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K-25 Oral History Interview

Date: 9/20/05

Interviewee: George Reed

Interviewer: Mitch Jerald

DOES NOT CONTAIN
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Reed, George

[crew talk]

Ok here we go, thirty second of silence please.

[00:56]

Jerald, M.:

My name is Mitch Jerald, and I will be the interviewer today. Today's date is September 20th, 2005. I will be interviewing Mr. George Reed for his recollection of activities associated with K-25, the K-25 facilities during the Manhattan Project and Cold War --

Reed, G.:

X-10.

Jerald, M.:

X-10?

Reed, G.:

Yeah. I was at X-10 for 35 years.

Jerald, M.:

Okay. All right. Mr. Reed, answer the questions and just have fun with the interview. Where were you born?

Reed, G.:

Birmingham. Birmingham, Alabama. December 17, 1921.

Jerald, M.:

That's kind of ironic. I was born in Birmingham, too. I don't know if I ever did discuss that. [laughter]

Reed, G.:

Yup!

[1:50]

Jerald, M.:

Where were you living before you came to X-10, K-25 facility?

Reed, G.:

I was staying at a little place about 60 miles from Birmingham, Talladega. T-A-double L-A-D-E-G-A. Alabama.

Jerald, M.:

All right. I'm sorry. What I didn't do at the beginning of this, I wanted your name and spell your name.

Reed, G.:

My name is George Reed. G-E-O-R-G-E R-double E-D.

Jerald, M.:

All right. For note, also, you know where Lees (phonetic sp.), Alabama is, right?

Reed, G.:

Yes!

Jerald, M.:

Well, that's where I (indiscernible)--

Reed, G.:

That's where the pine tar --

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Reed, George

Jerald, M.: That's where I was from.

Reed, G.: Yeah. Yeah.

[2:28]

Jerald, M.: Now, what kind of work did you do prior to coming up?

Reed, G.: Labor. And I used to work at the restaurant there at Birmingham for a while and shine shoes all over that place. [laughing] And for a long time, me and my brother, out on first avenue and all the places like that, the Tutwell (phonetic sp.), 16th Street and 17th Street.

Jerald, M.: Yeah.

Reed, G.: All those places.

Jerald, M.: What age were you when you came up?

Reed, G.: I imagine I was 'bout 10, 12. I used to work for Alabama Highway Express (phonetic sp.).

Jerald, M.: Okay.

Reed, G.: In Birmingham. Old Man Heck (phonetic sp.)now. I see some of those trucks around here now.

Jerald, M.: You still do.

Reed, G.: Yeah. Yeah. I was so young riding the street car and then my mother had to come down and get the money. They wouldn't pay me. [laughter]

[3:19]

I was ridin' the street car back and forth at 4:00 in the morning.

Jerald, M.: Yeah.

Reed, G.: That was when they -- they -- they used to set out all the produces out on the sidewalks.

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Reed, George

Jerald, M.:

Yeah, I remember that. Down by the Grey Hound Bus Station down there.

Reed, G.:

Yeah, they set out all the produce out on the sidewalk and you just leave the slip and stuff there and the man would pick it up when he opened his store.

Jerald, M.:

So you were a young kid.

Reed, G.:

I was a young kid.

Jerald, M.:

So what age were you when you come here?

Reed, G.:

Uh, I was in my 20's when I came down --.

[3:48]

Jerald, M.:

When you got here?

Reed, G.:

Yup.

Jerald, M.:

Okay. How did that all come about? Can you tell me about --?

Reed, G.:

Well, a friend of mine's brother's living up here in Oak Ridge, Joe Skayer (phonetic sp.), and so we was lookin' for a job after we got out of the service. I got out of service in '45 after 3 year, 11 month, and 17 days. And I was lookin' for a job where I could work continually without bein' laid off after rain and all that stuff. And so he said, let's go up here in Tennessee. I said, "Okay." And so we came up here and by us bein' veterans -- we were 'round here a couple weeks, I imagine, before we got on. In fact, bein' my wife used to say I was Tennessee anyway. See, we stayed in Pulaski, Tennessee for a long time when I was a smaller kid. Yeah, I stayed up there for a long time.

[4:40]

Jerald, M.:

How'd you like that little city?

Reed, G.:

Oh, it was all right, but I've never been back. [laughter]

Jerald, M.:

That ought to tell you something!

Reed, G.:

That really is good. All my people go back once or twice, you know, but I -- I never -- I never went back. All my aunts and stuff

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like that used to go back occasionally, but -- I went back -- I remember one time we was comin' from Memphis and I think I stopped right through one time for a few minutes and that was the last time I saw it.

Jerald, M.: You still got folk there?

Reed, G.: No. All my relatives since '89 deceased.

Jerald, M.: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Reed, G.: We come here and got a job and liked it. We decided to stay here.

Jerald, M.: Yeah. Yeah. What's your education background?

[5:22]

Reed, G.: Oh, I stopped in 6th grade.

Jerald, M.: Did you?

Reed, G.: Yeah.

Jerald, M.: (indiscernible)

Reed, G.: 'Cause I went back to school went I was in service.

Jerald, M.: Yeah. Okay.

Reed, G.: And then after I got plant, I went back to school again.

Jerald, M.: Okay.

Reed, G.: I went back school when I was in Cheyenne, Wyoming. I try to act like I didn't know too much [laughing] to get out of work.

Jerald, M.: [laughs]

Reed, G.: And they found out. They said you ain't got no business in this class and they put me out.

Jerald, M.: [laughing]

Reed, G.: But I -- I enjoyed it, so. I-- I had one of those old time teachers. Jack, if you didn't get her lesson -- she -- you went home with her.

Reed, George

[6:01]

Jerald, M.:

Is that right?

Reed, G.:

She came home with you, stayed on your (indiscernible) and come up on your daddy, too.

Jerald, M.:

Now, now, were you married when you came here?

Reed, G.:

I married in 1945, before I came out of the service. I married the eleventh of March of 1945.

Jerald, M.:

Oh, so you brought your wife on up here?

Reed, G.:

I brought my wife up here. My wife used to live next door to me when she was 12 and I was 14.

Jerald, M.:

Ain't that something? You married your school --

Reed, G.:

Sweetheart.

Jerald, M.:

-- sweetheart, right?

Reed, G.:

Yup. I told her one day, you know -- I told her one day, you know, I said, one day, "One day, you're going to be struttin' 'round my kitchen with your apron on."

[6:36]

Jerald, M.:

[laughing]

Reed, G.:

I told every guy/ girl she got married. I said, "I didn't know you were going to take this long!" [laughing] 57 years!

Jerald, M.:

I like that. That was your best buddy, wasn't it.

Reed, G.:

Yeah, best buddy. Yeah, I was married 54 years.

Jerald, M.:

I know what you mean about that. I -- I feel the same way about my wife.

Reed, G.:

Yeah. I had a -- had a wonderful childhood. Yeah, I told them them fellas and everything when I was in the service, are you gonna get married? I said, "Yeah, this girl back home. The one

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I'm going to marry." And when I got out of the service, her and I got married.

[7:05]

Jerald, M.:

That's wonderful! Now, now, you came to K-25 --

Reed, G.:

X-10.

Jerald, M.:

-- X-10 --

Reed, G.:

Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Jerald, M.:

-- we're talking about facilities, too, so that'd be fine if I misquote, but what was the drive? You told me that you had talked to friends and you guys came up and got jobs --

Reed, G.:

Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Jerald, M.:

-- jobs known to be here in Tennessee. What did you see when you got here?

Reed, G.:

Nothin' but a whole lot of huts and mud and no sidewalks in a lot of places. Had wooden sidewalks. In a lot of places. Wasn't too many 'cause we rode mostly buses and stuff like this for work and paths we had to go down.

Jerald, M.:

Were you caught off guard when you come over?

[7:55]

Reed, G.:

No!

Jerald, M.:

Did you see (indiscernible).

Reed, G.:

No, no!

Jerald, M.:

It was a city behind a fence, right?

Reed, G.:

Yeah. But it -- it was fence -- behind the fence, but I had been schooled by Joe 'cause he had been a PES (phonetic sp.). He worked on 25, K-25. And he had told us about different things right here, so we familiar with a lot of activities and things going on in areas, you know, like when you had to have a pass to go out

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Reed, George

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and a pass to come back in, stuff like that. 'Cause I even had to get one for my wife when she had -- see, if you didn't have --

Jerald, M.: 'Cause of security measures.

Reed, G.: Right, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you didn't talk about what happened here when it got on the outside and stuff like that. So it was -- it was a really secret place for a time. And then I stayed down the huts for years

[8:47]

Jerald, M.: I want you to describe to me, tell me about the huts.

Reed, G.: The huts was a place just like Army huts.

Jerald, M.: Who stayed in the huts, too? Describe them.

Reed, G.: Mens, all mens. They had a place for the women and a place for the men. And I think it was 4 mens in one hut with a stove in the middle of it, and after a while, that's where -- you know, is when you raise them for ventilation and stuff like that. But that's where all the single men stayed. You know, even though you may have been married and you didn't have your wife with you, you still had to stay down there.

Jerald, M.: You couldn't stay with your wife? Well, you were married.

Reed, G.: My wife didn't come up here when I come up here. No. I came up here just this other boy and myself. My wife came up here after I got established, got me a job, and then I sent for her. But first time I came up here, I came up here with my friend and we stayed down here in these family huts for mens only.

[9:49]

Jerald, M.: How often did you go back home to see your wife?

Reed, G.: Several times.

Jerald, M.: (indiscernible) Yeah.

Reed, G.: Yes, after I got payday after I got payday. Yeah, I'd catch the bus and go there on a Friday and come back on a Saturday.

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Reed, George

Jerald, M.:

Okay, I didn't mean to cut you off, but, talk about those huts.

Reed, G.:

Oh, those huts were really good. Just like I said, all mens stayed there in them and everything was furnished. They furnished your linen, your coal, and all stuff like that. And I think it was 4 or 5 mens to one hut. And they had a little sidewalk that was made out of wood and with all the rats and things running around in it. So, but it -- it wasn't too bad.

Now, the recreation center down there where we go down there for all our activities, you know. We shoot pool and --.

[10:38]

Jerald, M.:

So the women had their own quarters, too?

Reed, G.:

Yeah. The women's were one side; the men was on the other side.

Jerald, M.:

They had so called -- Theirs were called pens?

Reed, G.:

Yeah, they had pens between them and where the men stayed, but sometime --.

Jerald, M.:

They called them "pens". Why'd they call them pens?

Reed, G.:

[laughing] I don't have the slightest idea. [laughter] No, I don't have the slightest idea where they called it a pen, but they would all meet on Friday last night in recreation hall and we'd have dances and so forth like that. It -- it wasn't bad at all.

Jerald, M.:

Yeah, but then you got kind of segregated -- you stayed in the huts, the pen --

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

[11:14]

Jerald, M.:

That was mainly with the blacks.

Reed, G.:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Blacks stayed one side and -- and -- the men one side and the women on the other side. No, it wasn't no hut down where we were.

Jerald, M.:

Okay, so your recreation center -- that center was only for the blacks?

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Reed, G.: For the blacks.

Jerald, M.: So they did have something for --

Reed, G.: Right.

Jerald, M.: -- you guys.

Reed, G.: Oh, yeah. Yeah. They had places 'cause I knew the boys that work there. Old Man Berry (phonetic sp.) and Turk (phonetic sp.) and all them and worked in this canteen there. So we play checkers, dominoes, cards, and all that, and on Friday nights, they'd have dances. They'd had sometime the girls from Alcoa (phonetic sp.), Knoxville, get a pass, you know, if people worked at the plant, get 'em pass, they could come up.

Jerald, M.: Oh, really?

[11:59]

Reed, G.: And stay. Then after the pass expired, you had to leave.

Jerald, M.: There weren't any curfews or anything, was there?

Reed, G.: No. No.

Jerald, M.: I wouldn't think so.

Reed, G.: There wasn't no curfew. But she -- if you were working here, you had to have a pass to stay in the area.

Jerald, M.: Okay. Okay.

Reed, G.: Yeah, 'cause, see, I got passes for womens too, men, they were going to put 'em outta the gate. They'd put you out Sawway (phonetic sp.), this other gate over here, let's see. Sawway (phonetic sp.). And, I forget the name of the other gate, Elga Gate. I believe it was. Yeah, if you didn't have a pass, out the gate you'd go. And there's somebody worked at the plant and could get you a pass, when they come right check your pass, you could-- you could stay a little longer.

[12:44]

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Reed, George

Jerald, M.: Now, now in those days, you had to have a bunch of buddies that were white guys (indiscernible).

Reed, G.: At work -- at -- at -- at work. Not, ---.

Jerald, M.: (indiscernible) with their huts down in there?

Reed, G.: No, no, no, no, no, no. Nope. Nope. Colored stayed on one side and the whites stayed on the other one. Yeah. Only time you come in contact with a white, is when I was workin out there, is when you go to work. And then we would all work together, but you were all separated from lunch rooms and -- and change rooms and stuff like that.

Jerald, M.: They didn't have to have it like that, did they?

Reed, G.: No, but they did!

Jerald, M.: But they did. [laughing]

[13:26]

Reed, G.: Yeah. Yeah. The colored women changed in one end of the building and the mens in the other end of the building.

Jerald, M.: What life is like.

Reed, G.: There was a little bit next to the guards' site. And soon they had a wire fence around there -- barbed wire fence around that place when I was going to work there 'cause I got caught once or twice going through the barbed wire. Cold in the wintertime and the guards supposed to be down there opening the little gate to let you in the -- the clock alley. To -- to clock in.

Jerald, M.: To clock in?

Reed, G.: Yeah. So I came there one morning and he wasn't there. I just raised that wire and slipped through [laughing]. He said, "You ain't supposed to do that." I said, "Too late. I'm in here now." [laughter]

Jerald, M.: Now, hold it. To get to the plant area, did you ride the bus or anything like that?

[14:11]

Reed, George

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- Reed, G.: Ridin the -- Let me see.... Yeah! I forgot the name of that bus. That's all we rode. Bus.
- Jerald, M.: So it was just bus for transportation around inside the fence?
- Reed, G.: Bus for transportation inside of the fence. They had a area for the buses turn around and let you off right at the clock alley.
- Jerald, M.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Was there any personal vehicles in the area that they --?
- Reed, G.: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was a few people that owned cars they could drive their ownselves to work, you know. But most of the peoples down there in the huts and things, we rode buses.
- Jerald, M.: So that doesn't mean that you guys had segregated buses, though, did you?
- Reed, G.: No. Nah. You could catch on any buses.
- Jerald, M.: Not mostly white people?
- [14:45]**
- Reed, G.: Yeah. Yeah. We -- you got in the bus, you know. But I -- I used to ride the bus. Early, Jones was contractor out there. Then I would ride JA Jones bus in the morning because the bus that goin' to X-10 a lot of times would be full and you'd have to stand up. So rather than stand up I'd catch the other bus.
- Jerald, M.: Was there ever a case where you had to get up --
- Reed, G.: No.
- Jerald, M.: -- 'for nobody else to sit down?
- Reed, G.: No. They would just be filled and you had to stand there. [laughter] Yeah. That was the only thing about that. Naw, if you find a seat you could sit down, but --.
- Jerald, M.: It wasn't as bad as Birmingham, or any thing.
- Reed, G.: Oh, oh, no! I know. And up there in the bus station, see, they had them little windows where you could reach in there and get your food, you know, through the window. Pass it -- Well, they did that

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at the plant. We didn't go in and sit down at them tables. They had a little window there you go up there and -- and get your food and go sit out there somewhere and eat or stand up and eat it, whatever.

[15:52]

Jerald, M.:

And they didn't realize that all they had to do was let people be people and we'd all got along, right?

Reed, G.:

Right. Right. Well, it was a long time before they decided to take the -- the white uniforms off. We were wearing white overalls for long time, and the rest of the people were wearing khaki.

Jerald, M.:

Is that right?

Reed, G.:

Right, yeah!

Jerald, M.:

So the blacks wore --?

Reed, G.:

White overalls for a long time before they decide to let 'em wear khakis like the white boys were wearing.

Jerald, M.:

Why do you think that is, George?

Reed, G.:

I don't have the slightest idea, either. But that's the way it were.

[16:23]

Jerald, M.:

There's no reason.

Reed, G.:

Nope. Nope.

Jerald, M.:

Didn't have to do that, did they?

Reed, G.:

Work together all during the day and they go their separate ways and we go our separate ways. We go down to our chicken house and they go to their chicken house.

Jerald, M.:

Yeah, yeah, well, there are some things we never understand.

Reed, G.:

I seen a lot of teens there. That's when I turn around, boy, and laugh. I said, "You youngsters come in here. Boy, y'all got it made now."

Reed, George

Jerald, M.:

[laughing] Let's talk about cafeteria arrangement, food, going down eating lunch. Just put me in that atmosphere.

Reed, G.:

Oh, the food was fine and cheap too. At the time. And if you walked over, you could get a -- a -- a slip. You know, the government pay for your meal.

[17:07]

Jerald, M.:

Did they wait on you?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah!

Jerald, M.:

Did they wait on you with the quickness to get you back out again?

Reed, G.:

Yeah, well, see, they had a -- a place on one side where the colored came in and another place on the other side where the white went in. We didn't go in the same sections. There two different sections.

Jerald, M.:

But you had sitting down quarters?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah, and we had tables and everything in there then. And I knew a lot of boys that worked in the cafeteria and they served us. A lot of times, I got good meals according to who was on. [laughing] See, get a lot on your plate for any money.

Jerald, M.:

[laughter] Yeah, I would imagine that.

[17:45]

Reed, G.:

Yeah, it was -- it was real nice. But I mean, the first thing I can remember about that place, it was just a fine place to work if you got there in time and you didn't have to worry about losing an eye or nothing like that, like if you clocked in, they found something for you to do regardless of what the weather were. They'd always find something for you to do. And that's one reason I decided -- I said, this is where I want to stay. 'Cause all the other places I been staying, when it rained, you got to leave.

Jerald, M.:

You liked working at X-10 and K-25?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Yeah

Jerald, M.:

So your experiences there were good?

Reed, George

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Reed, G.: Oh, yeah. It wasn't very --

Jerald, M.: Your supervisors, foremen --

Reed, G.: My supervisor at (indiscernible) was -- I didn't have no trouble outta him because I knowed to myself I had a job, I wanted a job, I worked, and I got advanced for it, you know, after a certain length of time, you know. I got a chance to advance up.

[18:50]

Jerald, M.: Uh-hmm (affirmative). You were promoted up.

Reed, G.: Yeah.

Jerald, M.: Where were you promoted to (indiscernible)?

Reed, G.: Well, the first time, I was promoted jackhammer operator.

Jerald, M.: Let's start out. What were you doing before promotion?

Reed, G.: Just plain labor. Picks and shovels and wheelbarrows. Mixing concrete and pouring concrete and stuff like in digging ditches and stuff like that. And -- and -- and after they got through the -- had these bulletin boards, I started beating jobs out. I was told that, you know, if they ever gave colored a chance to beat it out, beat it out! And so when I got a chance to beat it out -- I worked with a lot of fellas that send you out (indiscernible) labor bus people that's sitting around with some craft, you know, like a carpenter, brick layer, stuff like -- to be their assistant during the day. And when I learned how to elected this craft so when they got a chance to let peoples beat out, I beat it out. And I got the job.

[19:56]

Jerald, M.: Now, before we go any further, I want to cue your concentration to go back on. What famous people did you see that showed up there on the reservation? And I'm talking about public figures, or talk about that.

Reed, G.: I remember President Kennedy was there once, him in his wife Jackie. And Senator -- but I can't think of his name. Was from Tennessee. You know, everytime some of them come out there, some of those senators, someone come out there with 'im. And

Reed, George

there was another president, there was, I'm just trying to think of him.

Jerald, M.:

Was it Roosevelt or was it Truman?

Reed, G.:

Truman? Well, I seen Roosevelt when I was up in Alaska. I know it wasn't none of him. He pass when I was -- getting out of service. And yeah, it was Kennedy and his wife and I believe it was Truman, I believe was out there one time. We wasn't real close to 'em, but you know, we was up there at a certain building we had been working in there, that day at 3019 (phonetic sp.). And they was visiting that graphite building up there.

Jerald, M.:

(indiscernible)?

Reed, G.:

Yeah. See, all of them would, would visit that place up there when they come in.

Jerald, M.:

I know you had a bunch of friends that worked out there.

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah.

Jerald, M.:

Right? Used to be buddies, all good relationships?

Reed, G.:

I had some good white friends, too, out there. Farmers and all when I worked there.

Jerald, M.:

Yeah, yeah. You got promoted. I bet -- Did you ever make it to a position where you were somewhat of a lead person?

[21:32]

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah.

Jerald, M.:

Tell me about it.

Reed, G.:

I did that before I left the labor month.

Jerald, M.:

Tell me about the attitude. I want to hear this.

Reed, G.:

Yeah. It was real fun. I did that before I left the labor month. I was tellin' a fella the other day. We was going down there, 3550, when they working on the contaminated area and this white fella there, he was setting the clock back on us. And I turned him in. And the next day, the foreman sent me down there to carry the men down there getting spaced out on a different job and didn't tell me

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to come back to the office and just answer the phone and take messages all day. So that's what I did for a whole month was set in the office and take notes, and when Brogan (phonetic sp.) came down there, he said, "Reed, how many mens did they call in for this place or that place," and I'd give him all the descriptions of the different places they wanted labor for the next day. And he'd tell me to take 'em and see that they get on the job and I'd come back to my job.

[22:38]

And then I got a raise, I got that nickel raise on that -- on that jackhammer. I guess I was there for about 5-6 months.

Jerald, M.:

What were your buddies' attitude?

Reed, G.:

Well, some of them just look at me, and the first time, they look at me, say, "Where you come from? We don't work like that, right?" I said -- I'm from Alabama -- I said, "If I got a job, I go on ahead on and do it and when I'm through, I'll sit down and call the foreman and tell him I'm through." I said, I don't ever hide.

Jerald, M.:

Tell me about who was turning the clock back on you guys and why.

Reed, G.:

He was trying to get all of the work outta those fellas that he could because they had 60 seconds in this contaminated area that we was working in. And the longer he could keep 'em there, the more radiation they would pick up. So you had a certain amount of dosage you'd get in a day, a week. And, see, what he did, he kinda keep 'em. He couldn't -- he couldn't burn out the whole bunch, so he said, well, I got four men for today. I'm going to get much out of them as I can get. And I look 'round and he was setting the clock back. And I went to the office and turned him in. And they gave him the devil [laughing] and sent me down there to do nothin' but watch that clock. And change those mens out.

[23:54]

Jerald, M.:

That was an administrative job.

Reed, G.:

I kept a tab on how long each man stayed in there and how much he got each day. Then, like I was tellin' you 'bout that time when they asked me how I got that dosimeter, I said, everytime I go into places, if I can't get a heath physical or any one to check it, I'd

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check it myself! Then if I see some comin' on out of the line, then I go find them and tell them to check this area. Because I got locked in the cell (indiscernible) down in an ashed up area.

[24:29]

Jerald, M.:

Tell me about that.

Reed, G.:

I got -- they put me in an ashed up area, doing some chippin' with a chippin' hammer when they --.

Jerald, M.:

What were they chippin' for?

Reed, G.:

Huh?

Jerald, M.:

Describe.

Reed, G.:

Take a hot spot out of a cell of concrete. And I had that space suit on. And they went for a coffee break and locked me in there, and I couldn't get out until they got back. And then -- Clock told me, he said, "Reed, you got 10 minutes. You got overdose." I said, "Well, how much did I get?" But they never tell me. But they told me, they said, "I don't want you 'round this stuff anymore for 5 or 6 weeks. Anybody try to send you 'round this stuff, tell 'em to see me." And that's when I sit in the office again and answer telephone.

Jerald, M.:

Well, that was for security purposes and safety?

[25:17]

Reed, G.:

Right.

Jerald, M.:

That was a flaw --

Reed, G.:

Yeah.

Jerald, M.:

--'cause you were in that area and you got locked in.

Reed, G.:

Yeah. I got locked in. And once or twice when I couldn't get the safety men when I was in the labor department, and dug little ditches of six feet deep or better, and (indiscernible) said, you gotta go, can't wait on the man that brace it up, I said, "Get me the stuff. I'll do it myself." So I brace up a whole lotta those ditches myself. I said, "I gotta get in there, do it. I ain't waitin' on that safety

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man." I get in there, shore it up with those screw jacks and get in there myself and do it.

Jerald, M.:

Right, so you won't have any collapsing.

Reed, G.:

No collapse. See, I've seen people get covered up in them ditches out there.

[25:58]

Jerald, M.:

Did some of the tasks or chores that you had to do, did you see any things that you think about and it's kind of, man, sad occasions? Did you see anybody get hurt out there on your job?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. A boy named Raymond Woods (phonetic sp.) stayed in Knoxville, he was an addition. This fella had this backhoe digger and he was an addition. You know, he was digging the dirt up and he got his leg broke. And he didn't do nothin' but sit around there in crocheted for 6 months.

Jerald, M.:

[laughing]

Reed, G.:

'Cause I bought my wife two of them for a dollar a piece. Yeah. They didn't see anymore. He was still drawing a check, you know, but he couldn't do nothin' 'cause that basket hit up against his leg, fractured his leg.

Jerald, M.:

I know getting rid of waste and stuff, it was kind of some of the ways we'd done things in those days were not proper.

[26:54]

Reed, G.:

I knew I spent a lot of time on them -- on them trucks and things. We did bury that stuff in the bare ground. Those trucks were coming out of Chicago and all them different places, and see them buryin' that stuff in kind of a concrete. And you know, one time, they had one here in -- over here by Jake Butcher's place. In Oak Ridge, they had a whole lotta them 55 gallon drums and we had to come up -- we had a police escort, an escort from X-10. And we covered those drums with plastic and carried 'em back to the plant and buried 'em and then poured concrete 'cause....

Jerald, M.:

Those drums shouldn't have been placed out.

Reed, George

Reed, G.: Oh, they been out there for years and years. Some of 'em -- some of 'em are leaking. And, yeah, they had to have a police escort.

Jerald, M.: That was off the reservation?

Reed, G.: Yeah. Yeah. Right over there on Marina -- on the other side of Marina.

[27:46]

Jerald, M.: That's over there by the river.

Reed, G.: Yeah.

Jerald, M.: Okay. That's hard to believe.

Reed, G.: Yeah. I was there. Yeah. And that was kind of dangerous work there, but that's what happened, you know, man said, "If you don't, somebody else will," so. [laughing] You want your job.

Jerald, M.: What did you dislike most? You sound like you really enjoyed it.

Reed, G.: You know, even -- we did a lot of -- I've owned dynamite and stuff there for a while. Yeah. I would drill a lot of holes and put sticks of dynamite in 'em.

Jerald, M.: Just to open up an area?

Reed, G.: Just to open up -- no, they was putting a 48-inch concrete tunnel in there underground once, you know. It taken over a year to get the thing in there.

Jerald, M.: So you use the dynamite to loosen up the soil?

[28:38]

Reed, G.: Loosen up the rock.

Jerald, M.: Loosen up the rock?

Reed, G.: A lot of rock. Yeah. See, we was using jackhammers then, right, and you had to loosen up the rock. That backhoe couldn't -- couldn't break a lot of the rocks and thing, and they couldn't get a bulldozer down in that ditch at that time, so.

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Jerald, M.:

What did you dislike about working at K-25? You sound like you had such a good time. What did you dislike?

Reed, G.:

Well, one thing, about it see, they had two areas when I started there. One area, they called the Restricted Area. That was where all the contamination was supposed to have been. And when you went up in that area, you changed altogether. You changed badge; you changed shoes; you changed everything in the Restricted Area. And they gave you those dosimeters and a lot of stuff like that. And then when you leave, you had to leave all those clothes up there. And then you workin' in the cell -- a tank farm, then, a place they called it -- at a place called a tank farm where they had a whole lotta tanks underground and then the pipes overhead was covered with lead. 'Cause when they removed all of 'em, we had to dig hole by hand and put them things in the ground.

[29:53]

Jerald, M.:

What do you think was in those tanks?

Reed, G.:

All kind of different solutions. For the different labs and stuff that they used. They draw it out of tanks into the labs and things. That's what they did that for. But I -- I -- I really enjoyed workin' there. I mean, it weren't no problem with me. I mean, I was glad to be able to work every day without missin' a day.

Jerald, M.:

What did you like most about this?

[crew talk]

Go ahead and um --

End Tape 1; begin Tape 2

[00:12]

Reed, G.:

I am -- I'll be 84 my next birthday.

Jerald, M.:

Okay. Okay. I'm going to ask you how many years you worked before you retired. Okay?

Reed, G.:

Yeah.

Even. I worked even number there. [laughter] Yeah. Yeah. (indiscernible), "Man, you can't draw no Social Security." I said, "I don't need no Social Security; I'm gone!"

Reed, George

Jerald, M.:

[laughing]

Reed, G.:

I stayed there 35 years; Ya'll can have it. [laughing]

[crew talk]

And silence please.

[1:08]

Jerald, M.:

So, George --.

Reed, G.:

You know, when you do a good job, you can tell without anybody else. I ain't missed a year since I left. If I wanna go back out there, could call me every year in December for a lunch they have out there, (indiscernible).

Jerald, M.:

Is that right?

[1:24]

Reed, G.:

Yep.

Jerald, M.:

Yep.

Reed, G.:

And I know some, they never call. [laughing]

Jerald, M.:

Yeah. They thought a lot about you.

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I had a lot of friends. I made a lot of friends when I was there.

Jerald, M.:

How many years were you there?

Reed, G.:

35 years even.

Jerald, M.:

35 years even?

Reed, G.:

Yeah. Even, when I left.

Jerald, M.:

Is that right?

Reed, G.:

Yup. I left in '81, December.

Jerald, M.:

Okay.

Reed, G.:

My 60th birthday. Last of December.

Reed, George

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Jerald, M.: [laughing] I bet you miss it, don't you?

Reed, G.: No.

[1:56]

Jerald, M.: You don't?

Reed, G.: No, no, no, no, no. [laughing] No, no! [laughter] Uh-hunh.
(negative)

But you know, I told the fellas, I told all them fellas when I left there, "You know what makes life real good for you, don't sit down when you retire like that. Do something." I can always find me something to do.

Jerald, M.: You keep up with that (indiscernible). Buddies, you got buddies --

Reed, G.: Yeah. I learned a lot of things when I were there. My son-in-law today, I said, "You know, Allen, I put my own roof in; I do my own plumbing; I do my own electrical work. Do all this stuff myself." Really. Really. Yeah, you gotta learn how to do somethin' yourself. Man, I go out there and ask them fellas how to do this and how to do that and they tell me.

Jerald, M.: You stay in touch with some of your old --?

Reed, G.: They call me. They call me all the time. Yeah. Yeah. They call me, talk, and then when they (indiscernible) out there, they invite me out for dinners and stuff like that and I go out there. They look at me, say, "Reed, look like you outta be back at work." I said, "If you say it again, I ain't comin' down here no more." [laughter] It look like your'e no 80-something, I said, "I'll be 84 my next birthday."

[3:16]

Jerald, M.: They laugh about that?

Reed, G.: Oh, yeah, yeah. (indiscernible), no.

Jerald, M.: Now, we've touched on the working environment, some of the things that you've done, your tasks, but overall, was the communication good between the workers as far as lock-out,

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making sure that things were locked out properly -- you know the case about you being locked down in the cell.

Reed, G.: Yeah.

Jerald, M.: But overall, would you say things were...?

[3:40]

Reed, G.: Everything worked fine. I mean, those -- those fellas are taking care of each other. I -- I don't know what kind of environment they work in these days, though. But those fellas really taking care of each other when I was workin' out there. And it was a pleasure to go to work every day. I ain't kiddin'. I mean, we get there in the morning, go to work at 8:00, we'd get off at 7:00 and play dominoes or checkers or something 'til 8:00. And -- and -- and we just enjoyed each other when we were workin'.

Jerald, M.: Was that an association with white and blacks or was it still segregated?

Reed, G.: No, it was segregated back then. It was a long time before they put 'em all in the same locker room, you know. Many years before they did that. No, like I said, they had they locker rooms -- change house, and we had our change house. But when they did decide doin' that, they started changing clothes next to each other, taking showers in the same shower and eat in the same lunch room and all the stuff like that later on.

[4:48]

Jerald, M.: Now, your communication with your family members, your wife, I know you talked about your job, some of the things that went on, but your job sounds so pleasant. Was this something you guys discussed sometimes? Did you discuss your job?

Reed, G.: Oh, yeah. We'd always talked about what we do. And it was -- certain peoples that you even enjoy working with more than others. And I tell you another thing, they did to some of them white boys, look at me, they said ever went to X-10 and you had to work with Reed, say, "Jack, you work!" 'Cause every time they'd get somebody there, the phone boy tell 'em, say, "See Reed over there?" "Yessir." Said, "You work with him, you work with him, you can stay here." 'Cause they know that I didn't play. [laughing] I work! [laughing] Yeah. That's what I did. Some of

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the white boys see me now at the flea market come over there, say, "Man, I used to work with Reed. You work with him." Say, "You never did know when to quit!" [laughing]

[5:56]

Jerald, M.:

Let me ask you this. What type of rules were employed that you followed?

Reed, G.:

Well, you know, they had rules there like any other place where you'd a job. Mostly safety; your glasses, your shoes, and your clothes, stuff like that. And I reminded, I guess you could call me almost a pusher 'cause (indiscernible). You had to have a leader in every bunch. And I tell 'em, boy, "Man, you better put your glasses on. You got that weed eater out here cuttin' grass and hit somethin'." One time I saved a pack printer's eyes. He had a snake around the pipe pouring hot lead and anytime you get water into a pipe when you -- when you pouring hot lead, boy if you ain't got some eye protection on. You pour that lead and all that water going to push that lead back up. Hit 'em all in the glasses. I'll never forget that boy, stood out in Kingston. He wanted to quit right there. I said, "No, don't quit, but I saved your eyes, didn't I?"

[7:00]

Jerald, M.:

[laughing]

Reed, G.:

Yeah, you put that snake around that pipe and pour that hot lead in there. That's to seal the joints in the pipe, you know. After they put that caulking in there.

Jerald, M.:

Exactly. Your supervisors -- All your supervisors, different ones, were good people?

Jerald, M.:

Different ones?

Jerald, M.:

Where did they live?

Reed, G.:

All of them live right here. I had good supervisor! I even had one one time, I told him, I said, he come out and said, Reed said -- I want you to come over to my house on the weekend, do some work, and I said, "Well, my car's in the shop." He said, "Well, lets go down to that Chevrolet place. He said, "You need your car, let's go down there and get it." He went out and payed for it. He

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said, "You can pay me a dollar or two a week, any way you like that. I don't care." [laughter] I had some good foremans.

Jerald, M.:

Is that guy still around, do you think? Is he here right now?

[7:45]

Reed, G.:

No. All of them foremans, the last one, even my (indiscernible) foreman, I told a fella, I said, "As long as I worked there, back in them days, I was drinkin'." You know. I didn't try to hide it. And I went to work one day and I was -- I couldn't hardly see them guards in that change house. And I told Brogan (phonetic sp.), and I said, "Brogan (phonetic sp.) I'm going back home." He said, "What's wrong with you you?" I said "I'm drunk" [laughing] He sent me back home. And I come back the next day, he done told in the (indiscernible). He said, "I'm proud of Reed." He said, "Somebody else had to come in here drunk like that and decided to try to go to work, and drop somethin' on somebody. Fell off a building and hurt they own selves." So you just come right out and told me. And I told him to go home and come back the next day and that's what I did.

Jerald, M.:

Did most of your co-workers, did everyone pull their own weight or did you have people that slacked?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. You -- you go have some of them. I mean, all -- all jobs, you know. I take up for 'em sometime and then sometime I let 'em know. "I ain't no fool, Jack, and I'm going to do some of the work and you gonna do the other half. And we're goin' to pull this thing half and half." [laughing] I was thinking about ole slick, I was tellin' that boy the other day, I had a fella whos standin' laughin', they called him Peanut. We'd be shoveling dirt in the truck and he'd have his shovel down there and I'd have mine. He'd take his shovel full of dirt and pour it on top of mine. I said, "That the truck there, you're supposed to be throwin' it in truck, don't be." (indiscernible) I didn't thought you was payin me no attention, there see, I said [laughing]

Jerald, M.:

What type of health insurance did they have there? Did they have good stuff for you?

Reed, G.:

They had good insurance when I was workin' there. If you was sick, and when you first started out, if you was sick, you was off. You didn't lose no pay. You off five days, you got paid five days. And they'd send a man out to check on you. You'd go to doctor and he'd give you slip when you go back to work. You know, if

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he says you weren't able to go to work, go home, stay two, three days, you go back, get a slip, take it to your foreman, and you go back to work. I had -- I had some good foremans. I've had some that, I mean, that was in plain labor, they even left me in charge. See I --

[10:06]

Jerald, M.: You said when they left you in charge, How many of those guys that you worked with became jealous?

Reed, G.: Oh, a lot of them did.

Jerald, M.: Go on and tell me about that.

Reed, G.: There's a boy named Edward Reed. He used to do nothin' and he had a college education and everything. He turned, said, "How can you get that?" Here I am, I said, "Don't ask me." I said, "I'm just doing what the man told me." I say, "I ain't there snitchin' or nothin'." I said, "He just told me he wanted me to do this or do that," and -- and -- and I did it. I mean, I never did go 'round tryin' to look for no drunk. I had a boy one time. I'm goin' to see if I can get us some work. I said, "No, you don't get me no work. You get you some." That's 'cause I can get my own work. [laughing] Don't need you to get me no work. [laughing]

Jerald, M.: Did they have good family health care?

[10:51]

Reed, G.: Yeah, yeah, yeah. My wife was in good shape, my kid was in good insurance. And when I got 'em to the doctor's or stuff like that, I didn't have a bit of trouble 'cause I had two or three operations when I was working there. Once I had a colon operation and I left work. They used to send you home in a cab. They had cabs then. But that's all they did. Somebody got sick, you work over, they'd bring you home. They had their own transportation. You live in Knoxville, (indiscernible) or whatever.

Jerald, M.: Did they give you a physical?

Reed, G.: Oh, yeah.

Jerald, M.: Medical before you started?

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Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, they did just like -- I tell myself, just come right up and here you are with the same stuff you got now. Yeah. They gave them physicals. And I didn't mess 'em up.

[11:43]

Jerald, M.:

Uh- huh, uh-huh (affirmative), Now, those were the -- that was the time when you arrived. It was right after the Manhattan Project.

Reed, G.:

I had one foreman, Joe Brannon(phonetic sp.), is the one that he and I was on the phone, that he and I had a little misunderstanding one morning. I came over on the bus and it was real early, and I got cold and I wanted to change. And I says, I wasn't paying any attention to the time and I stayed a little longer than I was supposed to stay. And he come out and he say, "You been to your job?" I say, "No." He said, "You know where it's at?" I said, "Yup!" He said, "You been in here to change how long ago?" Said, "I don't know. I was gettin' my hands warm." So he took me to the main office. Old Man foreman told me, said, "Was you in the change house?" I said, "Yup." Said, "How long?" I said, "I don't have the slightest idea." And he said, "Well, you know where you supposed to be workin'?" And I says, "Yup!" Says, "So what do you think I outta do?" I said, "Well I don't care what you want to do." I said, "I was warm but you can fire me if you want. I don't care." [laughing] But I hadn't been there long. I said I'd leave and go somewhere else. But he said, "Naw, we need workers here." Said, "We need all we can get. Said, go on back to where you're working at. Next time, It's alright to go get warm, but don't stay too long." And that's the only trouble I had.

[13:00]

Jerald, M.:

Were you ever hurt on the job?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. I got -- I got hurt once, but not real seriously, you know. I had a small accident. Let me see, which one of these fingers? Oh, that finger there. I worked on the coal drill for about 3 years and we were takin' soil samples and rock samples and all like that. And I mess around and got my finger out of that barrel of that thing, had the rock samples -- no, soil samples -- and the chuck slipped on it and caught my finger under there. And, boy, they had to cut that glove off -- had to cut that glove off and that finger ain't never felt right. (indiscernible) But it didn't break the bone or nothin'. And that was about the only -- Oh, no, it wasn't. I forgot

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about it. Right up here in my chest. 'Cause the ol' foreman called Dr. Diamond (phonetic sp.) one morning 'cause I went to -- to the doctor and any time you was off on a Monday, they thought you was drunk and didn't wanna come to work. And this happened on a Saturday.

[14:03]

I was up at the 3019 with a jackhammer and a piece of steel come off of that -- that thing and hit me in the neck right there. Have a scar right there. Just barely missed that vein right there. And I went down to the medical and they just put a little patch on it. So 2, 3 weeks after that, one Monday, I was up ready to catch the bus and that thing started to give me trouble when I turned my neck, and the doctor's office was straight across the street from the bus station. And I walked over there to Dr. Diamond and I told him that I (indiscernible). I said I feel something in my neck. He took an X-ray. He said you got a piece steel. And I said, "Boy, just missed that vein!" And he said, let me go here and get this out, then I'm going to send you home. And about that time, somebody, they had got to work and told my general foreman and he called the doctor, wanted to know if I was up there. Dr. Diamond told him, said, yes, he's here. He said, "When he leave here, he's going home." It made the doctor mad, boy. [laughing] He said, "He ain't comin' to work." Said, "When he leave here, he going home." And he told me to go home and stay 2, 3 days and come back, and if I don't like the way it look, go home and stay 2, 3 more days. And you still gonna get your money. You still gettin' paid.

[15:23]

Jerald, M.:

That was dangerous!

Reed, G.:

Out yeah, and they get that nurse down in the country when they got back. Main medical doctor. He asked me, "Well, what did she do?" I said, "She wiped the blood off it and put a bandage on it. Didn't take no X-ray of it or nothin'." Boy, they give her down in the country. They sure did.

Jerald, M.:

When you hired on, that was right after the Manhattan Project.

Reed, G.:

Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Reed, George

Jerald, M.:

The Manhattan Project, we know what it was, the big bomb, and stuff. In the Cold War story, right after the Manhattan Project, were you aware of -- what was the feeling knowing this is the weapon that ended?

[16:13]

Reed, G.:

We didn't know nothin' 'bout what was goin' on there at the time. Naw, you didn't know. (indiscernible) you went in a building less'n you were goin' in there to move somethin'. 'Cause a lot of people's askin', "What they makin'? What they doin'?" What they doin' there?" I said, "Don't ask me. I don't know." I work here and don't know. No, you didn't go to them laboratories and different areas then. Most of that was in restricted area anyway.

Jerald, M.:

So you could tell it was top secret?

Reed, G.:

Oh, it was top secret! You could tell from the -- from the guards and things they had 'round the area, you know, patrollin' the area and the signs they had up goin' in to Knoxville and goin' back in to Oak Ridge and all like that. But it was security place. And when people that didn't work here, didn't live here, couldn't get off the bus, they had the guards up there at the bus station. If you didn't work here or had a pass to get off here, you went straight through. You -- you -- you didn't get off.

[17:12]

Jerald, M.:

I know you were curious like a lot of guys --

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah.

Jerald, M.:

-- you guys talked among yourselves.

Reed, G.:

Wondered what was goin' on and stuff like that, but no, they --.

Jerald, M.:

You kinda knew what was going on.

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. I knew it was something for the government, but it was top secret. No, you -- you -- you didn't discuss it, not even with your family if you knew something. You didn't say anything about it. They was pretty strict 'bout that.

Jerald, M.:

Most of the people knew --

Reed, George

Reed, G.: Oh, yeah.

[17:41]

Jerald, M.: Conversation wise it just wasn't discussed, right?

Reed, G.: No, it just wasn't.

Jerald, M.: So did you have to sign a release for secrecy or something like that?

Reed, G.: No. I don't remember ever doing nothin' like that.

Jerald, M.: How was that -- How did they impress upon you that you don't talk about it?

Reed, G.: Well, I guess they did inspect people's record or something like that over the weekend and all the different activities and things they did 'cause I know all the boys get in jail over the weekend, they had all kinds of different records. And like I said, certain places, you just didn't go in. They -- they wouldn't let you in there.

Jerald, M.: So if you didn't know, you can't talk.

Reed, G.: No. You didn't know what was going on. You couldn't say nothin' about it. No. They was real strict about it. 'Cause that's where they -- see, the labor boys was all down at one end. And all the scientists and doctors and things in this restricted area, and all the time you went down there, maybe there's something, some kind of contamination or something got loose and you had to get it up some kind of way with a jackhammer, or some mercury got spilt and you have to siphon it with hose or stuff like that.

[19:00]

Jerald, M.: Do you think you worked with mercury?

Reed, G.: I worked in all of it! I didn't miss nothin'.

Jerald, M.: Is that right?

Reed, G.: I don't know why. I even asked a fellow one day, he had a whole bunch of mens, I went up and asked him, I said, I says, "(indiscernible)," I says, "You can have 50 mens in this building,"

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I said, "I'd be the first one to get a job." I said, "How's that?" He said, "Reed, I can send you on a job, tell you who to see, you go down there find a man do the job, come on back." Some of these other fellas, I had to go down there, point it out to 'em, see that they do it, then look for them when they finish it. And he said, "Reed." I said, "They gettin' paid just like me." [laughing] He said, "Yeah, but I can trust you."

[19:45]

Jerald, M.: Now you got promoted to pipe insulator.

Reed, G.: Yeah.

Jerald, M.: Tell me about that because that was a transition.

Reed, G.: Well, they started beating those jobs out. It was a little colored boy I beat it for. And I knew this -- this general foreman and I was gettin' ready to go on vacation, so he said, "Reed, they got that job up on the bid board again for insulator." And I said, "Well, what can I do about it?"

Jerald, M.: What does the insulator do?

Reed, G.: Hmm?

Jerald, M.: What does the insulator do?

[20:14]

Reed, G.: Covering. The insulator covered all these pipes in the wintertime to keep them from freezing. All the air conditions. We covered all air conditions in the summer, keep 'em from sweating. We covered all of 'em. And in the laboratory, we covered all those vessels that they had all this hot ice and stuff in. We did that. And we used board, fiberglass, and then we removed all this asbestos. See, lot of those lines had asbestos that the contractor put on 'em. We had to take it off and put fiberglass on. So, and -- and that's what I did when they got over there.

Yeah, and this fella, he said, "You want the job?" And I said, "Yeah, I want a job that makes more money than the labor." So I said, "I'm goin' on vacation." He said, "Well, when you come

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back, you got a job." See, now I had a colored foreman then. They had changed to Walter Mayard (phonetic sp.) was my foreman.

Jerald, M.: Was he a fair guy?

Reed, G.: He was a good one! Yeah, he's got a son, still work out there -- and when I came back, he told me, he said, "Reed, you're goin' to transfer over to 2013. You're an insulator. You're bein' upgraded as insulator." He said, "I woulda' send five men over there, than send you." He said, "But I know you come in to make the money." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, good luck." Shook my hand. Stayed until I retired. Yeah, that's right.

[21:46]

Jerald, M.: So being a pipe insulator, that pulled you away from direct labor?

Reed, G.: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Jerald, M.: Digin' a ditch and all that.

Reed, G.: I was makin' good money. Yeah, I was makin' good money. That's why I left. [laughing] When they told me what I could (indiscernible), man, I ain't carring that much home now, I'm gone! And after years, I had to, what I'm stayin' here for. No.

And all those fellas that I work with in -- in the insulation, there are two of 'em still livin'.

[22:16]

Jerald, M.: Is that right?

Reed, G.: The rest of 'em are deceased.

Jerald, M.: What was your most challenging assignment?

Reed, G.: One time I had a job, it wasn't really, got me this boy, man really, see what was his name? Osmond. (phonetic sp.) His name was Osmond. He stayed up in Lake City. He said, "Reed, how you get that job?" I said, "I'm a hard worker." He said, "I went to school." I said, "I don't care where you went to school." He said, "Yeah, I went to school for so many years to do this," and he went on -- he went on vacation once and he and I were working on a

duct, one of those big ducts that go through the attic, you know. I said, I'm goin' to show this joker that I can do it just as good as he can, down in there the boss asked me who you going to be sendin' down there. I said, I'll do it. Is -- is gone on vacation. I said, "No, I don't need nobody 'cause I'm going to do it myself." And when he come back, he said, "Did you work down there at the ashed up area?" I said yeah. "How'd you do?" I finished that duct. He went down there, He said, "Yeah, you did all right didn't ya'." I said, "Yeah, of course you went to school, you don't know everything. Some of the dumbest head jokers you ever seen come out of school." [laughing]

[23:31]

And (indiscernible) I really got a (indiscernible) one day, sure enough. We was cutting material and he says, cut me a piece $3 \frac{3}{4}$. And I cut it dead $3 \frac{3}{4}$. And he cut off $\frac{1}{4}$. And he say, you a quarter too short. I said, "I tell you one thing, you wanna cut again, you cut it yourself." I said, "I know what I cut." And he tried to make me look bad, you see what he's trying to do. He tryin' to -- see, he can't make me look bad [laughs].

Jerald, M.:

What was your most significant accomplishment? I think that's a big accomplishment, that you got promoted to pipe insulator.

[24:13]

Reed, G.:

I started off as laborer and worked from laborer to -- to jackhammer operator, then from then on up to insulator. And some of them boys been there way before I did, and when I left, they were still there. They had boys that -- that was on gas pumps and talkin' bout' they stay in Knoxville. They were from the richest high school in the district. I said, how come you don't bid out? They were scared to bid out. If they have pass somebody, you're going to be the first one they fire. I said, man, I can't be out lookin' for a job. If they fire me, I'll go somewhere else and look for another job. And the man always told me, "Well, Reed, the way you work, you ain't got nothin' to worry 'bout." I never laid off. They got after me twice. And I said, "Well, look like I'm going to be left." He said, "You be here just as long as you wanna be here." Said, "The way you work, boy, you ain't got nothin' to worry 'bout. Everybody like your work." And I worked on jobs -- after the union got there -- see, when I first started, there wasn't no

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union. You had to do anything they told you. And when the union got there, I was a union steward. I was even the union steward for a long time. They told me, said, "Well," said, "If you join the union, they gonna' fire ya'." Well, I said, "I'm tryin' to get more money. If they can help me get more money, I'm gonna' joinin'." I join 'em. Shoot, I told 'em boys, said "You know, I ain't scared of getting' fired. I was lookin' for a job when I came up here." And if you do what you supposed to and do it right, you ain't got nothin' to worry about. No, you work! You work, your work will tell what you can do by it's self.

[25:55]

Jerald, M.:

Was the family happy being -- if you were making money, everybody was happy, weren't they?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. My family 'appreciated comin' up here and, yeah, and just like I said, it -- it was a good bunch of fellas back in those days, working. They looked out for each other and we all tried to work together help each other improve the work you did. And they were no jealous peoples, you know if you got promoted more than others 'cause of some of 'em just scared to take a chance, you know. I say, well, that's the world. That's life. If you don't take a chance, you're going to be in the same rut.

[26:34]

Same way it was when I was in the army. I went in as a private and come out technician, fifth. There was a boy finished college. He was still a private when I left. And -- and the captain looked at me when I was up in Alaska in the Aleutian Islands and he said, "You can make top kick." I said, "Is top kick leaving?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Is he leaving? I didn't have much stripes when I came in here." [laughing] And I said, "I'm gone."

Jerald, M.:

Was a school, education-wise, set up for the kids okay?

Reed, G.:

Oh, yeah. All my kids were in school, finished high school, right in, and did real well. 'Cause we had some good teachers back in there then. And I gotta bunch of encyclopedias now. Old Man Walker was teaching school here in Oak Ridge and that kid of mine, I said, "Don't Mr. Walker give you nothin' to do in the evenin'?" He said, "No." So I got off at Monday. He didn't think I goin' to be off, you know the thing. "How come you ain't workin today'?" "Well, I came to see what you do in school. You're tellin' me Mr. Walker doesn't give you nothin' to do in the

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evenin'." Mr. Walker says, "Yeah, I does." It's all I wanted to know. I walked out, for me, he didn't pull that on me no more. I tell him, "See that set of encyclopedias up here? They sit up there. When you get the house, you grab one of 'em." I said, "'Cause I didn't go all the way through school, you'd better go try to find your kid."

[28:04]

Jerald, M.: So all your kids finished high school?

Reed, G.: Yeah.

Jerald, M.: How many did you have?

Reed, G.: I got two -- two girls and one boy. He's -- he's deceased. I got two girls livin'.

Jerald, M.: Okay.

Reed, G.: One of my daughter's over there in the end at Patricia Neal's (phonetic sp.).

[28:20]

Jerald, M.: Patricia Neal now? That's a hospital, right?

Reed, G.: Yeah. She had brain surgery. She had brain surgery last week. She's got to learn to walk and use her hands again. Then I got one girl that works for the government over here in Clinton. She work at the post office.

Jerald, M.: So all the schools in this area, bussing and such was satisfactory?

Reed, G.: Everythin's fine. Everything's fine, now, yeah. Housin' and all that stuff is -- you know, churches and everything is close. So I -- I really enjoy being here. That's when I tell the fella, I said, "This is where I intend to retire and spend the rest of my life."

Jerald, M.: In closing, is there anything you'd like to express?

[crew talk] Lets just go ahead and switch tapes.

End Tape 2; begin Tape 3

Reed, George

[00:13]

Jerald, M.:

When he starts rolling again I'm gonna --

Reed, G.:

Yeah. I says, "Shoot yeah, man."

Jerald, M.:

I have something I want to ask you.

Reed, G.:

Rented rooms and (indiscernible) around here, I said, "Get my own."

Jerald, M.:

Yeah. Yeah.

Reed, G.:

I coulda owned 2 or 3 of them if it hadn't been for my wife, though we was renting there for a while. She didn't like to rent it. She said, "We ain't rentin' no more." [laughter]

[crew talk]

Silence please.

[1:12]

Jerald, M.:

The huts, family life, promotions, money's good, you're ready to move out of the huts. Tell me about moving out of the huts, bringing the family up here, and buying a home. Just put me in there.

[1:30]

Reed, G.:

Well, we first lived in government houses up here, up in now where J.C. Penney's is. There was a housing for married -- married peoples. And my wife and I lived up there for, I guess, a couple of years right here, or something like that. Then we left and moved to Houston (phonetic sp.). Houston area down there, you know, on the side of where I live right now. And we stayed down there for several years until the government decided -- I think they had made up their mind once that they was goin' -- you see, white people used to stay in those houses down on Houston. And then they moved out. We was actually supposed to move in the Woodland area, accordin' to some of 'em, at first, then they changed their mind for some reason, moved us down to Gamble Valley (phonetic sp.) down on Houston.

Jerald, M.:

Who? Moved all the blacks down there or something?

Reed, G.:

Yeah.

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Jerald, M.:

I mean, they moved everybody as a group?

[2:29]

Reed, G.:

All of them as a group, they move, move 'em down there in on Houston Avenue. We was -- all the ones that were married. We stayed in the family huts up by where J.C. Penney's is now, along in there. And they moved all us down there on Houston and all those peoples moved -- I think they moved over in Woodland area somewhere. And we stayed there. 'Cause I -- I liked down there. I still like down there. I was goin' to buy a house down there, but the government wouldn't sell no (indiscernible). The government just rentin' 'em. So after they built the ones we stay in now, then they decided to move, you know, 'cause first time -- I can't think of the name of that company that owned those houses -- those houses down there when they first build 'em. 'Cause they was sellin' stock in 'em and stuff 'cause a lot of people bought stock in those houses then 'cause Leroy's wife was working down there as secretary and -- and a lot more of 'em. But I didn't -- I didn't -- I didn't buy any stock in there. When we started rentin' this house, we payin' \$17 a month, two-family house. And was payin' government. And after so many years, they decided to sell 'em and this FHA (phonetic sp.) was financing them if you wanted to buy. So when they told me about that, boy, I'm gonna catch it, put \$100 down. I walked all the way from Y-12. [laughter] Up to town site. [laughter] I got off work and they said, "Man, where are you goin'?" "Man, I'm going to get me a house!" [laughter] I walked that way. I did. I caught a bus from X-10 over there to Y-12, then I walked to the FHA's office uptown up there and signed up. And got the house I'm in now. Nobody never stayed in that house but me. The house I stay in now.

[4:31]

And when I first -- I paid rent, I think \$17 a month. 'Cause the man that, you know, was trying to buy, he could take the other part and rent it and then the rent would take care of my note, you know. It was takin' care of my note my note. Could I rent, it take care of that note. And I looked at that paper one day sfter about a year and have \$2. Man, I might not be livin' 30 years from now. That's too long! All that interest goin' to eat me up, too. We pay more interest on the principal. I said, "I got to make some changes." [laughter]

Reed, George

[5:05]

Jerald, M.:

Now, you know, for closure, you enjoyed your job --

Reed, G.:

Yeah!

Jerald, M.:

-- at X-10 and that's great. That's (indiscernible).

Reed, G.:

Yeah, I enjoyed 35 years (indiscernible) nobody did. I had a good time when I were there. And work and --

Jerald, M.:

Did you right.

Reed, G.:

-- and did me right and everything, yeah. I joined the credit union when it first came to the plant. We just had to pay money out of the pocket every Monday. Been a member ever since. Been a member ever since. That's been 50 years ago pretty soon. Yeah. Sure did!

[5:40]

Jerald, M.:

Family life was good?

Reed, G.:

Yeah! I remember when you used to have to stand in line to -- to wait to pay in, when you could borrow some money. Now, them jokers got more money than the banks. [laughter]

Jerald, M.:

Well, we're going to close it out here, buddy.

Reed, G.:

Yeah, I really enjoyed --.

Jerald, M.:

Anything you want to say?

Reed, G.:

I enjoyed -- I enjoyed X-10 and I had a lot of wonderful foremans that I worked for. And reason I know that is 'cause a lot of them have kept in contact with me. They're still livin' and they still call me and we talk and all that stuff. A lot of 'em people -- a lot of them people that are still workin' out there was younger, was just comin' in when I left. And they come over to the flea market sometime. A fella called me during the night, said, "Reed, you're sick?" I said, "No." "I haven't seen you. I know when you ain't over here, there's something wrong with you." I said, "No, my daughter's sick; I ain't sick." And they come 'round and set down by my table and set down and talk and carry on and talk about the plant. And this white fella I used to work close to, he was a pipe

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fitter at X-10. He's been over here in the nursing home in Knoxville for 2 ½ years, and everytime I go to Knoxville, I go over there to visit him. And he'll call me. Real good friend. I think he's one of the best friends I ever had here.

[7:03]

Jerald, M.:

Yeah, that's great.

Reed, G.:

Yeah, he's fine. I've made a lot of good friends here. I make no enemies. All friends.

Jerald, M.:

All right.

Reed, G.:

I can go back any time I get ready. [laughter]

Jerald, M.:

All right! We're going to shut it off.

Reed, G.:

All right.

Jerald, M.:

All right. I enjoyed it.

[End of Interview]