

130026 Interviewer: Let's start with a little bit of background. Can you tell me your name, where you grew up, went to school, how long you've been in the area? Just give us a little sketch.

130033 Tom: Sure, my name is Tom Wagner. Thomas E. Wagner is the more formal name. And uh, I really was raised in Cincinnati though I was born in Lexington, Kentucky and my parents moved here when I was young and I grew up in Camp Washington. Uh, I attended Cincinnati Public Schools and did an undergraduate degree from the University of Cincinnati. And then after teaching a while, I got a Master's degree in history at Miami University. Came back to UC to finish a doctorate in education and uh, began working at the University of Cincinnati. And worked there for about 33 years in a variety of different positions both faculty and administrative positions. So in all, I've spent most of life in the Greater Cincinnati area, working either at the University of Cincinnati or at public schools in the area.

130144 Interviewer: Describe to me a little about your research in your work.

130147 Tom: Well, uh my primary research, I'm a professor of planning and urban studies, now retired. And my primary research interest over the years has been in the adaption of migrants from the Appalachia region, uh, Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, those areas, to urban areas, and Cincinnati was a host or a receiving community for a lot of these migrants in several waves of migration. So I was very curious about how these folks adjusted to the city, so most of my primary research has been on that area. Through my administrative positions I became interested in negotiation, conflict resolution, and mediation. So I've done a little work in that area and that led over a little bit into public participation. So, I, uh, have a secondary research interest in the areas of conflict resolution, dispute resolution, mediation, and public participation.

130308 Interviewer: O.K., well how did you first become interested in Fernald and Fernald issues?

130313 Tom: Well, I guess I was always aware of something going on down in the Ross area, the Fernald site. Uh, as a college student I dated a woman, who eventually became my wife, and she was at Miami and I'd drive past that plant and would see, knew it was some sort of secret nuclear energy type location. And then over the years of just being aware of circumstances and most through the television and radio stories about the site, as well as the newspaper accounts. So I was always more or less interested but not first hand, and certainly wasn't something that was high on my kind of study list or priority list. And then about 1993, Dr. Eula Bingham, who had also been an administrator at the University but at that time was, had returned to the faculty, approached me and asked if I would go to lunch with her and with John Applegate, who's a professor of law. She said that she wanted to talk to us about a serving on a task force, a citizens' task force, relating to the Fernald clean-up. And so uh, we met with Dr. Bingham and over the course of a couple of hours at lunch we talked about the circumstances down there and the fact that she had been asked to put together a citizens advisory board or at that time was called a citizens task force, to provide some advice and guidance to the Department of Energy, Ohio EPA, and the U.S. EPA on issues related to the clean-up. So she asked us if we would consider

being members of the task force that she was putting together, and both of us said that we would do that. She also asked if one of us would be chair of the board and I immediately declined. I was still working as an administrator at the time, and uh, didn't, was concerned with whether or not I'd have both the knowledge or the skills to do it but also the information. John Applegate, he agreed very quickly to do it and I was pleased with that because I had worked with John on some other things and I knew he was very capable of doing that kind of work. So, I was recruited then by Eula, she told me that she was interested in my background of negotiation and mediation and dispute resolution. She wanted to get somebody on the board who came with some skills in that background, so I think that I wasn't particularly asked to serve to bring a close community interest on what was going on there but more out of maybe the skills that I might bring to the board.

130637 Interviewer: Now before you were asked to be on the task force you mentioned that your only knowledge was really through newspapers, television, different media channels. How far was your home from the site?

130649 Tom: Well ...

130651 Interviewer: You said the Cincinnati area, but specify.

130653 Tom: Yeah, at the time, I was in my current home, which is probably about ten or twelve miles from the site. It's probably closer, as they say, as the crow flies but the actual road distance is about ten or twelve miles. The, one of my first homes, however, was much closer. The first house that my wife and I purchased was in Colerain Township in the Dunlap Fire District, which makes it pretty close out there, I would say we were about six miles from the site. But actually living there, there was more, from an environmental perspective, there was more discussion in my neighborhood about the Rumpke landfill than about what was going on at Fernald. Uh, that was a lot closer to where we lived, we only lived about three miles from the Rumpke site and the trucks used the road that went by our street. Uh, we would go past it and so on, so that was a bigger from an environmental issue standpoint, that was a bigger issue for us, the Rumpke area.

130816 Interviewer: What was the time frame?

130818 Tom: In the, let's see we lived there from about '63 to '73, so it was in that time frame and I was going back to Miami for my Master's degree so I was getting up to, uh, I was passing mainly the Rumpke site at that time, on those trips. As I say, there was just, I guess the site was still in production up until the late '80s, and with the kind of cultural secrecy that the Department of Energy had both throughout the weapons complex but also at the Fernald site there was not a lot of information about it until the late '80s. And when some of the citizens down there began to organize FRESH, Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety and Health was organized and some others.

130923 Interviewer: O.K. Let's talk a little about your involvement with the Fernald Citizens Task Force that is now Fernald Citizens Advisory Board. Uh, you had mentioned that Eula

Bingham invited you to be a part of that and that you saw yourself coming to it more with skills of negotiation, conflict management. Uh, how were you received by the other board members who were more entrenched in the community or saw themselves as contributing as community members?

130949 Tom: Well, there were, I think to answer quickly and simply, that I think I was received cordially and politely. Uh, I think it was like any new group coming together, there were some folks who were familiar with the issues and had been involved for a long period of time. There was I'd say about more than 50% maybe close to 60% of the members were familiar and had been involved for a long period of time. And then there was another group of us, John Applegate, Connie Fox, a couple of other folks who had been invited for particular, to bring particular skills or because we were not necessarily entrenched in a particular point of view. So, I think we came together fairly well, and I think as you have with all groups, there was a period of time when folks were feeling out each other and also trying to figure out what people were bringing to the table and was someone bringing a particular set of issues. Uh, the folks like me, and certainly I was the epitome of this category, knew very little about the site, knew a little about the issues, a little about the concerns and so on, so I was on a fairly steep learning curve. But overall I think I was accepted and treated well. I had no, never had a sense that anybody on the board was, you know, had any animosity toward my being appointed or felt that I shouldn't be there.

131147 Interviewer: What about this, uh, formation period? Can you describe that a little bit and how you think that enabled the board to come together as a group?

131154 Tom: Yeah, I think that first of all, those who study citizen participation know that there are a number of techniques to bring a group of folks together to develop a citizen body to advise governmental agencies or whatever. And they used what is sometimes called a convener approach, which is to appoint or hire a consultant who looks around and finds people who might serve on such a board and then gets them to come together as a board. And that was the approach that Eula Bingham used. She, uh, went out and identified the various constituencies or stakeholders and then looked at the kind of skills and the sorts of people who would serve on the board, and then I think she had in her mind that there were certain skills or kinds of experts that might be needed on the board or other perspectives that might be needed. And then she tried to fill in those spots. Uh, so I think she did a pretty good job and they set up some ground rules, which I believe really provided the board some direction and guidance that made it possible for this kind of collection of people to come together. One of the important ground rules was that even though you might be representing, not representing, you might be a member of a particular organization or group, for example, labor unions or one of the community organizations or there was a member from the Sierra Club and another member from the, uh, Physicians for Responsible, I forget the exact term that that group has. We were, it was made very clear to us that we were not representatives of those groups, that we were our own person on the board. We had been asked to serve on that board not as a representative of that group but because we were a person from the community. And that we had no obligation, we were not delegates, we were not representatives, we were not advocates for that particular organization, but we were really serving as our own person on the board. And I think that ground rule was very helpful. It was very clear that people would bring their own background and experience and views to the board.

But by and large these folks saw that they were there as independent individuals, and I think that was very important because we could then coalesce, we could take positions, but we didn't feel that we had to go back and check with anyone. Uh, I think the other thing that was helpful, when we drew up our bylaws and mode of operation, and by this time John Applegate had been appointed chair, we decided that we would use a consensus decision-making approach which basically meant that we, while we would take votes we weren't going to take a vote until everybody had reached kind of an agreement on where we were on this particular issue and that can be rather lengthy in the deliberation process. But what it meant was that by the time we took a vote, people were voting based on complete discussion. And we didn't always have unanimous decisions, and I can think of two or three notable cases where we had minority reports, but by the time we reached that point everybody understood where everybody else was on the issue. There was a lot of respect for the other person's point of view even though it may not be your own, and also it allowed us to work more cohesively as a board. And I also thought that the facilitator we ultimately hired who was our technical person as well as group process person, Doug Sarno, was very skilled in making sure that all the opinions were heard and people moved along. So I think those two things, the fact that we weren't there representing a particular organization or constituency officially and secondly that we operated on a consensus basis, helped us in those early days and has even served us as we've on the last couple of years on a couple of issues, too.

131725 Interviewer: O.K., can you describe for me the goals of the Fernald Citizens Task Force? What did you guys set out to do?

131734 Tom: Well, the initial task that was given to us by the Department of Energy and the two regulators of the Ohio and the U.S. EPAs was to put together several recommendations related to the future use of the site. Uh, and so we were asked to issue a report and a set of recommendations related to that purpose, what was the site to be used for following the decontamination and restoration of the site. So that really was the goal or focus of the board or task force initially, uh, we set out to do that and that raised then a number of questions. One, what types of purposes might we identify for the site? And then once you've done that, how clean do you have to make the site in order for it to be used for that particular purpose? That led to a couple of other recommendations along the way, but, so initially the task force was trying to understand what the site might be used for and then secondly, if it's going to be used for a particular purpose, how clean do you have to make the site and then that would drive other types of decisions. If you have to clean up the site to background radiation level, for example, which if you went off site a mile and you'd check farms you'd probably have background radiation. Now, if you want to bring it back to that kind of pristine level then that's going to drive how clean you have to make the site which in turn will drive how you go about doing it. So, you might have to take the soil down 30 feet to get rid of all the radiation and then bring in clean soil to bring it back to the background level. So, we identified then, I forget, I think there were five or six or seven, I can't remember, possible uses, residential, and there was kind of a hierarchy, residential would be the cleanest that you'd have to take it, agriculture would be the next level, then industrial, and then recreational, right down to the point where you just leave it the way it was, put a fence around it and walk away. So, we looked at those things. And once we understood what the uses were, you had to understand how clean you had to make it and what that would

involve in terms of how much soil had to be removed, how you would clean up the water, and what you needed to do to make it clean enough for that particular use. And so that led to a number of other recommendations, but that was about a two-year process. We met monthly on a regular meeting basis and then we had some other workshops, and meetings, and public events and so on, and went through a kind of a planning process to define that and then set out to draft our report and recommendations. Uh, and I, we were initially convened I think in August of '93, if my memory serves me and it was in July of '95 when we issued our report. So, we did move along, it was a lot of work, a lot of commitment on the part of all of the folks who were involved, the citizens, the people from then it was called Fluor Daniel Fernald, the contractor, the Department of Energy, the folks at Ohio and U.S. EPAs, and a lot of other folks in the community who participated.

132159 Interviewer: Were there any particular methods or steps that you used in this process that you think helped you get to the recommendations?

132206 Tom: Yeah, I think so, uh, the probably some of the classic kind of group planning things, I mean, brainstorming certainly was one of the ways that we did. I can recall both a public meeting where everybody was there, as well as regular board meetings where we went through brainstorming sessions where we just listed on newsprint all of the potential uses, both general as well as specific uses, another landfill like Rumpke or turn it into a golf course, there were just all types of potential possible uses. So that the brainstorming techniques we used there and then, you know, kind of group sessions where people get rid of ideas that are not as useful.

One of the things that was very helpful as we were starting to go through was the development of a game. I asked John Applegate about it, you know, where did you come up with this idea and he said well, he was sitting around one day and they were talking about different . . . , in a planning meeting for the board with some of the others and said how can we understand the volumes of work that would, the soil that would have to be removed and transported. Can you come up with some idea? And so they came up with this board game called Future Site, and I would imagine that we had 120 to 150 different people in different types of groups quote "play this game." It was basically a game where if you were going to clean it up to a certain level, risk levels, we were working with risk level at that point (ten to the minus six, ten to the minus five, ten to the minus four), if you were going to clean it up to those risk levels how much stuff would you have to move off of the site. And so you had little blocks that just piled up and moved around the board and so on. We had a couple of open meetings for residents and others to come in and play the game. We had one for site managers, we had one for students, just to, I would say we did about 150 people through this exercise. And it was very helpful because what people could see then in a very tangible manner was the amount of dirt basically, because we were dealing with soils and that, that would have to be removed from the site and what the volumes of that might be and then in turn how many trucks or trainloads would have to be used shipped, if you were going to move it off-site completely. And then you could begin to envision what the site might look like and then in the cleanest scenario it was going to look like a moon crater, uh, because there was going to be a big hole in the ground, basically. And I think that helped people begin to understand and grasp what was necessary. And so those, there were, all of the kind of strategic planning, group planning techniques were employed at different points along the way to do that.

And in, as I say, both in meetings of the board or task force as well as with the broader public and public sessions, that was very helpful. I mean, people began to understand the complexity, the technical complexity of the clean up of the site, the volumes of stuff that was going to have to be moved if you try to clean it up to certain levels, and so on. And that I think helped us focus then on what level of, first of all, what sort of use we might be able to make. Oh, the other thing too is, was the cost, if you were going to clean it up to background it was going to cost billions of dollars, and they had talked about it costing something in the range of two billion, but to clean it up to background was going to be five to ten times that amount. And so all those things came together and people understood what was involved in a much better way. So, those were very useful, very productive, and led to good solid decisions on the part of the task force and decisions that, with a few exceptions, were basically unanimous. And where they were not unanimous it was usually, there was a minority report, everyone understood where the other person stood or the one or two people who took a different position and why.

132748 Interviewer: Can you describe for me what you would say are the major success stories of the Fernald Citizens Task Force?

132754 Tom: Well, I think, the probably oh somewhere between three to six major accomplishments or achievements. One is getting that Task Force report completed in two years. I mean, I don't know how many people have set off to write something that both is complex and technical but also, and I don't mean the report was complex and technical, but dealing with complex and technical issues and trying to understand them to the point where you could make a reasonable recommendation. Getting that report completed in the time frame, I think, was an important accomplishment of the Task Force. I think the acceptance of that report by the broader community was an accomplishment. There was not, the report came out and it was endorsed, I mean not formally endorsed by the community, but nobody came to meetings and stood up and said, "You folks are way off base here." Uh, there were questions asked, of course, but there was never any objection to it. A third thing, I think, is the consensus agreement around the future use of the site. In effect, what we've agreed we were going to do was to use the site as a natural resources area with a small section perhaps set aside for some other future community use. And, of course, if you're going to use it as a natural resource area rather than a residential area which would be a higher risk, then that drives your clean-up decision. And so the interesting thing about the clean-up decision, I think, is also an accomplishment and achievement, is that ultimately the Task Force went in a slightly different direction. The site sits about a major sole-source aquifer, Miami valley, Miami River aquifer. It provides water for all the communities around including part of the city of Cincinnati, and is an aquifer that's probably anywhere from 10 to 20 miles wide and over 100 miles long. And the site is only about 65 feet above that aquifer and the aquifer had been contaminated. That was what led to some of the citizen reaction and some of the lawsuits in the '80s was the contamination of the aquifer and then home drinking wells. So what ultimately drove the clean-up level was not the future use of the site but a desire to restore the aquifer to U.S. EPA drinking water standards, and because contamination of the radioactive materials percolates down through the aquifer you got to get rid of that contamination on the surface and protect the aquifer and clean up the aquifer. (tape cut)

140031 Tom: We were talking about the aquifer. The decision on the part of the Task Force was how clean should the site be cleaned up was based not on necessarily the risk levels that would be driven by the use of the site but by the fact that we needed to clean the aquifer and we wanted to bring it to EPA's drinking water standards and in order to do that you had to clean off the soil so the rain water wouldn't percolate radioactive uranium particles and other things down into the aquifer. So that became the clean-up standard, and that in turn would determine how much soil you would have to remove directly under the major production area. Some of the other areas is not a problem, but under the production areas it was necessary.

Uh, a couple of other things that were very important to the decisions, and I think achievements by the Task Force, had to do with funding. The original projection by the Department of Energy and the contractors was that it was probably going to take about 25 years to clean up the site and that it was going to cost something over two billion dollars. As the Task Force went through the discussion, and I really don't know where this idea came from, whether somebody over at the Department of Energy raised it a point or whether members of the Task Force, but somebody said, "Well if you got more money could you clean up the site faster and if you did, in other words if your annual budget was increased, could you accelerate the clean-up?" And so after some discussion and insistence by the members of the Task Force, the Department of Energy and the contractor went off and did a feasibility study and came back and, lo and behold, what they discovered was if you accelerated the clean-up it could be done in a ten-year period. Which at the time was optimistic but it's still going to be finished in about twelve- to thirteen-year period, which would be half of the twenty-five year period, at about half of the cost. So that from a public standpoint, if you accelerate the clean up, get it done faster, you're going to save substantial tax dollars from the public or if you're not saving those dollars you at least can then allocate them to other clean up operations in the DOE complex. So that was a recommendation of the Task Force and it, from a singular individual standpoint, is one of the most gratifying because the headquarters folks at the Department of Energy took that idea and said if we can do that Fernald why can't we do it at other sites? And came out with a plan for accelerated clean-up for all of the DOE sites that are under clean-up and at least two are benefiting from that, that are so-called closure sites, Fernald and the Rocky Flats site near Denver, between Denver and Boulder, Colorado. So here was a citizens group that made a recommendation that in effect altered national policy on the clean up process and rather than trying to clean these things up over twenty-five years, they're going to clean them up in a shorter period of time. So I think that is a major accomplishment, it gets the environment cleaner and it also saves money that could be allocated for other purposes

Uh, the other major accomplishment, in my mind, going into the discussions of the Task Force, the sense of the community at that point was to clean up, I won't say the sense of community, but there was very strong noise in the community about cleaning up the site to background levels. And I've already said that we reached a different level of clean-up which was not background, uh, so that's another type of accomplishment. The Task Force was able to take this discussion and in effect come out with a different outcome that the community accepted and was less than what, as I say, the kind of talk in the community had been. It would not have been realistic to clean it up to background levels; there would have been an awful lot of dissatisfaction if that had been the expectation. The other accomplishment that kind of, at the beginning of the

process, many people in the community, their position basically was, "Whatever is out there in the way of waste, get it out of Ohio, get it out of here, we didn't want it in the first place and we don't want it now." But as people went through, and I think that game helped people understand the volumes of soil that would have to be removed and sent somewhere else, and a recognition that citizens in those communities where the soil might be another waste, decontaminated products, buildings, low level radioactive waste, worker equipment, gloves, things like that. If you were going to ship it off to somewhere else, those folks didn't want that stuff in their backyard anymore than the Fernald people wanted it in their back yard. So what ultimately came out of the discussions and led by a lot of the community members on the board was a sense that and maybe we need to take responsibility for some of this. This stuff is a by-product of what our community was involved in. It created jobs and economic benefits and so on for our community, maybe it's unrealistic for us to say we want it out of our backyard when we would have to put it in somebody else's, which would have been in Nevada or Utah basically. And so a decision came out of the task force to build, what I'm not supposed to call a waste cell, I'm supposed to call an on-site disposal facility, but a mound protected disposal facility engineered for a thousand years. Now, most realistic people will be happy if it doesn't have any breakdowns that are serious for a hundred or a couple of hundred years, on-site so that, to put, to keep the waste on-site. And about 80% of the soils, of the waste materials, of the decontaminated and dismantled buildings and equipment, will remain on-site in that disposal facility, and some of the really difficult materials out of the silos and the waste pits, and others will be shipped off-site.

So, I think that was a major citizen decision and one that is being implemented. And again, at the beginning of the process folks did not want that material to stay on-site, but they are now very happy having it on-site. So I think most of those accomplishments are notable and came from the Task Force. I think that if those had come from the Department of Energy or the contractor without Task Force involvement there would have been a lot of opposition to them. So those are some of the things that I see as successes. One other accomplishment, that initial Task Force evolved into a Citizens Advisory Board, so the task forces are typically for a period of time and the advisory board is for a longer period of time. And I think we moved very smoothly from a role where we were doing more future planning and making recommendations and giving advice on future directions to now doing that but adding as a responsibility monitoring of the, and the implementation of the recommendations and the clean-up process. And I think that the Task Force has continued, I see that transition or evolution as a success also. A lot of times when task forces try to move to a different focus they kind of fall apart or don't do it as well. So I hope that's a long answer to your question. I hope it gives you the background you wanted.

141048 Interviewer: Wonderful! With that transition from being a task force to the advisory board, how else did the role change?

141055 Tom: Well, I think that the board itself has changed a little bit, too. First of all, uh, you have members, some of us who were newcomers to the issues that have been on the board for a period of time, I would like to think we're more informed and more educated and more aware of the issues and how some of these things work. But by and large, I think the role has changed and we're still making recommendations and giving advice. We went through a, there are three that I can think of. One has to do with transportation of the materials off-site, how you going to get rid

of them? And again, I think, we were, this could some ways be seen as an accomplishment, we were one of the sites that very early on, of the eleven site-specific advisory boards, began to focus very seriously on transportation issues because it's more than just cleaning up the site. It's the safety of the public, both in terms of worker handling of materials at the starting site, at the generating site as well as the receiving site, but the transportation along the way. And so we began to look at those issues very carefully and made a number of recommendations about how those transportation issues should be considered and how they should be handled to the point where we were the sponsors of a complex-wide seminar on transportation issues. We've pushed very hard for inter-modal transportation of the materials. It's cheaper and safer to take them by truck to a train point, put them on a train take them to Utah or Nevada and then when you get out there take them off the train by truck to the final site. Train transport of these materials is safer and cheaper than truck transport, so we pushed that and I think we've been modestly successful. There's still a lot of political issues and at the receiving end that we have to deal with but we've been modestly successful in that area.

Uh, DOE asked us to again consider future use of the site, not for clean-up purposes but now that we know it's going to be a natural resource area and there might be an area of the site that could be set aside for community use, either as an industrial park or recreational whatever, educational purposes. What are some of the things we would recommend? And the Task Force, along with FRESH and the Fernald Living History Project and some other groups in the area down there, held a series of public meetings to talk about and generate a long-term stewardship and future use recommendation for the site. And it made recommendations on that and, again, I think some things came out of that that might not have come out of a process that had not involved the public in the way that the board has, both the board as well as the activities they sponsored. So that now we're going to have a re-interment of Native American remains on the site, a couple of thousand pre-historic Indian remains all over Ohio in boxes on storage shelves and these can be re-interred in the site which and the tribal nations have been very pleased about that, some nature trails, some educational purposes, protection of endangered species, and some recommendations about around 23 acres, about how they might be used. So, that's another set of recommendations that came out.

And then the other role that the board has played in the last year or so, the original plans for how to deal with the waste in two of the silos, had a hole dropped out in the middle of them, when the vitrification pilot plant burned a hole in the bottom. So, you had to go back to the drawing board and decide how you were going to deal with, this was probably the worst stuff down there. And so the board went through a process with the contractor and with DOE, and the regulators and the with other folks who were interested to try to make a recommendation on the best technology, chemical stabilization which is basically making it into cement or vitrification which is turning it into glass. And which of those would the board recommend? Now again, we did not, we reached a consensus decision, it was not a unanimous decision and there were some folks who wanted a minority report, but the board went through a process and made that recommendation. And I think, again, the community accepted that. But you know, and I think you can see the community's kind of supportive of the board and what some people might feel as a less than positive fashion and that is we don't have many people showing up at our public meetings any more. And the reason I think that has occurred is that the folks who were coming to

public meetings early on and asking questions and kind of making sure the Board was doing what it was supposed to be doing are satisfied that the Board is making an honest effort to represent the views of the public and to carefully consider these things and they don't have to watch us as close as they used to. They trust this, it's a case of the community trusting that there's a group of citizens there who's paying attention to this, and if something really comes up they'll let us know and we can get involved again in it. So I think that the Board has played an important role and personally I feel very gratified with the fact that I was part of that and on the board.

141808 Interviewer: What are some of the challenges that you guys faced along the way?

141813 Tom: Well, I think there are several challenges. I think one is the same challenge faced by any group that comes together for a purpose and that is to begin to build a cohesiveness, to develop a working style and a pattern, trust among members and so on. So I think that was an obstacle, and I think with some very, very minor circumstances and situations we've done that very well. I think, and there's part of it has to do with, again, with the skills that Doug Sarno brought. He's a trained facilitator in addition to being an engineer so he understands both sides. He uh, we had, we broke bread together as they say, we had food after meetings or before meetings and everybody just kind of sat around, and regulators, contractors, everybody else, and talked about a lot of things so you've got to know people and learn to trust them. I think there were a lot of opportunities, we took several in groups, we went to several other sites and visited them to see what was going on. We visited Envirocare, which is the receiving site for some of the waste, we visited the National Test Site in Nevada, which is a receiving site, we attended workshops together. So you get to know people and learn how to trust them. So I think we came together as a board with a common purpose and different patterns and styles, but still we work well together.

I think we were very fortunate that the, a major obstacle could have been the lack of cooperation and collaboration on the part of the contractors and the part of the agencies, DOE in particular. You have to remember that until about 1990, until the Cold War was over, the Department of Energy had an extreme culture of secrecy. There were people in the Department of Energy who worked in cubicles next to each other and had no idea what the other person did, and to break down that cultural secrecy and to allow a group of citizens access to information and not necessarily classified information, they didn't talk about unclassified information before. And so the Department of Energy, for the most part, I mean we still ran, we still do run into folks who grew up in the old culture and are kind of resistant. So that was a barrier that we were fortunate to overcome. Technical people, engineers in particular, quite often identify a solution, they look at options, but quite often they'll identify a solution and often by the time non-technical people come in they are so far down the decision process that it's difficult for them to see other avenues. I think that, and I've often wondered, I mean, there'd be times in meetings where our citizens group has just been brow-beating some of these folks about why did you make that decision, why didn't you think of this, why didn't you think of that and I wonder to myself, you know, how would I respond if I was sitting on the other side. Probably tell them to jump out the window as far as I'm concerned, I'm going to head down the path we're headed 'cause we know what we're doing. But they were always, they weren't always, they didn't always embrace our

ideas immediately. Inter-modal transportation is a good example. When we first started talking about that and they would say, oh yeah, but this is the way we think it ought to be done. We kept hammering at it and finally they said, "O.K. we'll do a study," and a couple of months later they came back with a study and they're really taking an interest in this. And so I think that overcoming kind of that customary way that both the Department of Energy and contractors had made decisions. They didn't have to consult with the Board of Trustees or an advisory board and just kind of went on down the path and did that. And so I think that was an obstacle to overcome.

We could have had problems with the community and you know some day we may. We may make a recommendation that the community just hates, but the community came on board and I think was open and willing to listen to this groups of citizens, some from the community and some were strangers, but quite willing to listen. So community resistance, agency and contractor resistance and cohesiveness of the Board, those are obstacles I think we were able to overcome because of that I think we were able to achieve some of those things we talked about.

142354 Interviewer: Were there any obstacles that you can think of, that you weren't able to overcome? Things that the Board faced that you haven't been able to overcome?

142403 Tom: I think that, I still think that there are times that we'll go to the public briefings that the Department of Energy has and an announcement will be made or something will come up and we'll kind of look at each other and say this is the first we've heard about this. So I think, they haven't not done this, they haven't not informed the Board about something because of any kind of intent to hide it from the Board. I think it's just these are busy folks and it wasn't high on their radar screen to mention this to the Board, and so then it comes up. So I think there are still sometimes when we get in a position of being reactive rather than active and we're not, it would be much better, as far as I'm concerned, to be active in the sense of being a part of the decision process earlier rather than having to react to something that has come up. Those aren't major issues. Funding is an issue, we don't have a lot of control over that here. There are politics that take place in Washington and in the Department of Energy headquarters that we don't have all the control over, and there's been some slippage in the accelerated clean up schedule. A lot of that has to do with the fact that full funding or more funding hasn't come along, funding that we think as a Board would be necessary. How can we impress upon the decision-makers and those folks who have influence over the decisions in Washington that this is something that could be done? This could end up being the first site that the Department of Energy completely cleans up to citizen satisfaction, and that would be a major feather in their cap and would generate a lot of trust and support, among a lot of other people as well as politicians. So how to, that's been a frustration certainly and something we haven't been as successful with.

142640 Interviewer: O.K. What has your specific role been with the group? Were there certain position you filled, projects you led, interests you led up?

142651 Tom: Well I, I've served as a committee chair a couple of times. I was, when we had a transportation committee I was the chair of the transportation committee. I've served the last three years as vice chair of the advisory board. That's been a nice role in the sense that we've been very successful. We've had two chairs, they've both been very committed to the process. I

think that, and this is in my mind unique, they have perfect attendance in board meetings, there's only been one case where I had to take over a meeting and it really wasn't an official meeting of the board. So, but I've served in a role where I've been a liaison to some of the other boards and we have a national group where the chairs and vice chairs get together on a twice-year basis and, so I've represented the Fernald board at those, and so a variety of different roles. I think Eula had intended for me to serve some sort of mediator or a facilitator role on the Board in case the conflict came up, but I saw her a couple of years after being appointed to the Board and told her I certainly haven't had to use those. So, not in a major way, there were times I felt that the Board, the discussion wasn't moving well and the facilitator might have been having a little difficulty getting folks to move on or, you know, to kind of facilitate the decision process. I think I've been able to step in, in a kind of non-directive way and in a subtle way, and move things along where it could have been difficult for either the chair or the facilitator to take that same role, coming from another board member it helps. We've talked about this and so, those kinds of roles, I mean, beyond that I don't know, somebody who is trying to fulfill their commitment to serving on the board.

142923 Interviewer: From your experience ... (tape change)

150032 Interviewer: You had mentioned before that you've served sometimes as a liaison to other advisory boards or you had participated in national meetings. From that experience how would you compare the interactions among Fernald stakeholders with these other communities that have hosted DOE facilities.

150051 Tom: Well, around the DOE complex the Fernald board is known as the one that is really effective and gets things done, as a good board. Folks at headquarters say that and sometimes our colleagues on other boards will say it but with a twinge of jealousy and even envy and maybe even worse than that. So what I've observed in probably a half-dozen national workshops or meetings and probably another three or four site-specific advisory board chair and vice-chair meetings, is that we are very fortunate at Fernald. We have a very cohesive board, focused, the board gets along, the board does not tend to bring their own agendas to the board meetings. We get a lot of support and collaboration from DOE and the contractor Fluor Fernald, so we are very fortunate from that standpoint. I'll give you several war stories just real quickly. The chair and a member of one board, a man and woman actually, got in a fistfight at a restaurant after a board meeting. They both were kicked off the board, of course. I was at a chairs meeting this time last year, in February or January of 2000, and they were making a presentation on the new fiscal year budget from headquarters. I made a comment later that was very useless as far as I was concerned, as a vice chair of the board, because we had already had that discussion on a couple of occasions at our board meetings. And it turned out that about a third of the other chairs and vice chairs attending that conference had not had a briefing on the budget. So I mean, we were, so those are examples as why our board has I think been successful. I mean there's some kidding and so on that goes on, good-natured, but by and large we were a collegial group and we typically we get answers if we ask questions and we are provided information without asking. I mentioned a few occasions when it hasn't, but I don't think that's because of any willful intent to hide stuff from us, it's just an oversight on their part. So, and the issues at some of the other boards are different. We are a clean-up site. Places like Hanford or Savannah River,

Los Alamos, they're cleaning up there but, Oak Ridge is another one, but they have operational missions. They're going to continue in operation after the clean-up has occurred on some of the areas on their sites. So the issues can be different at those boards. Rocky Flats and Fernald are probably the most alike in that they are true closure sites but they are different in that Rocky Flats has plutonium and we don't have anything nearly that serious at our place.

150452 Interviewer: O.K. Could you tell me a minute about the relationship between the FCAB and FRESH, kind of as two of the most prominent organizations involved in DOE decisions. How have they related over the years?

150505 Tom: Well, I think they've related very well. FRESH, of course, they celebrated their fifteenth year recently and that's a true citizens group that came together as residents of the area who were concerned about the environmental and safety and health issues, that the plant brought to the community. So they had a different kind of focus. FCAB or Fernald Citizens Advisory Board was appointed for a specific purpose. There are members of FRESH who also serve on the advisory board. In fact, some of the officers of FRESH, the president, treasurer and some others, have served on the Board, and some of the members of the FRESH group have served as non-board members of committees. And so I think that there is a good relationship. They have sponsored some events that maybe wasn't the right role for the Board to sponsor, so they picked that up, and in some other cases the Board has picked it up. So, overall I think there's been a good relationship. There's kind of a symbiotic relationship, I mean, one doesn't exist without the other any more, and I think there is a kind of mutual support that goes on between the two groups. So I guess I can't see the Board existing without FRESH and its support. Certainly the FRESH could exist without the Board, but the Board really needs to have FRESH as a collaborator and a co-partner in the work.

150714 Interviewer: Sure, now you've touched on this when you talked about the Future Site workshops, the game, using Future Site for the workshops, and then the workshops that the FCAB sponsored about future use. Uh, but could you talk a minute about how the community's awareness and understanding has changed over time and how you think that relates to the activities of the board?

150736 Tom: Well, I think that the, well this is going to be a hard question for me to answer because I came on the scene in late '93, so I don't have, other than through the kind of folk history and oral history that I've heard, a lot of information about how the community was involved prior to that time. I think that FRESH certainly was the main channel for community involvement and probably for a lot of information that went back to the community. FRESH is made up, its leadership is pre-dominantly women, and these are folks who've become, who live in the community, are committed to both the community and the clean-up. So they bring a different kind of feeling to the table and so I think, after I became involved I think that you also, and I don't attribute this to the Board, I attribute this to the overall environment and I don't mean the natural environment I mean the social environment. DOE was, the culture of secrecy was breaking down in DOE, people were being more open on the site, people were being more open throughout the complex, information was beginning to flow more easily. A lot of the FRESH folks had built up their own network; they will get information and rumors out of Washington

and through the network before members of the Advisory Board will. So, I think that built upon the foundation that they established, there is probably more information available to the community if the community wants it than before. If anything, I think the news media probably has less insight on what's going on down in there than the community does. I think there was probably a time where the news media had more insight, I won't say more than at least the FRESH folks, but more insight than the average community resident within five miles of the plant, but I don't think that's true any longer.

151007 Interviewer: O.K. To what extent do you think the FCAB has impacted DOE decision-making?

151012 Tom: Well I think it's helped quite a bit, mostly in the areas I've mentioned. The change in the work schedule, the accelerated clean up, I think that the certainly some policies related to the clean up and how they go about it. I think that the some parts of DOE headquarters have been more open to participating in all site-specific advisory board activities. So they've been more open to recommendations, to the idea that citizens do have a role in the clean-up process, the planning process. So I think they're probably more open to doing that and I would hope under the new administration in Washington now that that will continue. That we won't see any, and I think the problems at Los Alamos, the issues around rather or not the Chinese were able to get potentially secret or maybe secret information and some of the freedom that was going on there is going to cause some tightening up, but certainly not at a place like Fernald. I mean, there's nothing secret about what Fernald did or how they're doing it now.

151152 Interviewer: Uh, what satisfaction do you personally get from being an FCAB board member?

151159 Tom: Well, I think there are two or three types of satisfaction, certainly being a part of a board that works well together, that the members respect each other, there's been a specific purpose, accomplishing the task that we were asked to do, and to have the recommendations of the board accepted by the Department of Energy and by the contractor. All those are, bring a degree of personal satisfaction. I've been on boards where, and committees, where you spend a lot of time and nothing ever came of it and that is very, very frustrating. And so I think this is important. I have a very small part in a maybe a kind of legacy or an endowment that's left to the community by cleaning up that site. Cleaning up in a way that I personally would be comfortable living next to it and would be comfortable having my children or grandchildren go on to the site and feel comfortable protecting the aquifer. So those are satisfying and I feel some gratification from it.

151324 Interviewer: How, you know, you as a researcher, you talked about how that personally satisfies you, Tom Wagner, as a researcher, how has this influenced your thought and your research?

151335 Tom: Well, as I mentioned, it's not my primary focus of research, it's kind of a secondary or tertiary interest, but I'm also one of those people who when I get involved in something and because I'm an academic, I come out of an academic background, you're always

looking for how can you make this apply to what you're teaching in the classroom or the research, or are there things that you need to get out to the academic community. So, I've published, well I haven't published anything, I've written a couple of papers that have been presented at conferences. It has led to some comparative looks at not environmental clean-up, but at citizen participation and being a part of this process and citizen participation. And then looking at how citizen participation takes place in the planning process in Thailand, for example, or in Greece and Crete in particular. Uh, so and then thinking about it in relation to a couple of other community activities and so on. And I've encouraged some students to be involved in writing some papers and so on. So I think as I say, it's not been a specific focus but kind of a secondary focus and some things have come out of it.

151503 Interviewer: Sure, sure. When you hear the word, public participation, what does it mean to you?

151509 Tom: Well, that's a, public participation is a very broad term. It could mean being involved in political, you know, getting your favorite politician elected. It could mean serving on a community board or serving as a member of FRESH and so on. So to me, as an academic and someone who's looked at it from an academic perspective, it's a very broad term. In my own mind it's the, and I don't mean this to sound like a canned definition, but it's kind of meaningful involvement of people who have some interest or stake in the outcome of the decisions or policies that relate to a particular subject or a particular area. So, in this case, as a citizen of Hamilton County where this place is located and being involved in it and then having some of the decisions being influenced by, the recommendations would be. I think that's public participation. As a, kind of somebody who's studied these things, I don't expect them to take every recommendation we accept, or to accept every recommendation we make and take every decision based upon those recommendations. I expect them to consider them, but if they reach a different conclusion, I'm satisfied in the most part. I may think they've gone the wrong direction but I've done, but I've been involved in a way I think I should be. So I don't know if that really answers the question of what it means, but to me that's what it means

151701 Interviewer: It does. Now if you're stepping back for a minute, sort of reflecting on this time period and your involvement with the FCAB, what would you say, in terms of advice to future generations, is the most important thing for you that came out of this experience?

151719 Tom: Well, a couple of things I guess. One, to be a part of a group, again, that had influence on public policy. I mean, I don't know, there's only one other time in my career when I felt that I had influence on public policy in the same way, and I won't go into that but it had to do with a state law that was being developed and written, but being a part of the policy. And what I'm talking about is the accelerated clean up, the decision that the Department of Energy made, which is a public policy decision to clean it up faster than the plan that they ..., and to commit the resources to a certain extent to do that. So that is something that I really see. I think, I hope this doesn't sound kind of grandiose or hokey but kind of walking away from the site knowing that here was an environmental problem, and here's some contaminated site that really could have been a serious drain on the community and could have been harmful to the health and safety of the residents, and we're gonna walk away from that site some day and most of the

people are going to be able to say we did a good job cleaning it up and we're comfortable with that. Those are the kinds of things that I look back as kind of my role in it and feel good about having left that. So I would say it's a learning process; if you get involved in something like that you're going to be real satisfied with it.

151904 Interviewer: Great! O.K. Can you think of anything that we haven't covered that you wanted to talk about today? You can take a minute.

151913 Tom: Well, I don't know, I guess one of things I'm wondering about and I haven't and I don't want to offer an answer to it. But, one of the things I think about a little bit is, the Board's now about six or seven years old, some of the Board members have been on it for a while, we've got new folks coming on, the site will not be cleaned up for six or seven more years. Sometimes I question rather we will be able to get the commitment and leadership that we've had on the Board for the first six or seven years to kind of sustain the level of interest and commitment to the issues and so on that we've had. And so that's something that might be explored with someone at some point. I've just started thinking about that and trying to raise it with Jim Bierer and Doug Sarno and a couple of others that we need to really be thinking about that for the next. Some folks, FRESH folks, they're committed to it for life, but others aren't, they're more transient. I think the Board needs to turn over, we need to bring fresh perspective, fresh energy to it and so we do need to bring on new members for that purpose.

152044 Interviewer: Great, O.K.