn. He's the one I told you I think. We had started an occupational disease clinic. I think I told you that. It started off, this really was the AFLCIO is and was trying, they…the clinic got started off from our district. We wanted doctors to evaluate a guy

and give an honest opinion and wanted somebody you could trust. The guy was from NIOSH. It was a very good doctor. He helped me a lot when he was just learning this, down there. He was our first doctor in the clinic. Then they later hired another guy by the name of, uh, he's in Lansing, Michigan, now. Uh …

102401 Interviewer: How did that work to use this occupational health clinic?

102403 Al: Well, they needed a place to operate from, in other words, to see patients and you know do all that they had to do. And so, the woman that helped us start that, it was myself, and the head of … Phil Landragin, was the head of NIOSH, but his wife was Mary Landragin, she was an activist. She liked me anyway. She said, "Why don't you guys try to get a grant." So she was, all of this, writing this and getting the right people on board, which I had no idea what to do for all that. The next thing you know, Celeste was the governor at that time, we went up there, we had a meeting up there. We had to present a draft of what we was trying to do, what our objectives were to try and help people and so forth. They got a substantial amount of money from the government, local government, to start the clinic and then we started sending patients there. You know workers, somebody that was hurt. Something was happening to a number of patients and you didn't have no explanation, you try to get … they were raised on what the hell the chemicals and different things do to the body. And what it effects, that's the training. Normal doctors don't get that kind of training. That's why we got that doctor. And our objective was the same thing: helping people get an honest opinion. Most local doctors were either intimidated by big companies - saying we won't send you no more if you side in with this guy. In other words, they were reluctant to take a position, not that they didn't know, they probably knew because I tried, I wrote letters to plenty of doctors to try to explain what this guy was, and very few would you ever get a reply from or get a letter from. Without proof you can't do too much. I tried everything in my power. And one of the things was trying to get this clinic started. Well, it was the AFL-CIO was mostly in charge of it, Dan **Raffert (?).** They had people on the board. I was on the board for awhile. And they had people from companies who was on the board. They had Eula Bingham who used to be OSHA director, I guess, whatever you call it. She was with UC, and she was on the board. A very intelligent woman. And she knows just about everything. So that's how we got, the clinic got started. But we got letters from the clinic. We got letters from the personal physicians. That's what you need to win a case any ways. I can't just go in and say this guy's got this because of this. The company comes up with all of their doctors and says just the reverse. You have to have something to counteract. You know what they're going to say. Say hey that's not right. Do that's what the clinic did. **(Tape change)**]

VHS TAPE RESUMES HERE

110029 Interviewer: We've been talking a little about the different cases and you filing the workers claims. I want to talk now about NLO or DOE's reactions to that. I remember you talking about the first meeting you had with NLO. Could you describe that meeting for me?

110050 Al: Well the meeting was first to try to get into the plant, to look around and for them to tell us, well, come clean with us, in other words. Well in the meantime, I'd go over to NIOSH

many times for different things, you know, not just NLO, but my own plant. Others that needed information and I'd try to get it. So this one doctor knew I was having trouble with the NLO so he got me all the information he could. And he gave me fourteen reports that the doctors at NLO had done themselves. O.k.

110142 Interviewer: NIOSH doctors or NLO doctors?

110146 Al: These were NLO doctors. They didn't work with DOE or NIOSH's. So anyway, at that first meeting they had all their health and safety people in this meeting, there was the manager, there was ... I can't remember all the names of all the people that were there. We got it written down. But just on our side it was myself, and John Nickel was a business agent, and I think the plant's safety man. I forget his name. So I asked them questions to start out with to kind of lay the groundwork. I asked them if they had ever done any studies. They said no. I asked them a few more leading questions, all part of these studies. And they said no. I let that go on long enough anyway. I had an old brown, dirty, brown briefcase, and in there I had them fourteen studies, and they had the names of the doctors that was involved in them. I asked them, "Did anybody do a study on such and such?" O.k.? "Dead animals on the property?" They said no. In the beginning I asked them all these leading questions. Almost one out of every study. And the answer was no to all of them. So then I asked, "Does anybody here know a guy by the name of Heatherton?" A guy raises his hand and says that's me. He was from the Health and Safety department, you know, whatever. I said, "When I asked this question you said no. It says here that you did a study." And there were other names on almost all of them, there was two or three names, you know. I said does anybody know a guy by the name of Quigley?" Another guy … you know, I told you, they … And I said, "I just asked you questions and all you guys who raised your hands and said no." Yeah, so anyway, I did this to all these ... Bolback was another one, Quigley, Heatherton, and there was others. Anyway, the company called a recess of the meeting, and I never seen them guys again. I still got the studies and they were done at Oak Ridge Associated Universities. In other words, that's where they were turned in to. Now they were never printed for the government, per se, but they didn't just do it for themselves because none of the studies was very good anyway. But they studied like animals, dead animals that they would find on the property. They would do an autopsy on them. They never told people any of this stuff. They were going to buy Paddy's Run that leads into the Little Miami River, that goes to Ohio, but they didn't want to because they didn't want to cause any more suspicion. One of the guys told me that they used to wait till it rained, and dump all the waste down Paddy's Run, you know, on the grounds. And the rainwater would wash it into Paddy's Run and then down to Little Miami. And my own feeling is that they, um, that's why they put that big landfill out there close to that plant. I think a lot of the waste is down there. Can I prove it? No, I can't prove it, but I bet you there is because what they did all the rest of the places. But, anyway, when they called a recess, none of them guys came back in. Another study was a big one was they made a deal with the county coroner, Frank Cleveland I think his name was, that they would do the autopsies for him and send back the results. So they wasn't going to send any results back to incriminate him. So that was phony as a three-dollar bill too. I think later on he tried to get out of it, but the goddamn study's right there. If they made an agreement, they made an agreement. If no place else, it's on the paper there.

110623 Interviewer: After the doctors didn't come back in they called a recess, the doctors had gone, what answers were you given?

110630 Al: None, they didn't give any. I mean I told, I think it was the NIOSH guy there at that first meeting. I think I told him. I'm a little uncertain, I used to swear an awful lot…I still do, but, anyway, I said, uh, I said to the NIOSH guy, "Now, you've seen these studies, and you've heard the answers, you've heard the answers from them doctors." I said, "They lied. They lied, so, I wouldn't believe a god damn thing they said, and neither should you." So he didn't say anything. But, that's the way I felt. At that meeting is when that guy [Weldon Adams] told me I'd never get back in the plant. I said, "Don't bet on me." So …

110717 Interviewer: Now was the union's role different because it was a federal facility? You know, we're hearing about your approaching NIOSH and OSHA getting into the plant. During this time period, was your role different than, let's say, it was at GE, or something, because NLO was part of a federal facility?

110736 Al: Well, at GE we had our own health and safety people. There was two unions out there: the machinists union, IAM, and the UAW, at General Electric. And, they had their own health and safety man, so we trained ours, religiously, everyday. If they couldn't get anything done about a problem they would get their information from either OSHA or NIOSH. We'd call in OSHA, you know, ask them to walk around. We had NIOSH. The company would usually correct a problem because they didn't want them pouring bodies in there … NIOSH, OSHA. So, we were lucky we was able to do something. They didn't, the NLO didn't have no power at all because DOE exempted all the companies across the country from any kind of liability. I mean, they paid for work comp cases if we won, and they paid for the bills. They just didn't want anybody into them plants to look. So we were by far the luckier people. Any plant that we had in the city or tri-state area was all the same restrictions: EPA, NIOSH, OSHA standards. And, so they had to comply just like everybody else in the Untied States, you gotta comply. Their plants, DOE plants, NLO and all of them included across the country, didn't have to comply with nothing.

11093219 Interviewer: Which meant that you didn't have any power?

11093515 Al: No, as far as to do anything. And they knew it. The companies knew it. So, you could go complain, but they wasn't going to change a damn thing because it would cost them money that would take out of their profits. Like I said, they got rewarded every year at the expense of the worker, as far as I'm concerned, and all the dead workers.

111007 Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about your union membership. When certain workers were getting sick and coming to you and saying, "I think it's because of the work that we're doing at Fernald," in general did you have support from throughout the union membership? How did the other members feel about this?

111025 Al: Well, they were glad someone was doing something. We never would have got us a safety committee in the first place. We never would have got a work-comp committee. They

knew that we were working for them. As part of their dues, they deserved no better than the best. That's my feeling, and that's what I always tried to do. So, we had a very good membership, and they got very good representation. And they were glad to have us, all of us, not just me, all the guys that worked for them. I feel glad about that because that's a reflection of your work.

111110 Interviewer: Now what about the other unions out at Fernald. How did you all interact with them about health and safety issues?

111116 Al: They were very good because we was involved in a lot of chemicals out there, too, and different processes. And they had their own health and safety men. Now they were so good, you know, they could almost correct their problem just by us bringing it to their attention. One of their health and safety men, his name was Murphy, Bill Murphy, he later became the director, or whatever they call him, of OSHA in Cincinnati. He was very good, very fair man, very good man. We called on him a lot of times. In fact, I called him to try to get into NLO, and he said he didn't have any jurisdiction there or he would have went out there, very good.

111220 Interviewer: You said something about a council of the unions … Can you describe …

111225 Al: Oh, that's the council NLO had, I don't know, between 13 and 19 unions and they had a council and one spokesman, which they elected. Different times it was like David Day; Gene Branham, I think, was a representative one time of, president of the council. There were other ones, I can't just remember all their names right now. But a lot of their members, like especially I know the chemical workers name, the guy's name was John Webster. It was him and Doctor Edelman at the clinic and they had people, you know, at the plant was the ones that got the community together to tell them what the hell was going on, all this pollution that was coming their way. I forget the first woman's name who was in charge of what they called FRESH; well it's something else now. And Lisa Crawford came up after the fact. We were the first ones, our union people, at the plant, was the first ones out there. John Webster could probably tell you, give you a better history of that than I could. He's still around, I know that. He's retired, too.

111348 Interviewer: So the union's contact with the community members started mid-'80s after that initial "here's what the plant does, there have been leaks". What kind of interaction was there between your union and the community?

111402 Al: Well, actually, like I said I had enough to do. I had to leave it up to that plant, and their president, and their business agents. They're more … to take care of that problem. I'm trying to do the best I can, trying to get to some information. I myself wasn't directly involved with none of that community stuff. Although I know they were certainly right in their endeavors, and I think they got short-changed. I think the attorney kept most of the money, myself.

111441 Interviewer: What are your impressions of the work that's going on now at Fernald with the remediation?

111447 Al: My feelings is this, from what I understand and what I saw out there and the contamination that they've admitted to, I don't think that there's no way in this world they're ever going to clean it up. What concerns me is the results of what they've done for all these years more than anything. I'm not against them getting paid for what the hell happened to them. I'm all for it. They should be compensated. I don't think that there's any way they're ever gonna decontaminate the aquifers; they contaminated the wells that come from the aquifers, and it's documented better than me. Ohio State Safety and Health, when we finally got them in, they did a pretty thorough core drilling and so forth. They found out what was contaminated and what wasn't. Over the three billion pounds of dust, that's conservative, because the scrubbers out there were supposed to take all the elements out of … they were…because the heat and moisture, and the scrubbers had these woolen bags in them. They shrunk two foot short of the exhaust. In other words, it was like not having any bags in there at all and that's also, I think, uh, come out through the state investigations, and so forth. In fact, the state EPA wouldn't even go in there because the first time they'd send somebody in there, the guys would come out with contaminated clothing, shoes and stuff. They made them clean it up before they would ever go back in. That's also in one of these articles you've seen in the…only a little bit of what I got a lot of it's downstairs. But this is all documented and fact.

One of the worst places out there is the silos. And, they stuff they got is from the Belgian Congo. Another concern I have is how did all this stuff get here? By truck, railway, whatever, whatever it was, that's contaminated too, and then they dumped it off and went some place else. So, not only did they contaminate what they got out there, but whatever else they pick up and where they take it, it's all been contaminated. But anyway, those tanks are above ground to start with, and they started leaking. So, if they started leaking out the sides, o.k., you know god damn well it's probably leaking out the bottom too. But all they did was mound dirt up around them so you couldn't see it leaking. My feeling, and I haven't checked with anybody 'cause I've been gone out of this for a long time, ten years, I think the thing's still there, and it's still leaking. I run across a picture of a truck, it was, uh, to do with somebody's case, another one, a salary guy this time that died. And that truck was the same truck, a little dump truck, they used to hook the barrels on the back of that truck, and run it up and down across the fields, just spreading contamination out of 'em. That's a fact, I got that from the president of the union. His name was Pete Sansone at the time. And Pete's son, this is when he was still working out there, got leukemia. He was in the Navy. He was making his life's job. He was on an atomic submarine for six years. So it didn't take much for me to put two and two together. But, anyway, he got leukemia, and the Navy was going to discharge him at half pay, and they wouldn't pay for a bone transplant, marrow transplant. So, I went to Glenn, Metzenbaum, again. Whatever they did, anyway, I gota hold of the commander, or something, in the Navy, and he said that he had to have some release form filled out. So I gave them to Pete, they got, we know all that anyway. The end result was they finally agreed to keep him in the Navy because the guy wanted to make a career out of it, and it paid for the bone marrow transplant. Well, Pete's daughter was a match so he got the bone marrow transplant. But they waited too long, the guy died. So, and, uh, I invited the guys, and it was Groton, Connecticut, I think. I told you, I forget where it was. They came to one of our meetings, anyway, 'cause they had concern, too.

112030 Interviewer: Do you know what, I'm recalling from our interview that you had been talking about an organ registry? And I thought that that's an important one we want to touch on before we …

112039 Al: The company used to try to talk to guys out there into signing up so that if anything happened to them that they would get their organs for a transuranium registry, o.k. Not only this plant but all over the country they asked this. That was just another way of them doing and not telling you nothing, and deny any claim if they guy had one. My suggestion was to the business agent, I'd tell them guys, "Don't sign it. Forget it." I mean, but the, you know if you want to get an autopsy, get it done by a professional that's, that'll tell you what he finds, not what he finds, they don't tell you. They tried to do that on Luther Horn's case. And the wife, her name was Joy, she called, I don't think she called me, she called the doctor who was taking care of him, it was, it had to be that Albert Egleman (?). In fact, this was in the newspapers, too, big article because they tried to get the organs without telling anybody. I mean, that's how, just … they didn't fear nothing. And, they don't fear nothing today. If they paid these people like they said they're going to do, and pay them for their medical, I'll be really surprised. I don't think that it's ever going to happen.

112222 Interviewer: Let's kind of step back for a moment. This is kind of a broader question. Imagine you were writing a memoir for your grandkids or for other younger children, future generations. And in this memoir, what do you think you would identify as the most important thing that came out of your experience?

112242 Al: It's that I never thought I'd hear a Department Of Energy representative, especially the director, ever admit that they were killing people, in other words. That's the most important thing that I think came out of all the efforts, and it's not just my effort. It's the effort of all the union people and all the union representatives: Rocky Flats; Pantex, Texas; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Sandia, New Mexico. You go across the country, and they all feel the same way. I think their fight was worth it, and without that fight and trying to get them to do the right thing, that it wouldn't have got done. And, I think, finally, I hope, finally, that employees are able to file against the companies that really are the perpetrators of this, with the blessings of the DOE because they should pay. They couldn't operate under anything else than the laws that the rest of the land has to live by, and that's the way DOE should have done it, too.

112408 Interviewer: So what advice then would you give to future generations when faced with similar circumstances that you were faced with?

112418 Al: Alone, you can't do nothing. I say, get as many people on your side in your business, or whatever it is, uh, to be informed on what's going on and try to get something done, uh, through the federal organizations: OSHA, NIOSH, their own health and safety, every state has a Health and Safety Commission. And at last resort, if they can't get nothing done, just do like they did down in Rocky Flats. Tim Wirth was that guy's name, I think he was a Congressman and became a Senator. I think he's the one that co-authored the bill with Senator Glenn to get something done to start this off. So, go to the politicians, that's what they are there

for, to help you get something done that's not right. Don't be afraid to stick up. And never give up. That's what I say. Never give up.

112525 Interviewer: This question is kind of a tough one. During this time period when you were fighting this and championing the workers' rights, there was a mentality that "it's Cold War" and "whatever the price." Sort of the mentality of, "it's okay to sacrifice some to save the country." How would you react to that? And how do you feel about that?

112549 Al: It's like genocide. That's they way I feel, it is. If you put workers in jeopardy with uranium, thorium, plutonium, tritium, all these chemicals and the chemicals they use to process, it's a shame not to have the best health and safety you can, best health and safety. It's more necessary than any other plant, any other chemical plant, or anything. And they really have stringent rules. Government agencies really keep good track of them, and so does the state. In most cases, they do a good job. But when they are not allowed in there, it's a job you can't do. When people die as a result of what they have been working on, that's not fair, I don't care, it'll never be fair. And I don't care what country you're in. We had a meeting, a world conference of nuclear plants, whatever you call it, anyway, France was there, England was there, United States was there, Canada, and they even invited the guys from Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. Christ, I can't remember, it was a huge place … people come from all over … Japan, and all over. France is about three-quarter nuclear right now. The thing that I got to say about that it may be a source of energy, but there isn't a commercial or government-owned nuclear reactor plant that's of the utilities that doesn't contaminate the water supply where ever they are at. It's just an impossibility. They can't design a plant that won't give off a certain amount of radiation. And, it happens all over. And, they've got a lot more over there than we've got. In fact, one of the questions I got … I got this off the web, I didn't, my son did, it shows … this is just … it's all commercial, nuclear plants in the world, in the United States, I mean. And it shows you where they're at and what state they're at. It even gives you the longitude and latitude. I'm sure that anybody wants to bomb us, that's all they need, longitude and latitude. But, we won't need that, we'll do it to ourselves. If you take a look at them, they are all near the biggest waterways, lakes, the ocean, and the government even admits dumping it into the ocean, the nuclear waste. It's really something to see. What I'm trying to do right now is I've got the names of all the government facilities. And I'm going to put it on this little map, blow it up, to show you how really bad it is. Because every plant, government or commercial, has to have some place for storage because they have to change the fuel rods, 'cause they're contaminated, they're hot. Government don't have no place to put them. They don't want to take any more from these private companies. So they have to do their own. So where the hell are they, where are they putting their wastes? And all the boats and all the ships, just one thing after another, and it's getting out of hand. Well, it's got out of hand already. Somebody's got to do something, sometime. I don't think I'll ever do it alone. Hell, they never did listen to me even though I was always right. But, somebody should take up the ball to do it. It's either the workers in the plant are the most ones that's going to be affected and people on the ships, and subs, and whatever. They're the ones that are going to be affected. They're gonna be like Pete's son. So somebody has to keep this moving and keep the politicians working on it. You know, it just takes, well, by yourself, you can't do nothing. You need money to get people together to do things. Don't be

afraid to spend the money. It's worth every dime. One life is worth every dime you can get to get something done. Does that answer your question? I might have gone off the road.

11310519 Interviewer: Can you think of any other stories that you wanted to tell that you wanted to make sure were told?

11311210 Al: Oh, Christ, there would be plenty of them. But, we don't have the time. I handle so many cases …