

MY NAME IS ROBERT ELKINS. I BEGAN WORKING AT THE PORTSMOUTH GASEOUS DIFFUSION PLANT IN 1954. I WORKED AS A CHEMICAL OPERATOR OVER 31 YEARS.

WE USED NEOPRENE GLOVES AND ASSAULT MASKS DAILY AT "E AREA". WE CRUSHED URANIUM WITH ROD MILL IN TUBES UNTIL IT RESEMBLED POWDER. IT WAS THEN PUT ON A SCREEN AND SIFTED INTO CYLINDERS AND FED INTO THE REACTOR. THE VENTILATION WAS VERY POOR IN THE AREA. I DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO, THE BLACK OXIDE WAS REPROCESSED FUEL RODS FROM REACTORS. I AM ALMOST CERTAIN THEY HAD BERYLLIUM AND PLUTONIUM IN THEM. WE KNOW THEY WERE HIGH ASSAY FUEL RODS TO BE PUT THROUGH RECOVERY AND FED BACK TO THE CASCADE.

IN 1965, WHILE WORKING IN THE "E AREA" REACTOR, SIX CO-WORKERS AND I WERE SENT TO OAK RIDGE FOR IN-VIVO COUNTING FOR INSOLUBLE URANIUM. GAIL McCLELLEN AND MYSELF WERE TOLD OUR COUNT RESULTS WERE 3 1/2 TIMES THE BODY BURDEN ABOVE THE PLANT ALLOWABLE LIMITS. EVERY MONTH OR TWO THE SUPERVISOR OF INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE AND HEALTH PHYSICS WOULD WRITE TO DOE CONCERNING OUR EXPOSURE. COULD SOMEONE TELL ME WHERE THOSE LETTERS ARE? I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A COPY OF THEM. THE SUPERVISOR WOULD CARRY THE FACTS OF OUR CASE TO MEETINGS HE HAD THROUGHOUT THE NATION IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT HOW TO GET OUR COUNT DOWN.

I WENT TO MY PERSONAL PHYSICIAN, BUT HE TOLD ME I SHOULD RETURN TO THE PLANT DOCTOR BECAUSE HE WAS THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THE FIELD OF URANIUM. THE PLANT DOCTOR HAD US URINATE IN GALLON JUGS AROUND THE CLOCK FOR PROBABLY TWO MONTHS. THEY DISCOVERED THIS WAS USELESS TO DETERMINE OUR CONDITION BECAUSE THE URANIUM DOESN'T DISSOLVE IN BODY FLUIDS. WE WERE THEN PLACED ON AN IN-VIVO CHECK EVERY SIX MONTHS.

THE HALF-LIFE CYCLE OF URANIUM WAS EXPLAINED TO US AND HOW THIS WOULD OCCUR IN OUR BODIES. THEY SAID THE COUNT WOULD NEED TO GET DOWN BELOW 75 ON TWO COUNTS IN A ROW TO BE REMOVED FROM RESTRICTION. AT MY RETIREMENT, MINE WAS STILL NOT DOWN TO 75. MINE CAME DOWN TO 100 AND LEVELED OFF. WE ASKED THE PLANT DOCTOR VARIOUS QUESTIONS OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO US AND COULD IT ENDANGER OUR FAMILIES IN ANY WAY. THE DOCTOR DIDN'T LIKE BEING ASKED THE QUESTIONS, HE STORMED OUT OF THE ROOM. LATER, I WENT TO HIS OFFICE ALONE AND HE TOLD ME, AS FAR AS HE KNEW, NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN FOR TEN YEARS. THE URANIUM WOULD TAKE THE RED BLOOD CELLS.

ONE DAY I WAS CALLED TO THE PLANT HOSPITAL. A DOCTOR FROM THE HANFORD RESEARCH LABORATORY ASKED ME TO BE ON THE URANIUM REGISTRY. THEY OFFERED MY WIFE \$500.00 TO ALLOW THEM TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY IN THE EVENT OF MY DEATH. IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT INSOLUBLE

URANIUM IN ANIMALS MOVES THROUGH THE BODY TO ANY ORGANS THAT ACT AS A FILTER. THEY WANTED TO FIND OUT WHERE IT HAD MOVED IN MY BODY. MY WIFE WOULD NOT SIGN IT.

IN 1985, MY FAILING HEALTH FORCED ME TO RETIRE EARLY. GAIL McCLELLEN WAS DIAGNOSED WITH LEUKEMIA AND DIED IN HIS 40'S. I JUST KNEW I WOULD BE NEXT. I DID HAVE SYMPTOMS OF LEUKEMIA AND THE DOCTOR TOLD ME IT WOULD GO AWAY. MY CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM IS NOT HEALTHY. I HAVE HAD TWO NERVIOUS BREAKDOWNS, KIDNEY, BLADDER AND URINARY PROBLEMS, ACUTE BRONCHITIS, BREATHING PROBLEMS. I ALSO HAD A MASSIVE HEART ATTACK AND OPEN-HEART SURGERY AND I HAD A DISC GO BAD IN MY BACK AND HAD TO HAVE BACK FUSSION..

THE SEVEN OF US FILED A STATE WORKERS COMPENSATION CLAIM. WE HAD A HEARING AND WON THE CLAIM. SOMEHOW, GOODYEAR HAD THE CLAIM PUT ON A TEN-YEAR HOLD AND IT DIED AFTER SIX MORE YEARS.

WHEN I READ ABOUT THE NEW FEDERAL LAW, I BEGAN TO GATHER MY RECORDS OF EXPOSURE. I WENT TO THE BUREAU OF WORKERS COMPENSATION TO FILE A STATE CLAIM, THEY TOLD ME MY RECORDS HAD BEEN DESTROYED AND I COULD NOT RE-OPEN MY DEAD CLAIM.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY NEEDS TO HELP US WITH THESE CLAIMS. WE WERE LOYAL WORKERS FOR THIS COUNTRY. WE WERE EXPOSED TO HAZARDOUS TOXIC CHEMICALS AND WERE NOT TOLD. THESE RULES WILL NOT HELP US. THEY HAVE LEFT ME OUT OF IT.