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RECORD OF INTERVIEW

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Name: Robert J. Beecken
Position: Current: Plant Readiness Manager
Watts Bar Nuclear Plant (WBN)
Former: Plant Manager
Sequoyah Nuclear Plant (SQN)
Work Tel.: (615) 751-6055
SSN/DOB: [REDACTED]

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Beecken, who is aware of the identity of the interviewing agent, was contacted at WBN and advised that this interview pertained to the Gary L. Fiser (former Chemistry Manager, SQN) reduction-in-force (RIF) and Fiser's subsequent Department of Labor (DOL) complaint. Beecken provided the following information.

Beecken stated that Fiser was not adverse to the idea of swapping positions with Bill Jocher, former Corporate Chemistry Manager, in March 1992. Beecken originally felt that the swap was a good idea because it would give Jocher a chance to fix the chemistry problems he (Jocher) had been identifying. Furthermore, Beecken had not been happy with Fiser's performance at SQN and the swap would give Fiser a chance to perform under a different manager (i.e. Wilson McArthur, Manager, Technical Programs).

Beecken does not recall having a specific conversation with Fiser and Jack Wilson, former Site Vice President, SQN, in the stairwell. However, Beecken stated that it was possible that Fiser caught them in the stairwell and he (Beecken) "said something to the effect of you (Fiser) have done a good job, but there are a lot of problems in the Chemistry Program and here is a good offer for you to go downtown - a good career move." In addition, Beecken believes he may also have told Fiser that he (Beecken) wanted Jocher to prove himself.

Investigation On: February 3, 1994

At: Watts Bar Nuclear Plant

By: ^{BS1} SA Beth B. Thomas

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CLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Docket No. 01-791-01 Official Exh. No. Joint 26

In the matter of TVA

Staff _____ IDENTIFIED _____

Applicant _____ RECEIVED

Intervenor _____ REJECTED _____

Other _____ WITHDRAWN _____

DATE 9-9-02 Witness Becker

Clerk L. Davis

01-791-01-26

Beecken denies telling Fiser that going to Corporate would make him more promotable. Instead, Beecken recalls telling Fiser that it would be a good idea for him to go to Corporate to prove himself because of the problems in the SQN chemistry program.

According to Beecken, the longer Jocher was at SQN, the more it became apparent that Fiser had not been doing his job (as SQN Chemistry Manager). Therefore, Beecken told McArthur (exact date unknown) that he did not want Fiser to return as the SQN Chemistry Manager because the underlying performance problems showed that Fiser was not the "right guy" to run the SQN Chemistry program. According to Beecken, the decision not to bring Fiser back to SQN had nothing to do with Fiser raising safety issues. Instead, Beecken stated that Fiser was a "good chemist, but not a good manager."

When questioned regarding Fiser's claim that he was held accountable for chemistry problems which occurred when he (Fiser) was assigned to the Outage Team, Beecken advised that Fiser's performance problems and the chemistry program problems had not just developed in that one year (when Fiser was in Outage), but rather were long-standing. In addition, Fiser was still on-site when he worked in outage and therefore, should have been aware of what was happening in the chemistry program (even though there was an Acting Chemistry Manager at that time).

Beecken's December 1992 Meeting with Fiser

Beecken recalled meeting with Fiser in December 1992 to discuss why he (Beecken) did not want Fiser back as the SQN Chemistry Manager. During this meeting, Beecken told Fiser that he (Fiser) was not wanted back at SQN because there were so many problems in the SQN Chemistry Program that he (Beecken) did not see how Fiser could be effective. Beecken recalled that he and Fiser discussed the problems with the "rad-monitor setpoints not accounting for the vacuum" during this meeting. According to Beecken, Fiser was held accountable for this problem (which resulted in an incident investigation) because he had been the Chemistry Manager during much of the time that the rad-monitors were "out of whack."

According to Beecken, Fiser was held accountable for technicians misaligning valves and misassembling filters. Specifically, Beecken stated in the "filter change-out scenario" (where technicians found a valve which is supposed to remain open was closed and it resulted in a Licensee Event Report [LER]) there was a problem with supervisory oversight. Beecken explained that the root cause of the problem was the technicians were not using the correct procedures and there was supervisory

acceptance of them (the technicians) using incorrect procedures. Beecken stated that Fiser did not let the technicians know what was expected or what might occur if they did not use the correct procedures. As a result, according to Beecken, the manager is held accountable instead of the technicians. Beecken stated that Fiser would have been held accountable even though he was not working in Chemistry at the time because of the tone that Fiser had previously set for the chemistry department.

Beecken stated that the instrumentation problem had been out of Fiser's ability to control. However, Beecken feels that Fiser should have been more effective at presenting the instrumentation problems.

Beecken stated "I was real upset about training." Beecken explained that he was not even aware that SQN had such a nice chemistry lab at the training center until Jocher took him over to it (when Jocher was the SQN Chemistry Manager). When Beecken saw the lab, it was "locked up with cobwebs." Even though Beecken realized that resources for training had been cut, he feels that Fiser should have been more resourceful with what was there instead of "whining that he didn't have any instructors, etc."

Additionally, Fiser would "pump" up the technicians prior to an Institute of Nuclear Power (INPO) evaluation. Beecken stated that he told Fiser during the December 1992, meeting that the technicians should know the basics instead of being told before the test. Beecken stated that his position was "why do we have to pump these guys, what's wrong?"

Beecken stated that there were continuous findings against Chemistry by INPO while Fiser was the SQN Chemistry Manager.

According to Beecken, Fiser not being brought back to SQN was not because he (Fiser) raised safety issues, but rather because Fiser did not raise the issues.

Beecken believes he "went the extra mile" to give Fiser a chance to succeed by sending him downtown.

Beecken stated that he never told Fiser that he was not wanted back at SQN because "I (Beecken) wanted a perfect INPO evaluation that's why." Instead, Beecken believes he may have said something like "I wanted an improved INPO evaluation."

Organizational Changes

According to Beecken, it was a company wide decision to combine Radiological Control (RadCon) and Chemistry and it involved the other nuclear sites.

Beecken stated that he gave Charles Kent, the new RadCon/Chemistry Manager, the freedom to change the organizational structure, but Kent was limited by Corporate wanting the sites to remain consistent. According to Beecken, it was Kent's wish to flatten the organization, but Beecken did not necessarily agree. However, Beecken stated that he did not care what organization ended up happening.

Beecken could not recall an interim organization being implemented. In addition, Beecken was not involved in the Hay Committee dealings for the new positions.

Beecken stated that he was in kind of a fog about the organizational changes because he knew Kent had it under control. Beecken stated that he has a lot of confidence in Kent.

Beecken's Knowledge of Fiser's Reduction-in-Force (RIF)

Beecken believed that Fiser had been RIF'ed from a Corporate position not from the SQN Chemistry Manager job. Beecken believes McArthur may have told him that Fiser was being RIF'ed, but "it didn't even dawn on me that it was from the SQN Chemistry Manager position." Beecken stated that he did not realize that the Chemistry Manager position had officially gone away.

Beecken stated that when he originally told McArthur that he (Beecken) did not want Fiser at SQN, McArthur said that he (McArthur) did not want him either. However, once the decision was made that Fiser would not be returning to SQN, Beecken felt like Fiser was a Corporate person and therefore, Beecken did not worry about what happened to him.

Beecken stated that he did talk to Joe Bynum, former Vice President, Nuclear Operations, about Fiser's performance problems and the swap. Beecken denied telling Bynum that they needed to do away with Fiser, but Beecken did probably tell Bynum that he (Beecken) did not want Fiser back at SQN. In addition, Beecken stated he also told Dan Keuter, former Vice President, Nuclear Operations Services, that he did not want Fiser back at SQN because Fiser was in Keuter's organization.

Miscellaneous

Beecken advised that he actually left SQN on July 7, 1993. However, Beecken became less effective after February 8, 1993.

Beecken was not aware that the Chemistry Manager position had been upgraded. In addition, Beecken was not aware that Kent was trying to hire Fiser back as the SQN Chemistry Manager (out of the employee transition program). Beecken stated that if he had known of the attempt to re-hire Fiser, he (Beecken) would have agreed that Fiser was not the right person for the SQN Chemistry Manager position.

Beecken stated that Kent felt like Gordon Rich, a candidate for the Chemistry Manager position, was being forced upon him (Kent) by Keuter.