

ORIGINAL
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Title: INTERVIEW OF
VERNON PAUL LAW
(CLOSED)

Case No.: 2-1998-023

Work Order No.: ASB-300-937

LOCATION: Spring City, TN

DATE: Wednesday, May 12, 1999

PAGES: 1 - 19

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C O N T E N T S

WITNESS	EXAMINATION
VERNON PAUL LAW	
BY MR. CLAXTON	4

E X H I B I T S

NUMBER	IDENTIFIED
[NONE.]	

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. CLAXTON: For the record, this is Wednesday,
3 May 12th, 1999. This is an interview of Paul Law. The
4 interview is taking place at Watts Bar Nuclear Plant at 1260
5 Nuclear Plant Road in Spring City, Tennessee.

6 Also present is Ed Bigluicci who is a Senior
7 Counsel for the Tennessee Valley Authority, and myself. I
8 am Gary Claxton, I am a Special Agent with the Nuclear
9 Regulatory Commission, Office of Investigation.

10 Mr. Law, well, we talked before the interview
11 started as to whether you are aware of Mr. Bigluicci's
12 position --

13 MR. LAW: Yes, I am.

14 MR. CLAXTON: -- with the company here. That he
15 is an attorney for your employer. Are you aware that he can
16 share anything he hears today with your employer?

17 MR. LAW: Yes.

18 MR. CLAXTON: And are you aware that you have the
19 right to provide information to the NRC confidentially
20 without anyone else being present?

21 MR. LAW: Yes, sir.

22 MR. CLAXTON: Okay. And have you asked him to be
23 here with you today?

24 MR. LAW: Yes, sir, I did.

25 MR. CLAXTON: Okay. Do you have any objections to

1 placing -- or giving me the information under oath?

2 MR. LAW: No, sir.

3 MR. CLAXTON: Okay. Would you raise your right
4 hand, please?

5 Whereupon,

6 VERNON PAUL LAW,
7 the interviewee, was called for examination and, having been
8 first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

9 MR. CLAXTON: Thank you. You can put your hand
10 down.

11 DIRECT EXAMINATION

12 BY MR. CLAXTON:

13 Q As we proceed through the interview, Mr. Law, if
14 you give me a proper name or an acronym, or anything, if you
15 would spell that out or say what the acronym means, I would
16 appreciate it.

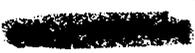
17 A Okay.

18 Q Okay. What is your full name?

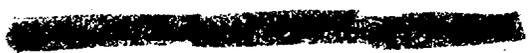
19 A Vernon Paul Law.

20 Q And where do you reside?

21 A 

22 

1c

23 Q 

24 A 

25 Q 

- 1 74 A [REDACTED]
- 2 Q And are you presently employed here at Watts Bar?
- 3 A Yes, sir.
- 4 Q Okay. And what is your occupation?
- 5 A Presently I am in training for a SRO license.
- 6 Q Okay. And SRO refers --
- 7 A Senior reactor operator.
- 8 Q Senior reactor operator. And how long have you
- 9 been in class?
- 10 A Three weeks now.
- 11 Q Okay. And what did you do prior to beginning your
- 12 SRO class?
- 13 A I was in the system engineering group.
- 14 Q And specifically what did you do there?
- 15 A I was the auxiliary lead, unit lead. I had two
- 16 people under my supervision, and we had responsibility for
- 17 about six or eight systems.
- 18 Q Was the ice condenser one of those systems?
- 19 A Yes, sir.
- 20 Q And how long -- excuse me -- how long have you had
- 21 the responsibilities for the ice condenser?
- 22 A In actuality, Gary Jordan is the system engineer,
- 23 he worked for me, and we have been working this particular
- 24 arrangement since about '96. Prior to that we didn't have
- 25 group leads, we all just worked, you know, straight for the

1 supervisor.

2 Q Okay. So in June of 1995, were you involved with
3 the ice condenser system?

4 A I was working with Curtis, because, you know, it
5 really took more than one person to do the work on it. So I
6 was working with Curtis Overall.

7 Q And was he the system engineer, so did you report
8 to Curtis?

9 A No, sir, we just kind of worked together. That is
10 what I was saying, prior to that, we just all reported to
11 the management supervisor at that point in time. We didn't
12 even have like the group lead, so everybody was really kind
13 on the same level, but, you know, we helped each other out,
14 because, you know, when one person had a lot more to do than
15 somebody else, somebody that had some slack time would help
16 the other people. That is -- at that time I was doing, I
17 was helping Curtis.

18 Q And who was your supervisor at that time, in June
19 of '95?

20 A Randy McCormick.

21 Q Okay. Now, during that time period of 1995, were
22 you involved in a request for Central Lab Services to
23 examine some ice basket screws?

24 A Yes, sir, we had found some screws in the melt
25 tank after the initial load of ice, and those were sent off

1 as part of the corrective action for a PER, we call it,
2 which is a problem evaluation report, and they were sent
3 down there to be evaluated, to determine, you know, what had
4 caused the heads, basically, to pop off the screws.

5 Q So you sent them to the Central Labs for
6 examination?

7 A Right.

8 Q What part did you play in that? I mean did you
9 find the screws, did you discuss this issue with Curtis?

10 A Well, basically, what happened, Curtis and I were
11 there together when we cleaned out the melt tank and we
12 found the screws. We came back up, both of us together, to
13 discuss it with the supervisor. And, of course, at that
14 point in time the PER was initiated and then, you know, part
15 of the corrective action for the PER was to send the screws
16 down to see if they could, you know, determine, you know,
17 what the problem was with the screws.

18 Q Okay. You said you discussed it with your
19 supervisor, Mr. McCormick?

20 A That's correct.

21 Q Okay. Did he advise you in any way as to what to
22 do?

23 A Well, not so much, you know, like it was just kind
24 of an open discussion that we had about, you know, what we
25 felt like needed to be done in order to -- you know, there

1 was other items, too, that we identified, you know, we had
2 problems with. And so we were really just coming up with a
3 corrective action plan. And, so, you know, basically, it
4 was just an open forum where we sat down and discussed the
5 problems and what potential corrective actions were, you
6 know, because Curtis was the one that developed the
7 corrective actions for it. And then, of course, the goes
8 back to the supervisor, you know, but on the way is, you
9 know, the employee writes up the corrective action plan and
10 then the supervisor approves it.

11 Q So had the screws been sent to the Central Labs
12 before he talked to Mr. McCormick?

13 A No, sir. That was -- that was part of the
14 subsequent actions that were done as part of the corrective
15 action for the PER.

16 Q Okay. So, now, to your knowledge, did Mr.
17 McCormick agree with sending the screws back to the lab?

18 A The best I can remember, you know, he was in favor
19 of doing that, yes.

20 Q Okay. What happened as a result of you sending
21 the screws to the lab?

22 A The lab did various type testing, which I don't
23 know that much about the metallurgical aspects of it, but,
24 you know, of course, a report was generated and provided
25 back to the site.

1 Q Did you see the report?

2 A Yes, sir.

3 Q Okay. So there -- I think there were two reports,
4 eventually, is that correct?

5 A And I didn't realize that there were two reports
6 written until a significant time later. As a matter of
7 fact, you know, it was a couple of years later that I found
8 out that the second report had been written, because I
9 didn't get a copy of the second report.

10 Q Did you see the first report?

11 A Yes, sir.

12 Q Did you read the first report?

13 A Yes, sir.

14 Q Okay. At the time it was issued?

15 A Yes, sir.

16 Q Okay. When did you find out about the second
17 report?

18 A Just guessing, I would say probably '97 timeframe.

19 Q Do you know how you found out about it, what the
20 occasion that you would learn about it then?

21 A Well, the way it came back to me was finally
22 Westinghouse had questioned the -- TVA questioned the
23 response that Westinghouse provided on the screws, and then
24 the Westinghouse site -- some of the site representatives
25 came back to me and asked me if I had a copy of the second

1 report. And, of course, I told them, I said, well, I didn't
2 know that there was a second report. So then we got to
3 digging into it and found out that there was.

4 Q But that, you think that was along about '97?

5 A I am just guessing that is when it was. I was
6 thinking it was like in the '97 timeframe, maybe '98,
7 something like --

8 Q Could it have been last autumn or last fall, all
9 of '98?

10 A Ninety-eight. It could have been as late as that,
11 yeah. Yeah, this is '99, so it was '98, right, last year.

12 Q And do you remember who asked you about that
13 second report?

14 A Yes, sir. It was the secretary out at the
15 Westinghouse that works here on site.

16 Q And do you know who that is, do you know the name?
17 Do you know her name?

18 A I am trying to remember her last name. Robin --

19 Q That's okay.

20 A I can't remember what her last name is.

21 Q That's all right. Okay. In June of '95, the
22 first report was issued on June 2nd, and then sometime later
23 on June 14th there was a meeting here on site. There was a
24 sign-in sheet, an attendance sheet, and your name does not
25 appear on there. Do you recall whether or not you attended

1 that meeting, even though your name is not on there?

2 A I didn't remember that meeting. I had -- Ed and I
3 discussed it previously somewhat and I don't recall that
4 meeting. I tried to remember where that meeting was held,
5 because, you know, we have moved around to like two or three
6 different places, and I was trying to remember where we were
7 at that point in time, and I can't remember that meeting
8 there specifically.

9 Q Okay. Do you recall a teleconference involving
10 personnel from Westinghouse and maybe Gordon Yetter and
11 Curtis Overall?

12 A Yes, sir. I remember the telecon that was held
13 later, and that was one where Westinghouse was on the
14 telecon and our metallurgical engineer was on the telecon.

15 Q And who is that?

16 A Terry Woods.

17 Q Okay. What do you recall about that conference?

18 A Basically, it was just a discussion about the
19 findings, you know, that TVA had found out at Central Labs,
20 and I think at that point in time they were really just
21 trying to see what Westinghouse's feelings were about, you
22 know, the report itself.

23 Q Was there any indication that Westinghouse had a
24 copy of that report?

25 A I don't know. I would assume that they probably

1 did have because they were talking like maybe that they had
2 already had it. I was thinking that this was like after the
3 report had issued several days, and I know that a copy of
4 the report was given to Westinghouse.

5 Q Do you know how they got a copy of the report?

6 A No, sir, I do not.

7 Q Do you know who was on the teleconference from
8 Westinghouse? Do you know who represented Westinghouse?

9 A The best I can remember it was Chuck Cravis. And
10 the reason I say that is because just about in all cases,
11 whenever we talk about ice condensers with Westinghouse, it
12 is typically Chuck Cravis, because he is their ice condenser
13 expert.

14 Q Do you think you spell his name C-r-a-v-i-s?

15 A As far as I know.

16 Q Okay. Do you recall whether there was any
17 discussion in that teleconference about the new unused
18 screws that had been examined?

19 A I don't remember a whole lot of the details about
20 the discussion. All I remember is just a general discussion
21 about the reports, you know, the report and the findings of
22 the screw issues and that kind of thing. But I don't
23 remember specifically, you know, what was discussed in the
24 meeting.

25 Q Do you recall whether you had any input or whether

1 you had any interest or something to contribute?

2 A I mainly listened. Like I was saying, they were
3 discussing a whole lot of metallurgical issues, you know,
4 like stress fractures and stuff like that, and I am not, you
5 know, that familiar with that aspect of the -- you know, I
6 am not a metallurgical engineer. And so, really, I was
7 just, you know, listening to see what the discussion
8 involved.

9 Q At the end of the teleconference did you and
10 Curtis discuss the conversation at all as far as anything he
11 disagreed with or do you recall that anything troubled him
12 as far as what was said?

13 A I am sure Curtis and I talked about it afterwards
14 because the end result of the report, you know, from our
15 aspect would be to make a determination as far as like what
16 corrective actions would have to be taken as to whether or
17 not we would have to replace the screws or whatever was
18 going to be done. But I don't remember any -- anything that
19 was said, really, at that point in time that would have, you
20 know, been a problem for Curtis, or myself, either one.

21 Q Do you recall or did the two of you discuss what
22 corrective actions should be taken? Or did the two of you
23 hash this out in any way?

24 A No, because we were still waiting for the final
25 decision. Even though -- I guess what I should say is

1 regardless of what the conclusions that the Central Lab came
2 up with, we were still waiting for an official response from
3 Westinghouse, since they were the vendor, you know, for us
4 to be able to decide what final corrective actions we would
5 take. And, of course, that was what we were trying to do,
6 is provide the information from within TVA to Westinghouse
7 to help them make the decision on what their suggestions for
8 the corrective action would be.

9 Q Do you recall what the Westinghouse findings were,
10 generally?

11 A Well, the report that came back from Westinghouse
12 indicated that there was a very small number of screw
13 problems and that I guess, based on their previous testing,
14 most everything on the ice condenser was not analyzed, you
15 know, mathematically, or whatever, you know, there was no
16 analytical analysis done, it was all done by testing, and
17 they felt like that there wouldn't be a problem because it
18 was such a small population of screws that had been found.

19 Q Okay. So if I understand you, you are saying that
20 your understanding at the time was that Westinghouse said
21 there shouldn't be a problem based on statistical analysis?

22 A Yes, sir.

23 Q Okay. And I think you said earlier, and I want to
24 make sure I understood you correctly, that you believe they
25 had the Central Lab report?

1 A Yes, sir, I believe that they did have the first
2 one at that point in time. I don't know that to be a fact,
3 but just based on my recollection of the discussion, I would
4 have thought, you know, that they had information that they
5 were talking about that I thought that they had a copy of
6 it.

7 Q I guess the next question would be kind of
8 rhetorical. I am not sure you have the answer. If they
9 didn't have that report, how would they have known about the
10 screw problem, how would they have been advised, or how
11 would they have been made aware of the screw problem?

12 A Well, I mean it is reasonable to assume that once
13 the PER was written, that the Westinghouse people on site
14 would have known about it. And then I am sure that they
15 talked to their, you know, people up in Pittsburgh. So, you
16 know, that is just kind of an assumption on my part, but I
17 don't think it was unreasonable to assume that the
18 information could have been transferred that way.

19 MR. CLAXTON: Okay. We will take a short break at
20 2:08.

21 [Recess.]

22 MR. CLAXTON: We are back on the record at 2:16
23 p.m. with the same parties present. And Mr. Smith, I will
24 remind you that you are under oath for the information you
25 give us.

1 THE INTERVIEWEE: Right.

2 BY MR. CLAXTON:

3 Q When you were working with Mr. Overall, did you
4 all talk a lot during the day, were you pretty much aware of
5 what each other would be doing on a day-to-day basis?

6 A Well, yeah, pretty much so because we were on the
7 same projects, so, you know, we were kind of -- we were
8 staying pretty much in communication with what was going on.

9 Q And the reason I am asking that, I am curious
10 about when that second report came out, and I think you said
11 you weren't even aware that the second report came out, and
12 I can only go by what you are telling me, did he never -- or
13 did Mr. Overall ever express any concerns about what was
14 going on with the ice basket screw issue or did you ever
15 discuss it?

16 A After we got through with the initial ice load and
17 we kind of got most of the work load, you know, it was kind
18 of squared away, then I had to go over start working on some
19 of my systems then. So, Curtis and I didn't work as closely
20 together.

21 Q Excuse me. But what about what would the time
22 period there, somewhat after the June time period?

23 A Yeah. Yeah, see, the thing about it is, if you
24 think about what happened, is we had already gone through
25 and done most of the majority of the work on the ice

1 condenser that needed to be done. One of the last things
2 that we did was to clean out the melt tank and that is when
3 we found the screws in there. So that was toward the
4 cleanup on the back end of the major effort. And so then at
5 that point in time, you know, since Curtis' work load was
6 beginning to, you know, to ease off some, then they let me
7 go back and start working on some of my stuff.

8 And then also, you know, sometime after that, and
9 I am not sure how long it was, the responsibility for the
10 PER got transferred to the design engineering group
11 upstairs. So it was kind of taken, you know, taken out of
12 the system engineer's hands, and so we weren't directly
13 involved in what was going on at that point in time.

14 Q Okay. Do you know why the PER was transferred?

15 A Well, like I was saying before, it was
16 metallurgical type issues and stuff like that, that we
17 weren't intimately familiar with, and so I think it was felt
18 like that it was more appropriate to be handled somebody
19 that was more knowledgeable in those areas.

20 Q Did anyone from engineering come back and talk to
21 you or ask any questions about the PER or ice basket screws?

22 A No, they didn't ask me specifically, but I think
23 that some of the other people, you know, Randy McCormick, of
24 course, and I think Curtis was involved in some other
25 discussions, but by that point in time I wasn't.

1 Q Okay. Have you talked to Mr. Overall in the last
2 year or so about this ice basket screw issue? I mean like,
3 has he called you and asked you any questions to help him
4 refresh his memory or anything along those lines?

5 A Curtis and I talked off and on on different
6 occasions, and I am sure that we have talked within the last
7 year. But we have never talked since Curtis left TVA
8 specifically about the screw issue, other than the fact that
9 Curtis, you know, had had some problems and stuff like that.
10 And I was involved in a Department of Labor hearing that
11 involved Curtis, you know, that I provided testimony in.
12 But we have never really talked at length, you know,
13 anything about the screws or anything like that, I mean
14 just, you know, things that developed, we just kind of
15 ignored the subject, I guess.

16 Q Can you follow up on that a little bit, when you
17 said as things developed, I kind of ignored it? Help me out
18 a little bit there. I know you might not want to get into
19 collateral issues, but --

20 A Well, you know, the bottom line was Curtis filed a
21 DOL suit, you know, because he had claimed that TVA had
22 released him due to the fact that he had identified the
23 problem with the screws. And so I didn't feel like it was
24 really appropriate for me to be discussing, you know, items
25 with him, you know, like that, under the circumstances, and

1 so I just -- I didn't bring it up, and he didn't either. So
2 we just didn't talk about it.

3 Q Do you have any questions about what we have
4 talked about, or do you have anything you would like to add,
5 something you think we have missed?

6 A No, sir, I can't think of anything.

7 MR. CLAXTON: Do you have anything, Ed?

8 MR. BIGLUICCI: Nothing, Gary.

9 MR. CLAXTON: Okay. I think that is all I have.

10 BY MR. CLAXTON:

11 Q Have you provided this information freely and
12 voluntarily?

13 A Yes, sir.

14 Q Okay. Have you received any threats or promises
15 from myself or any other employee of the NRC?

16 A No, sir.

17 MR. CLAXTON: All right. If there are no other
18 questions, we will conclude the interview at 2:22 p.m.

19 [Whereupon, at 2:22 p.m., the interview was
20 concluded.]

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceedings before the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the matter of:

Name of Proceeding: INTERVIEW OF
VERNON PAUL LAW
(CLOSED)

Docket Number: 2-1998-023

Place of Proceeding: Spring City, TN

were held as herein appears, and that this is the original transcript thereof for the file of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission transcribed by me from recorded tapes provided by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and that the transcript is a true and accurate record of the foregoing proceedings to the best of my belief and ability.



Martha Brazil
Transcriber
Ann Riley & Associates, Ltd.