Official Transcript of Proceedings

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Title: Interview of [redacted]

Docket Number: 1-2003-051F

Location: Hancock's Bridge, New Jersey

Date: Friday, October 24, 2003

Work Order No.: NRC-1203 Pages 1-44

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1 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2 NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

3 + + + + +

4 OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

5 INTERVIEW

6 ----------x

7 IN THE MATTER OF: :

8 INTERVIEW OF : Docket No.

9 [redacted] 7c : 1-2003-051F

10 (CLOSED) :

11 ----------x

12

13 Friday, October 24, 2003

14 Resident Inspector's Office

15 Salem/Hope Creek Nuclear Power

16 Station

17 Hancock's Bridge, New Jersey

18

19 The above-entitled interview was conducted

20 at 10:45 a.m.

21

22 BEFORE:

23 Special Agent MARK A. ANDERSON

24

25

1 ALSO PRESENT:

2 MARK FERDAS

3 Hope Creek Resident Inspector

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5 CHARLES HASSLER

6 IBEW LOCAL 94 Business Representative

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 10:45 a.m.

3 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Today is October

4 24, 2003. The time is now approximately 10:45 a.m.

5 This is an interview with [redacted]

6 [redacted].

7 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: [redacted]

8 [redacted] who is employed by PSE&G at the Salem Generating

9 Station. The location of this interview is the

10 Resident Inspector's Office at Salem.

11 Present at this interview are myself, Mark

12 A. Anderson, Special Agent with the Office of

13 Investigations, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

14 Region I, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania and also Mark

15 Ferdas, F-E-R-D-A-S, the Hope Creek Resident

16 Inspector. Also present today is Charles Hassler, H-

17 A-S-S-L-E-R, the business agent for IBEW Local 94 who

18 is here with [redacted] today.

19 This interview is being recorded and a

20 transcript of the interview will be prepared. The

21 subject matter of the interview concerns safety

22 conscious work environment issues and the programs

23 that exist to get those issues resolved at Salem and

24 Hope Creek. At this point, [redacted] I will ask you

25 to raise your right hand so I can swear you in.

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1 WHEREUPON,

2 [redacted]

3 was called as a witness and, having been first duly

4 sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

5 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Thank you. If

6 you would just state your full name for the record

7 please.

8 [redacted]

9 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Your address.

10 [redacted]

11 [redacted]

12 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Your current job

13 title.

14 [redacted] I am a [redacted]

15 [redacted] at the Salem Generating Station.

16 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Your home

17 telephone number.

18 [redacted]

19 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Your work number.

20 [redacted]

21 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Your date of

22 birth.

23 [redacted]

24 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Your social

25 security number.

1 [redacted]

2 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: If you would just

3 tell me a little bit about your education history and

4 how you got into the nuclear business and how you got

5 to the position you are in now.

6 [redacted] Do you want college too?

7 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Yes.

8 [redacted]

9 [redacted]

10 [redacted]

11 [redacted]

12 [redacted]

13 [redacted].

14 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: How long did you

15 hold that position?

16 [redacted]. I became a [redacted]

17 [redacted] in the [redacted] I have been licensed

18 since [redacted]

19 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Who is your

20 current supervisor now in your position?

21 [redacted] My [redacted] is [redacted]

22 [redacted]

23 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Is that [redacted]

24 [redacted]

25 [redacted] Correct.

1 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: We talked a
2 little bit before going on the record about what we're
3 looking to talk about today. I guess I would just ask
4 you from your standpoint. Have you had issues related
5 with the safety environment here that you have raised
6 before?
7 [redacted] Are you talking about
8 personal safety?
9 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Our primary focus
10 is nuclear safety issues, but I think that the way
11 that management receives or responds to any safety
12 issue is relevant just to the attitude. Our chief
13 concern would be the nuclear safety side.
14 [redacted] As far as nuclear safety, I
15 have never seen an issue where I have questioned the
16 company's attitude about nuclear safety. Just in the
17 last year, I have been in there for two reactor trips.
18 I have been in there for numerous down powers and
19 coming off-lines. I have done a couple of start ups.
20 I have never had an issue with nuclear safety as far
21 as the way we approached it, the way management has
22 approached it.
23 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: The one thing
24 that we bring up is the concept of production being
25 more important than safety.

1 [redacted] I know what you mean.

2 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You haven't seen

3 any example of that in the nuclear safety arena.

4 [redacted] No, I have never seen an

5 issue as far as nuclear safety. In fact, on the

6 several occasions that I have been there where we have

7 had for instance the reactor trips, management has

8 always followed up and came to me and said to me you

9 guys did the right thing. They have never said you

10 guys shouldn't. Well, you could have approached it

11 differently. But they have always backed our decision

12 to bring the unit off-line. Do you want specifics?

13 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Sure.

14 [redacted] I think it was November 11 of

15 last year, about a week after we came out of refueling

16 on Unit I, that we had a problem with a feed pump. A

17 technician was down there doing some troubleshooting.

18 He tripped it. We weren't aware of it because we had

19 a silent feed pump trip. We had no overhead alarms.

20 Once we recognized our indications, we

21 initiated the run back like we're supposed to. It

22 looked like the generator levels weren't recovering.

23 I was the plant operator that day. The reactor

24 operator and I decided the generator levels aren't

25 going to recover. We recommend reactor trip. CRS

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1 realized this was serious. We tripped the reactor
2 before the automatic trip got it, and we went into the
3 OPs.
4 There's no question about it. Later on
5 that afternoon, management came up to us and said you
6 guys did exactly what you were supposed to do. That
7 was what we expected. It was just on that occasion.
8 That's what I can think of off the top of my head.
9 Another specific would be last spring we had a problem
10 with the heater drain pump. The heater drain pump
11 discharge valve closed on us, an air line vibrated
12 loose.
13 The dump valve should have opened up
14 automatically but it was such a high DP that the valve
15 couldn't open. So we went into the AB. We got to the
16 point where we have a lot of guys in there now dealing
17 with the situation. Maintenance wanted to put a
18 hydraulic jack on the dump valve to open the valve up.
19 I looked at the assistant ops manager and said that's
20 a bad idea. We're going to probably hurt somebody.
21 He thanked me for saying you are exactly
22 right. We need to regroup here before we just get
23 into worrying about getting this valve open and the
24 restoration of production. That would be the best way
25 to think about it. Those are two examples that I have

never had a problem with as far as actual plant operations with management's approach. They have always backed up the operators.

MR. FERDAS: Any of those issues, were they recurring problems that were known about previously that weren't addressed that the operators might have had concerns over that could take the unit off-line or just cause it to go through a transient?

[redacted] During those two instances, there were no known problems. That's just those things happened unfortunately. We weren't aware of those at the time, no.

MR. FERDAS: Are there any issues that are out there that create angst and could potentially threaten the safe operation of the unit that's not being addressed?

[redacted]: There's lots of issues that are trying to be addressed. We're trying to deal with the issues that we're trying to fix and the appropriate time we get them fixed. These things just seem to pile up and pile up. It does create a lot of angst.

For instance, control room indicators, that's always been a thorn in our side. We keep trying to address it. It doesn't matter who you put

1 in charge of it. It just seems like we can't seem to
2 get it fixed.
3 MR. FERDAS: It's not a lack of trying.
4 [redacted] It's not a lack of trying.
5 MR. FERDAS: It's resources, money.
6 [redacted] Well, I don't know. As far
7 as what goes on behind the scenes, I really can't tell
8 you because I'm not privy to that.
9 MR. FERDAS: There's an attempt to try to
10 fix.
11 [redacted] I could say there's probably
12 an attempt to try to fix. Is it maybe no one is being
13 held accountable? I don't know.
14 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Is it an
15 insurmountable issue, or is it just it seems to drop
16 off the table?
17 [redacted] It just seems like you are
18 always chasing your tail. It's one thing after
19 another after another. It's always something more
20 important comes up it seems like.
21 MR. FERDAS: These issues are on your
22 turnover sheets. They are known problems.
23 [redacted] They are known problems.
24 They are in the system. They wouldn't be on our daily
25 turnover sheet unless it's an issue that could

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1 threaten the operation of the plant. But they are in
2 the SAP systems. We keep an attachment in the control
3 room of the ongoing inoperable control room
4 instrumentation or the -- control room
5 instrumentation.
6 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Do those issues
7 amongst you and your peers cause you guys to question
8 at times the company's commitment to the safety and to
9 things like that?
10 [redacted] The problem is after a while
11 when you start seeing the same things over and over
12 you get into that rut of that's just how things are.
13 That's how it always is. Maybe you get a little
14 complacent about it. We accept it. Maybe we
15 shouldn't be accepting it. We're hoping that maybe
16 this is going to get addressed at the next outage or
17 at the next available down time. Sometimes they do.
18 A lot of times it doesn't seem like it. It's just
19 always something else is coming up.
20 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Those repetitive
21 issues can really wear on morale a little bit. You
22 either get complacent about it or you get ticked off.
23 [redacted] I can give you a perfect
24 example. I was [redacted] for a year on the [redacted] (PH)
25 [redacted] as a [redacted] (PH) [redacted] Part

1 of my responsibility was tracking the broken control
2 room indicators. After doing that for a year, I was
3 like what's the point. We know that they are out
4 there and we try to address them. Then when outage
5 comes we do fix a lot of them, but then it seems like
6 nobody wants to commit the resources and/or the time
7 to really address it like it should be addressed I
8 believe.
9 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Right.
10 [redacted] You know what I am talking
11 about.
12 [redacted] I was here as a [redacted]
13 [redacted] I left to take this job [redacted] ago. It was
14 down to where we had one or two indicators in the
15 control room.
16 [redacted] Yes.
17 [redacted] It took a long time to get
18 to that point in the Salem Station.
19 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You have to let
20 things go for a while to let it get down to that few,
21 right?
22 [redacted] Well, it's a constant
23 battle.
24 MR. FERDAS: How many control room
25 indicators are out? What's the number that they are

1 reporting? Are these all overheads?

2 [redacted] No, these are just various

3 points from the control room. Give you a number off

4 the top of my head.

5 MR. FERDAS: For the overheads.

6 [redacted] I can't talk about Unit II

7 right now because being in an outage there could be

8 numerous. I would say right now we probably have

9 anywhere from five to seven overheads either blocked

10 or partially blocked. Partially blocked means they

11 have multiple inputs for that overhead. That alarm

12 would still come in for the other inputs that feed

13 into that overhead, but somewhere we have a broken

14 control room indicator that's blocked and inoperable

15 from a field input or whatever it might be.

16 MR. FERDAS: Are these all just indicating

17 inputs or actually control inputs? Do any of these

18 support control inputs?

19 [redacted] It would depend. As far as

20 control inputs, I'm not aware of anything that

21 actually is inoperable as far as anything that

22 controls plant parameters. These would be mostly

23 indicators. I'm trying to think of the one right now

24 on Unit I.

25 It's a voltage regulator on Unit I right

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now. We know it has a problem. We were getting the overhead alarm for it when it was hot out. Now that it's gotten colder out that alarm is clear. We still know that voltage regulator, I believe it's one of the cards is bad.

Once we replaced the card, they fried that card. That tells me that it's a symptom and not a cause. So I don't know if the engineers are still trying to figure out what's causing it. I don't think it's been addressed. I just know right now the overhead is clear. Out of sight, out of mind.

MR. FERDAS: What's the function of the voltage regulator? Elaborate on that.

[redacted] This is the main generator.

MR. FERDAS: Okay.

[redacted] We have a digital voltage regulator with a primary and back up as well as our manual. The card that's in there now. If the unit trips, we're going blind.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: With issues like those, how do you normally raise those to get them addressed?

[redacted] Via notification.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: And enter that into the corrective action program.

1 [redacted] Correct.

2 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Have you used

3 that system before?

4 [redacted] I write notifications all the

5 time.

6 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You do.

7 [redacted] Yes.

8 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: When you write

9 those notifications, do they get back to you about

10 what's been done with it? How does that work?

11 [redacted] Generally what happens when

12 a notification is put into the system is it gets

13 screened by a licensed SRO. He'll determine how it

14 affects the operability of the specific unit and/or if

15 it would affect tech specs and stuff like that. Then

16 it would go to whoever is responsible for that system.

17 Generally depending on the level of notification

18 whether it was priority and significant would address

19 how quickly the organization would address it.

20 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So it goes back

21 to the responsible party who has oversight for that

22 function.

23 [redacted] Well, generally what would

24 happen is if I was in the day that we got the alarm in

25 for the voltage regulator, we would have pulled the

overhead, saw what the overhead read, looked at our indications to see how it affected the plant at that time, brought the SDA in if I would have looked at it. Right now it hasn't affected our ability to operate the plant at that moment. It's not affecting safety.

At that point, it was not even affecting production. So then at that point, we would create a notification. Whoever the SRO was that day would screen it. It would go into the system. Then it would go to engineering. Engineering would make a determination on it and decide if it's going to affect the unit or not.

Like I said before, how it affects the unit as far as safety and/or production is going to determine how aggressive the organization goes after it to correct it and whether they could do it on-line or off-line. Generally that's how the notifications work. Sometimes notifications get closed out after a work order has been created.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So they don't track it to fixing. They track it to the work order.

[redacted]: It just depends, yes.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Probably again on the priority of it.

[redacted]: Exactly. We had this 12 week

1 in three year work week windows now. When you create
2 a notification, in this case it would be a corrective
3 maintenance notification, you assign a priority. Now,
4 I would not be responsible for assigning priority.
5 Somewhere in management would assign it, generally one
6 of the work week supervisors of when they could
7 address that.
8 If it's something that you could live with
9 for a little while, it would probably get pushed out
10 as far as it could if it did not require an outage.
11 If it requires an outage, then it would get an outage
12 priority. If it's something that needed to be
13 addressed immediately, it would fall into the next
14 available window outside the 12 weeks. That would be
15 a priority three I believe. Then priority two, it
16 would get pushed into the next available window within
17 the three or the 12 week one. Wait, how does that
18 work again?
19 Priority three is within the next 12 weeks
20 I believe. Priority two would be within the next
21 available window which means probably the next three
22 to four weeks, any time in that time. It depends on
23 which week you are on. Then priority one is
24 immediate. This is part of the problem with the
25 organization, at least with the way work weeks are

1 arranged right now. When something comes up like that
2 when you have to address it now or within the next
3 window, something has to be bumped out.
4 That's part of the problem because now all
5 you are doing is even though you are addressing
6 problems, you are taking existing problems that you
7 said we're going to fix this, we're going to address
8 this and we just keep postponing it. Like I said
9 before, always something else comes up. Issues keep
10 sliding back and back and don't get addressed.
11 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Because they get
12 bumped out by higher priority issues.
13 [redacted] Exactly.
14 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So these control
15 room indicators could fall into that category.
16 [redacted] Definitely. Any operator or
17 anybody in maintenance knows exactly what I'm talking
18 about.
19 MR. FERDAS: Recent history of the
20 performance of those units, is it those issues that
21 keep getting bumped out the ones that are affecting
22 operation of the plant? Instead of being at the goal
23 100 percent steady state, are those causing some of
24 the perdivations (H) throughout the cycle do you
25 think?

1 [redacted] I really can't say because
2 everything adds up to a point where it's greater than
3 the whole. I'm not aware off the top of my head of
4 any issues such as those that have actually affected
5 production or plant operation either safety-wise or
6 production-wise. I really can't say to tell you the
7 truth.
8 MR. FERDAS: Okay.
9 [redacted] Not that I'm aware of because
10 generally when it's that important the organization
11 will go after it. It's just those little things that
12 will kill you.
13 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: With that, if
14 something in the corrective action program is closed
15 out when a work order is generated, how do they --
16 [redacted] It doesn't always get closed
17 out.
18 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: I know. I
19 understand.
20 [redacted] I have seen it get closed
21 out.
22 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: How do they track
23 the items being done then? I guess it's through the
24 work order.
25 [redacted] I guess in the work week, in

1 the 12 week cycle, in the three year cycle it's
2 getting tracked. A lot of times the shift managers
3 seem to be a lot more on it than the SRO level because
4 those guys are going to meetings constantly and these
5 things are getting addressed.
6 To be honest with you, sometimes I just
7 don't know. Then of course you are constantly
8 rotating with the shifts. I'm at a control room at
9 one unit. Then I go over to the other unit. By the
10 time I get over to the other unit, it might have
11 gotten addressed or it might have been forgotten
12 about. It all depends on the severity on how it's
13 going to affect operations. A lot of things carry
14 over. You know about that because you deal with turn
15 over. Some things just slip through the cracks.
16 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: How confident are
17 you about the way that system works, the notification
18 system and corrective action program?
19 [redacted] It's like the work week
20 progress. It's like everything else. I think it
21 could work very well if you do it the way it's
22 written. But it's so vague sometimes the way things
23 are written. I don't think we allow it to work. Like
24 I said before, it always seems like there are
25 priorities. We're always addressing something else.

1 Around here, we go through people as far
2 as at the supervisor level. We just constantly rotate
3 and rotate. By the time a guy gets comfortable in a
4 position, they rotate him out somewhere else.
5 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So there's not a
6 lot of continuity.
7 [redacted] Yes, there's no consistency.
8 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: With regard to
9 the corrective action program, you have written lots
10 of notifications.
11 [redacted] Yes.
12 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Have you ever
13 been reprimanded or given any grief about writing
14 those? Have you felt any negative pressure on you
15 about that?
16 [redacted] No. When I write a
17 notification, it needs a notification. I'm not one to
18 generate paperwork just to generate paperwork because
19 I understand it costs the organization money to
20 address a notification.
21 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Are there people
22 out there that do that?
23 [redacted] There are individuals who
24 create notifications because they believe that's their
25 job to address what they believe are problems. It's

1 not always a problem at the level that they think it
2 is or that they think it should be.
3 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Have you heard of
4 anyone else being harassed or gotten on for writing
5 notifications?
6 [redacted] No.
7 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So even if it's
8 a perceived problem, it's not as big as they think
9 that the organization takes care of it within that
10 program.
11 [redacted] Yes, they try to address it.
12 I believe so.
13 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You haven't seen
14 management in the control room or anything like that
15 get on individuals about raising issues too much or
16 causing problems by bringing things up that didn't
17 need to be brought up.
18 [redacted] Not that I'm aware of. As a
19 general rule, management tries not to bother the
20 control room staff with stuff like that. They
21 understand we have to operate the reactors. They try
22 not to distract us from that.
23 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Have you seen
24 your first line supervisors raise issues that then
25 took flack from management for that?

1 [redacted] I haven't see it. I wouldn't
2 see it because they wouldn't do it in front of us.
3 They would do it behind closed doors.
4 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: I guess that's a
5 good way to put it. Have you heard of that at all?
6 [redacted] There's always rumors. I
7 can't think of any specific rumors off the top of my
8 head. Such and such caught a lot of grief over the
9 way they addressed that issue the other day. I think
10 they calibrated them. But it's all a rumor.
11 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: But none of the
12 supervisors have ever said that to you in
13 conversations around the control room saying I really
14 got calibrated for bringing this issue up or they got
15 on me about it.
16 [redacted] No, you can tell. They seem
17 a little different. I can't bring up specifics, but
18 you just know if they approached an issue of what
19 upper management believes is incorrect that they were
20 calibrated on.
21 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Any of those
22 issues adverse to nuclear safety would you say?
23 [redacted] No, because like I said
24 before when it comes to nuclear safety, management is
25 pretty up on addressing those issues either at our

level or higher.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So these could be just other issues that have gotten raised.

[redacted] Correct.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: How about the employee concerns program? Have you used that at all?

[redacted] I have never had to use it. I'm aware of it.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You are aware that opportunity exists too.

[redacted] Yes.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Would you say that your coworkers are aware of that program and the way it operates?

[redacted] Yes, everyone is aware of it.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Do you know any individuals that have used it?

[redacted] Yes, I do know some individuals that have used it.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Have they been satisfied with it? Did they feel it was effective? What's your take on that?

[redacted] They generally don't talk too much about it. Usually once someone uses it, it's more on a private level. It's usually not discussed.

1 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Are you thinking
2 of the EAP program?
3 [redacted] Yes, that's what I'm thinking
4 of. You are talking about employee concerns.
5 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Yes.
6 [redacted] I'm not aware of anyone that
7 has actually gone to employee concerns. You are
8 talking about whistle blower.
9 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Right.
10 [redacted] I'm not aware of that.
11 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Raising issues
12 that haven't gotten handled through other chains or
13 whatever.
14 [redacted] No, I'm not aware of anyone
15 that has ever used that.
16 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: What's the
17 attitude towards it amongst the people you are with?
18 [redacted] I would think if you were
19 going to use it, then you would feel very close to the
20 issue that you are trying to have addressed and you
21 are not getting your desired result. I've seen
22 individuals jump over levels of management to get
23 things addressed. Usually when something happens, it
24 gets addressed. It might not be to their
25 satisfaction, but at least they get an answer.

1 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Right.

2 [redacted]: I'm a[redacted] too.

3 I'm a[redacted] I see these things all the time.

4 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: In that context

5 with the issues that you have assisted with or been

6 involved with, you see management responding to it.

7 It might not always be in the way that --

8 [redacted] They respond to us, not

9 always to my satisfaction or to someone else's

10 satisfaction. Sometimes it is. It just depends on

11 the issue.

12 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Do you have

13 something?

14 MR. FERDAS: No.

15 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: How about raising

16 issues with the NRC? Do people know that's an avenue

17 that's available? Do people feel intimidated about

18 using that avenue? What's your thoughts on that?

19 [redacted]: I would say most individuals

20 are aware that is an avenue especially the longer you

21 have been here. You know that's an avenue. Let's

22 face it. That's pretty intimidating. When you have

23 to bring an issue to the Commission, you are not

24 getting it addressed by management.

25 So I think a lot of people would be leery

1 to bring it up to the NRC, not because of threats from
2 management. No one likes to cause trouble. No one
3 wants to be labeled a trouble-maker. So it would be
4 intimidating.
5 Personally if I feel something as far as
6 a safety issue is affecting either the plant or the
7 general public and I wasn't getting resolution through
8 management, I have a license. I understand that it's
9 my job and I understand that it's my job, my
10 obligation. I have to address it. So I would not
11 have a problem with it.
12 But as far as the equipment operator, I
13 don't know. This would go for both control room staff
14 and for the field operators. Some guys tolerance
15 levels for problems and issues are a lot higher than
16 others. So it's based on personalities too. You see
17 all kinds of individuals come through here.
18 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Are you aware of
19 individuals that if they are spoken to by the NRC or
20 INPO or something like that does the company want to
21 debrief them as to what took place and what did you
22 say and things like that?
23 [redacted] I'm not aware to tell you the
24 truth. This is my first interview so --
25 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Yes, it's nothing

1 that you have had.

2 [redacted] I have no experience with it.

3 I have never really heard anyone talk about it before.

4 We always get the standard INPO comes in and they want

5 to talk to a few operators. Guys come back and say we

6 talked about this and we talked about that. But I

7 have never heard anyone say that [redacted] wants to see me

8 now because I just came out of my INPO interview

9 because he wants to discuss with me what we talked

10 about or anything like that.

11 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: All right. You

12 said that you are very confident with the way that

13 they handle nuclear safety issues. How about more

14 like industrial safety and things like that? What are

15 your thoughts on that?

16 [redacted] Well, there was the mindset

17 for a long time we're working in that power house.

18 There's some risk. It's inherent with the job and

19 that's the chances you take. I don't know anybody who

20 would blatantly go out and violate their own personal

21 safety or anyone else's safety or the plant safety.

22 But in the last several years, we have noticed

23 individuals have gotten hurt on the job so the

24 organization has streamlined that direction.

25 They are concentrating a lot more on

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1 personal safety. It's changed a lot. In my opinion,
2 it's gotten a lot better. For example, the emphasis
3 on maintaining our personal safety. Now, it's a
4 management expectation that you will maintain yourself
5 safe. We'll give you the tools to do it. Fire
6 retardant clothing is a perfect example.
7 But now, it seems like we get more OSHA
8 recordables than ever before. I don't know if it's
9 because there's more emphasis on the personal safety
10 so things come to light where before they just were
11 swept aside. I just don't know. I think lately, in
12 the last year or so, the emphasis on personal safety
13 is a lot higher than it used to be.
14 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You think some of
15 that is management driven too.
16 [redacted] Well, it's definitely
17 management driven because it had to be addressed. The
18 guy over at Hope Creek almost died. Last year a guy
19 lost down to his fingers. It could have been a lot
20 worse. The organization had to address those.
21 MR. FERDAS: When was the Hope Creek one,
22 how many years ago?
23 [redacted] That was about two and a half
24 years ago.
25 [redacted] About a year and a half.

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1 MR. FERDAS: Okay.

2 [redacted] He was in there by himself.

3 He managed to get out of there and get help.

4 MR. FERDAS: When was the Salem one?

5 [redacted]: When [redacted] lost his fingers,

6 when was that?

7 [redacted]: About a year ago.

8 [redacted] Yes, it was about six months

9 after [redacted] It was a job he was on for years. Even

10 that operator said look it's a power house. My number

11 was up. Management said we don't need that attitude.

12 These things need to be addressed. We understand that

13 you accept the risk, but that's not acceptable to us.

14 It was not acceptable to management.

15 The pages in the steam pen is the perfect

16 example. For years, we complained about no plant

17 pages in the steam pen. They said it costs a lot of

18 money. Engineering-wise we don't think it's feasible.

19 After these two individuals got hurt, it came to the

20 limelight and they said you are right. We'll address

21 that and put the pages in the pens.

22 So it took a lot to get the organization

23 to start moving that direction again. Sometimes it

24 seems like a hindrance. Jobs which I would normally

25 go out and do on my own, now I have to have a safety

1 guy. For some individuals, that's hard to accept that
2 because they are used to just going out. I want to
3 get this job done so I am going to go out and do it.
4 Now, I have to have someone with me. It slows things
5 up. You see a lot of that too.
6 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Guys who have
7 done it another way for a while see it as being a pain
8 rather than helping out the process.
9 [redacted] It's a hinderance. It's the
10 older guys. They say this is the way we used to do
11 it. We did that for 20 years and no one lost the tips
12 of their fingers.
13 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Right. Any other
14 comments on the whole concept of production over
15 safety? Is that an issue that is a concern to you or
16 the people you work with or is it not that significant
17 of an issue?
18 [redacted] There's no doubt in a
19 deregulated environment because we have seen it. The
20 control room staff has seen it in there for
21 deregulation. You can see the swing in the emphasis
22 on production. We don't allow reactor safety I don't
23 believe to interfere. We don't allow production to
24 allow with reactor safety. There's lines we draw.
25 But on the other hand, the company looks at a probable

1 risk assessment too. So sometimes it seems like you
2 are drawing a fine line between what's acceptable risk
3 and what isn't.
4 MR. FERDAS: Would you say that they are
5 pushing the line, tip toeing on it?
6 [redacted] That's a hard one to say
7 because an engineer always comes back and justifies
8 it. With this EO (PH) and PRA, they have all their
9 studies and their databases. The engineers say this
10 is what they do at this plant and in this region and
11 we're doing it exactly the same way the rest of the
12 industry is doing it. Maybe I guess the risk
13 tolerance for some stations is different than others.
14 I would imagine it is.
15 It's hard to tell. Any given day could be
16 a little different than another depending on the
17 situation. I'll give you a for instance. Last week,
18 I was in Unit I for the stop feed rig valve. The guy
19 that I turned over from was more adamant about we need
20 to shut down than we were. I'm talking about the
21 control room staff. I hadn't seen it before but I
22 have known about it.
23 Sometimes these valves get stuck. I have
24 talked to the techs. We know what to do. Every now
25 and then the packing gets hung up and they get stuck.

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1 We'll unstick it. That's the route we went knowing
2 full well this valve could really be stuck.
3 Unfortunately that's what it ended up as.
4 I felt we were fine. We had our limits.
5 We knew what our limits were for shutting the unit
6 down, for tripping the plant. In fact, once again,
7 for that generator on Unit I you have a feedwater
8 isolation. When you get the feedwater isolation, the
9 feed pumps will trip. All the feed valves will close
10 up. The trip falls seconds later.
11 Unit I is at 67 percent high level in the
12 generator. Unit II is a little lower. It's a
13 combination. It's about 61 percent. I believe the
14 shift we turned over from said your limit is going to
15 be 63 percent and 20 percent generator levels. When
16 we came in, the assistant ops manager said I want your
17 high limit to be 60. That's a little too high. So he
18 made it more conservative.
19 I had no problem with that. I said you
20 are making it more conservative. We're controlling it
21 right now. Until we can address going after the feed
22 rig valve and seeing whether or not it's really stuck
23 as far as physically or mechanically stuck, it's not
24 a control problem. We can find out when we do the
25 troubleshoot for sure. That's the way we approached

1 it. That's the way we did it.

2 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: So a conservative

3 approach.

4 [redacted] The most conservative

5 approach would have been just go ahead and trip it.

6 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Right.

7 [redacted] But like I said, past

8 experience has shown sometimes the packing gets a

9 little bit tight on these. At 100 percent power, they

10 don't move that far. They stay in the same spot.

11 They sit there and swing a couple percent. What

12 happens after a while is the packing heats up and

13 swells and they get stuck.

14 When we went into the frequent perform

15 test or procedure at the brief prior to that and

16 talked to the technician, I said [redacted] -- Everyone has

17 input. I asked the technician. He said we have seen

18 this two or three other times. We know what it is.

19 This is what we think it is. This is how we're going

20 to address it. He said I think it's going to free up.

21 That's how it looks to me. That's what we did.

22 We sent a guy out to the simulator. He

23 practiced backing the feed pump down. They gave us

24 our limits. They made it clear to me. [redacted] you

25 understand what your limits are. Any time you think

1 we're pushing a safety limit, what you see is
2 uncontrollable, trip the plant.
3 (Tape flip.)
4 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: And you had no
5 problem with the way it was done or how it was
6 handled.
7 [redacted] No. Well, they were coming
8 down. It was on the fly they decide to make changes.
9 So then we did hold at 25 percent. Originally our
10 shift was going to come down low on power to the plant
11 on the EOPs, come out of the EOPs, turn over the plant
12 and load it through to the oncoming shift. We didn't
13 get to that point.
14 They wanted to stop at 25 percent. That
15 was a business decision. We were controlling it and
16 I had no problem with it. It would have been a lot
17 easier for me to just go ahead and pull the trip
18 handle because I know exactly where I'm going then.
19 Like I said, that was a business decision at that
20 point.
21 MR. FERDAS: What was the business
22 decision at that point?
23 [redacted] Well, on the way down, I
24 guess engineering and the technicians said there was
25 one other thing we didn't address. I think we could

1 look at this. I think it had something to do with
2 looking at a controls issue. They got to that point.
3 We turned over at 25 percent power. We were holding
4 there.
5 It's my understanding that then they had
6 other briefs. Then I had turned over and left. Then
7 they came out of their briefs and said we decided
8 that's not going to fix anything and we're going to
9 continue with the down power and trip. That's what
10 they did.
11 MR. FERDAS: But the unit at all times was
12 in a safe condition when you were at 25 percent.
13 [redacted] Yes. In fact, having that
14 operator go out and practice it on the simulator
15 helped a lot. I think the on coming shift manager
16 said to me he could never believe you could have shut
17 down a unit from 100 percent power safely with a stuck
18 valve the way you guys did. It was very smooth. I
19 was surprised myself.
20 We had a lot of help. I'm not going to
21 lie to you. You couldn't have done that with just two
22 guys and a shift supervisor. We had a lot of extra
23 people because of the outage. If we just had a
24 skeleton crew in there, I would have recommended
25 tripping and just going into EOPs and coming down to

1 mode three that way. There's too much risk there.

2 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: But with the

3 extra help, you were able to do it this way and do it

4 just fine.

5 [redacted] Correct. Now, that might be

6 an issue, the extra help. I guess the organization is

7 pushing to streamline. This has to be brought up.

8 The organization is pushing to streamline. They would

9 like us to go down to what we perceive to be as four

10 licensed control room operators in the control room.

11 That's what our tech spec minimum manning has.

12 The non-affected unit secondary to the

13 plant operator, meaning the secondary operator, would

14 become the secondary communicator in an EP situation.

15 I can tell you 99 percent of reactor operators don't

16 feel its safe to go down to four operators in the

17 control room. Management keeps telling us this is

18 what other stations do, this is what other utilities

19 are doing.

20 MR. FERDAS: What is your current

21 configuration in Salem?

22 [redacted] Five.

23 MR. FERDAS: Five in each.

24 [redacted] Two in each unit are RO and

25 PO, plant operator and a reactor operator. Then we

have the control center reactor operator. He comes in to give those guys release. He's also the secondary communicator in EP situations.

MR. FERDAS: Okay, so they want to remove that position basically.

[redacted] I don't want to say they want to remove it. They would like it so they can secure it at times because they don't see the cost benefit of having the extra licensed operator there I believe. If it wouldn't get abused, and I have seen it so many times, I would almost have not a problem with it. They are saying holidays, back shifts. But I have seen it get abused so many times in that situation.

Our manning gets abused constantly. I truly don't think that's safe. I don't want to be in there when something happens by myself because that is what you are setting yourself up for. Management doesn't seem to see it that way. We're not at that point yet. It's my understanding we're still discussing it. I can tell you what the union's stand is. We don't want to do it.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Is the talk about that getting more intense that you foresee that?

[redacted]: Actually that's one of those things during the summertime that was coming to a

1 head. I actually addressed that to the union. What
2 do you call that, problem resolution?
3 [redacted]: Yes, with the safety
4 committee-type thing.
5 [redacted] It's not a grievance.
6 There's no violation of the contract or any written
7 agreements. But we believe that this is going to
8 cause a problem, and that's the way I addressed it.
9 That's still being addressed at this time. It's our
10 feeling that the organization is going to go ahead and
11 do it. I can't find one reactor operator that wants
12 to do it.
13 I don't have any problem being in there by
14 myself. I'm not scared to operate the plant. I'm not
15 scared to be in there by myself. I can address
16 alarms. I can address problems. But it's always nice
17 to have another guy in there to back you up. That's
18 been the mindset since we came out of restart in the
19 mid-'90s. You need to have a backup operator for a
20 second opinion.
21 The way our standards are written is any
22 time I operate a piece of equipment -- If you are
23 doing reactor manipulation, you are operating a piece
24 of four KV equipment. You are doing something on the
25 turban. Those always require a second verification,

1 a guy looking over your shoulder saying I agree. It's
2 always been management's expectation when you can get
3 a second check, no matter what it is, on the boards,
4 you do it.
5 It seems like we're slipping away from
6 that, not the required ones. We still do a second
7 check for that. It's just all part of that mindset,
8 the philosophy that they drove into us for restart
9 training. Now, it just seems like it's slowly
10 crumbling away.
11 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You see the main
12 reason for that being the deregulated market and just
13 needing to maintain that competitive edge.
14 [redacted] One less guy they have to
15 pay. I'm not saying they want to get rid of licensed
16 operators. It's an overtime issue. Generally the way
17 our shifts are manned, we have one or two operators
18 extra. Below the lines we call it, basically not on
19 watch doing the support. For a long time, the shifts
20 couldn't support that through normal manning. We had
21 to cover it with overtime.
22 Shifts like that always had five licensed
23 operators when we could support it. The summer before
24 last we were down to or we had no choice. We had lost
25 so many licensed ROs through upgrades to the point

1 where we had to cover the licensed spots on-shift with
2 overtime. We have recovered that now. We have more
3 than enough reactor operators to cover all the off-
4 shift positions and tagging and whatnot and to cover
5 all the positions on-shift.
6 It's my personal belief that they are
7 trying to streamline. They would like to take that
8 fifth RO and just make him an extra guy. I have no
9 problem doing field work. I have no problem with that
10 at all. I have a problem with I don't want to be in
11 there by myself addressing an issue like a partial
12 loss of off-site power like I was in July when I was
13 in there by myself. That's enough for a full control
14 room and extra guys, let alone a guy is in there by
15 himself, just one guy and a CRS.
16 MR. FERDAS: That's for the unaffected
17 unit, right? You borrow the communicator from the
18 unaffected, is that true? Is that what you are
19 saying?
20 [redacted] That would be how it would
21 work. The unaffected unit PO would become your
22 secondary communicator.
23 MR. FERDAS: But when you run into
24 problems like a dual unit trip.
25 [redacted] I'm not aware of a dual unit

1 trip yet, but we have had many problems that affect
2 both the units.
3 MR. FERDAS: One to trip, one to go down
4 in power just to maintain it.
5 [redacted] Correct. Last July the
6 partial loss of off-site power was a perfect example.
7 MR. FERDAS: One unit was affected by
8 that.
9 [redacted] One tripped and the other one
10 almost tripped. I thought they did trip, but I was a
11 little busy.
12 (Laughter.)
13 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: You couldn't be
14 worried about that.
15 [redacted] I thought they did trip, but
16 I was too busy trying to stabilize our unit.
17 MR. FERDAS: So in those situations, you
18 would be affected in two ways is what you are saying.
19 One is you wouldn't have a communicator to meet your
20 E plan, right?
21 [redacted] Well, here's what they would
22 like to do because how are you doing to take care of
23 the control? One of the reactor operators is going to
24 be allowed to do -- I've heard someone suggest up to
25 a 40 minute self-relief. So basically you are leaving

a guy in there by himself for up to 40 minutes.

I don't care if it's ten minutes. I don't care if it's to run out and go to the bathroom. Something can happen at any time. I believe that you should always have a second guy in there whether it's a relief or it's the guy that's on watch. Like I said, last July when we had the partial loss of off-site power, we weren't doing it. We still had the fifth guy around. That was enough. We were all busy. If a guy had run up to the restroom, can that happen? That came and we had no forewarning. That happened just like that. It was not pleasant.

SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Any other issues with regard to the approach to safety here and the safety conscious work environment that we should be aware of?

[redacted] I can't think of any off the top of my head. It's just the same ongoing issues as the one I just discussed with you. I had forgotten all about that one because that's settled down. But I could see that coming once the outage is over. Like I said, I have never had a problem with management as far as safety issues, as far as operating the reactor, safety of the public or personnel in the plant. There's nothing I would call blatant, not even

1 indirect.

2 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: In the way that

3 they deal with them or in the way they deal with

4 people that raise them.

5 [redacted] Correct. I have never seen

6 a problem with that.

7 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Do you have

8 anything else?

9 MR. FERDAS: No.

10 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: I just will put

11 the closing blurb on here. [redacted] have I or any

12 other NRC representative threatened you in any manner

13 or offered you any rewards in return for this

14 information?

15 [redacted]: No, you have not.

16 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Have you provided

17 this information freely and voluntarily?

18 [redacted]: Yes, I have.

19 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: Is there anything

20 else you want to add to the record at this time?

21 [redacted]: No.

22 SPECIAL AGENT ANDERSON: The time is now

23 11:50 a.m. and the interview is concluded.

24 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter

25 concluded at 11:50 a.m.)

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 [redacted]

Docket Number: 1-2003-051F

Location: Hancock's Bridge, NJ

were held as herein appears, and that this is the original transcript thereof for the file of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission taken by me and, thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under the direction of the court reporting company, and that the transcript is a true and accurate record of the foregoing proceedings as recorded on tape(s) provided by the NRC.

Anne Marie Smith

Anne Marie Smith
Official Transcriber
Neal R. Gross & Co., Inc.