

ORIGINAL

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF:

DOCKET NO:

INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW

OF WILLIAM BASS

LOCATION:

Tennessee Valley Authority
Chattanooga Office Complex
4th Floor, Lookout Place
N-1 Conference Room
Chattanooga, Tennessee

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L. WILLIAM BASS,

being first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

EXAMINATION

BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

Q For the record, it is now 1308, March 24th, 1987. This is an interview of William Bass, who is employed by Basic Energy Technology Associates, Inc. The location of this interview is Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Present at this interview are Larry Robinson, Mark Reinhart and Lynn Williamson. As agreed, this is being transcribed by a court reporter.

The subject matter of this interview concerns Mr. Bass' knowledge of or involvement in the March 20th, 1986 response from TVA to the NRC regarding TVA's compliance with Appendix B at Watts Bar.

Mr. Bass, if you'd please stand and raise your right hand.

Do you swear or affirm that the information you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

A I do.

Q Okay. Mr. Bass, for the record, would you please tell us what your current position is with BETA and also with TVA?

1 A Well, BETA is a corporation. In the
2 corporate structure, I am the Vice-President and
3 Secretary of the corporation. Technically and as we
4 organized, we are a group of four associates, and I am an
5 associate. That's it. The company is four associates.
6 Frequently, we will work together at the same time,
7 sometimes we independently go out on jobs.

8 At this particular time as regards TVA, we
9 do have a contract with TVA where we will function in the
10 position that they call advisor, and the person that
11 we're the advisor to is Mr. White. We will be allowed or
12 if it were appropriate, we could give advice to others in
13 the process, but principally, we are, quote, advisors,
14 unquote, to him. And that's my role here.

15 That is appropriate in our dealings with Mr.
16 White, because I've known him for a long time, what,
17 twenty-eight years? I've watched him grow up, so to
18 speak. We've worked together a number of places through
19 the years. I know how he thinks, he knows how I think,
20 what his standards are, what my standards are. So, it's
21 easy for us to work together.

22 It's not a -- neither one of us is trying to
23 train the other, you know. And when he says something, I
24 know what he means, when I say something, he knows what I
25 mean, based on long years of association and experience.

1 The first time I saw him, which I'd like to
2 put into this, because I think it's kind of interesting,
3 he was -- it was the first Rickover-sponsored trip I ever
4 made, and that was to Portsmouth Naval Ship Yard in
5 Kittery, Maine. Subsequently, I made many, many, more,
6 but the first one was in 1959 when I was working for
7 Admiral Rickover, and the Nautilus was in overhaul at
8 Portsmouth, her first overhaul and refueling.

9 The, what was called the electrical and
10 instrumentation control officer, E&RC, that's electrical
11 and reactor control officer, was Steve White. He was
12 working for a fellow or working with a fellow, also in
13 the department, named Don Hall. Don's now the
14 Vice-President of Illinois Power, responsible for their
15 Clinton operation, Region III. They both were working
16 for a fellow named Ken Carr. I don't have to give you
17 any further background on him. And the three of them
18 were working for Lando Iech, who was the commanding
19 officer of the ship. So, that's the first time I ran
20 into these four guys and, and they were all together at
21 the time.

22 If we had had Hall there the other day, I
23 mentioned this to Lando, and we were together there,
24 where's Don, you know. You got the whole crowd together
25 again, you know. But that was, that's an interesting

1 thing.

2 It, of course, doesn't bear directly on
3 anything that you say or do, but it does provide the
4 basis for a lot of understanding, just because of long
5 years of association. Like when people make a point that
6 Sech is a heavy on his inspection of plants, that won't
7 bother us. We know how he inspects a plant, you know,
8 we're ready.

9 Q How long have you been in this capacity as
10 advisor to Mr. White?

11 A It was January of '86 we came down, you
12 know. I guess it was during his first week that he was
13 here.

14 Q Okay.

15 A And we left in October, October the 16th,
16 when he left, came back January the, the early of this
17 year when he came back.

18 Q How long prior to being, prior to your being
19 an advisor to Mr. White and coming here in January of
20 '86, what were you doing with BETA?

21 A Well, BETA was doing a number of things.
22 Just before that, and my heaviest involvement for the
23 last year-and-a-half up to that time was at the
24 Davis-Besse site. You might remember in about June of
25 '85, they had the first twelve minutes of the TMI II

1 accident there. It was a very exciting event. We got to
2 know Mr. Keppler very well during that time. He took
3 more than a passive interest in Davis-Besse before the
4 event and afterwards.

5 And talked to Mr. Williams, I guess it was
6 Admiral Williams, I guess it was on last Thursday night,
7 and he was at the motel and the plant was at seventy
8 percent, the power was increasing.

9 And the next morning, they were going to put
10 him in his company car and take him to the airport and
11 then bring the car back. He was through, you know. And
12 that was a lot of fun to work that one with Williams.

13 During that time, also, at Clinton, and
14 before Davis-Besse, more time at Clinton. Just about
15 full-time at Clinton during the period when they were
16 working on lifting the stop works.

17 Q And before your --

18 A Well, before that, the big press was with
19 General Public Utilities or GBU Nuclear. They were
20 really our first customer at BETA when we were formed in
21 October of '79. That's when we put the thing together.
22 That was Monday of a week, and we're all there and ready
23 to do something. We just wondered what, you know.

24 And on Wednesday of that week, the phone
25 rang, and it was Bob Arnold, then the Vice-President of

1 Met Ed and later the President of GPU Nuclear and a close
2 acquaintance of Harold Denton's. You better take that
3 out. That's foolishness.

4 Q That's all right.

5 A But that took a lot of our time at GPU from
6 then on through about '83. All of us spent a lot of time
7 at GPU. And Oyster Creek was sort of my point of
8 principal interest during that time.

9 Q And prior to your forming of BETA, where
10 were you?

11 A I worked for Admiral Rickover for the
12 twenty-four years preceding that time when I got out of
13 the Government service in 1979.

14 Q As a military man?

15 A Well, some of each. It was -- I went to
16 work for him in '55, then as a Naval officer, and I
17 retired in '67, and became an AIC civilian employee, and
18 then retired from Government service in '79.

19 Q Okay.

20 A And that was thirty-seven years. I figured
21 that's enough, you know. While I still have some energy
22 and all this, let's go try something else.

23 Q From '55 to '79 --

24 A I was with Rickover. The last, the last
25 thirteen years of that, '66 to '79, I was his project

1 officer for commissioned nuclear submarines.

2 Q Okay.

3 A Commissioned, meaning those that are
4 operating, contrasted to those that are being built.

5 BY MR. BEINHART:

6 Q So you were with NAC, and that was
7 associated with nuclear reactors?

8 A Uh-huh. Within Energy Technology is the
9 group called naval reactors. The fact that we call it
10 Basic Energy Technology Associates, "basic" is a good
11 word. You watch yourself, you use it almost every day.

12 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

13 Q But from 1955 through '79, you were involved
14 in this nuclear --

15 A Nuclear submarines.

16 Q Industry related?

17 A Propulsion plants in submarines for
18 twenty-four years.

19 Q Okay. Fine.

20 A And before that, I was at sea in non-nuclear
21 submarines. The Nautilus went to sea in '55, so before
22 that, I was at sea on diesel submarines.

23 Before that, I had a course at MIT where the
24 Navy sent me entitled naval architecture and marine
25 engineering. And before that, I was at sea in large

1 surface ships, cruisers and battleships. I was on the
2 Missouri when it ran aground in Norfolk Harbor, if you've
3 ever heard about that, that's a good story, and graduated
4 from the Naval Academy in 1947.

5 Q Okay.

6 A You want to go back further than that?
7 That's enough.

8 Q That's as far as I go back.

9 A Right.

10 Q What I would like to ask is, and we have the
11 documentation here, I guess I should make that available
12 to you, the March 20th letter from Mr. White to the
13 Commissioner, or to Mr. Denton.

14 A I sense that's what you were going to talk
15 to me about, I started to go get a copy and read the
16 thing.

17 Q Let me provide that to you, as well as a
18 January 3rd, 1986 memo to Mr. Parris and also a January 9
19 memo to Mr. Denton from Mr. Dean. And this is all
20 regarding statements that were made in December to
21 Commissioner Asselstine about the TVA not meeting
22 requirements of Appendix B at Watts Bar.

23 A Uh-huh.

24 Q As you mentioned earlier, you came aboard
25 with TVA in January of '86 as an advisor to Mr. White.

1 And simply stated, we'd like to know what your
2 involvement was or your involvement in or knowledge of or
3 involvement in the preparation and or response to this
4 letter to the NRC from TVA.

5 A Okay. During -- my assignment during this
6 time frame was at the Sequoyah site. I was, so to speak,
7 I was his representative at the Sequoyah site when we
8 first came to town.

9 Q From January?

10 A Right. Until March and then beyond. I
11 don't remember exactly. Of course, I still sort of think
12 of Sequoyah as, quote, mine, you know, but I'm not out
13 there full-time like I was then.

14 So, since I was there full-time during this
15 period of time, I wasn't directly working on this letter.
16 I do recall seeing drafts of the letter, reading the
17 letter.

18 I was aware, contrasted to the thing I told
19 you before, the difference between knowledge and
20 awareness, you know. Certainly, I was aware of that, and
21 these other two, I had read them.

22 And I had heard a lot about how this
23 presentation to Asselstine came about, and the remorse
24 that the guy who was speaking had voiced, but that's just
25 hearsay, and you're not here to investigate rumors, you

1 know, which that is, if all I can tell you is just
2 something I heard.

3 So, you know, I'm aware of this. And I did
4 not at the time see in the reading of this anything that
5 offended me or struck me to be misleading or created in
6 my mind anything that they are doing wrong.

7 You know, if you've worked on as many
8 reactor plants as I have over the years, if you count
9 each little naval reactor plant as a reactor plant,
10 that's -- and you can get in as much trouble with a
11 little one as you can with a big one. A little one is
12 easier to work on.

13 But a lot of the same traps are there and a
14 lot of the principles are the same. It's not unusual in
15 my experience to find something that went astray, and
16 then fix it. By "astray," it's really the concept of
17 some of the criteria of Appendix B, you know.

18 Are there, should there be programs that
19 will detect deficiencies? What deficiencies? Well,
20 those that occur in the normal process of doing your
21 work.

22 Should there be programs for corrective?
23 Yes. Correct what? Well, correct the deficiencies.
24 What deficiencies? The ones that went wrong, you know.

25 So, it kind of presumes in my mind, Appendix

1 B does, that something is going to go wrong. And you
2 have these programs and these procedures and these
3 organizations and that leadership of these organizations
4 that are calculated to give you assurance that what does
5 go wrong will be found and will be fixed. And that's
6 what I got out of it.

7 That's kind of -- that was our Rickover
8 logic. You wouldn't want to believe that anything went
9 wrong with a submarine. I had a check valve in the main
10 coolant system, and the disk just fell right of the arm,
11 you know. I got everything in this except the check
12 valve. That shouldn't have happened, believe me, you
13 know.

14 Q You --

15 A But, so, you found it and you fixed it.

16 Q You said you were assigned or spent much of
17 your time at Sequoyah?

18 A At Sequoyah, right.

19 Q Were you asked to review early drafts of
20 this letter, the March 20th, subsequent March 20th
21 letter?

22 A I don't recall being asked to do so, but
23 when I'm back in town, and I would come back to town each
24 evening, you know, because Sequoyah, you stay here when
25 you're working at Sequoyah, contrasted to working at

1 Watts Bar or Browns Ferry, where you would be staying
2 somewhere else.

3 I was staying in town. Wegner, Brodsky, my
4 other associates, would be here in town. So, I would
5 come back in town in the evening. And, so, I'd usually
6 come and meet them here in the building, 6:30, 7:00.

7 What are you doing? Well, we got to do
8 another draft of this letter. What letter? Let me see
9 it, you know. So, you read the letter.

10 Q Okay.

11 A You know, so, I saw many drafts of the
12 thing.

13 Q Were you making written comments?

14 A No.

15 Q Were you making verbal comments?

16 A You know, I might have had a copy, I might
17 have scribbled something and give it back to them.

18 Q Were you making substantive comments or
19 changes?

20 A No. My specialty is editorializing.

21 Q So, you were reading it?

22 A Like I used the subjunctive mood and I avoid
23 passive voice, and I'm heavy on commas, and that sort of
24 thing, you know.

25 But I was reading it for content and for

1 meaning, and could somebody pick this up and understand
2 what you're trying to say, that would really be the kind
3 of reading that I would put into the thing.

4 Q Okay.

5 A This word "pervasive" that I've heard so
6 much about since, I've wondered, tried to wonder if I
7 would come up with a different word than that, you know,
8 just as I was thinking.

9 Q Was that your word?

10 A No.

11 Q You know where that came from?

12 A No. It's out of the dictionary, I guess.
13 You go look it up in the dictionary, it's perfect.

14 Q What does that mean?

15 A Existing throughout. Found in all places.
16 I don't know. Look it up in the dictionary. That's what
17 it means to me.

18 Q Widespread?

19 A I don't know. Yeah, I guess so. Widespread
20 really means to me is found at all places, you know.
21 Everywhere you look, there it is.

22 BY MR. REINHART:

23 Q When you say "all places," do you mean that
24 inclusively?

25 A Well, I mean if you are -- presume that

1 we're talking about the quality assurance program at
2 Watts Bar. In the quality assurance program at Watts
3 Bar, you did not find a breakdown in all places, all
4 aspects of the program. You did not.

5 Q So, are you saying that to have --

6 A I'm telling you the truth. I didn't go look
7 to see if they had. I was told that they looked.

8 Q In the way you're interpreting this, would
9 you say that to have a pervasive breakdown, that you
10 would have to have a breakdown in all places of the QA
11 program at Watts Bar?

12 A Well, I, what I would say that if you did
13 have a breakdown in all places, that would be pervasive,
14 that's right.

15 Q What if you had it in almost all places, but
16 not all?

17 A All but one, right? Admiral Rickover used
18 to ask me questions like this. He used to say, wait a
19 minute, is it like that in fifty percent of the cases?
20 I say no.

21 Ten percent of the cases? I'd say, well,
22 maybe ten. He said that's enough to prove my point, you
23 know.

24 Q So, how many percentage --

25 A I don't know. How in the hell do you know?

1 Q I'm asking you.

2 A What would you use for that, you know?

3 Q I'm asking what you said, all places.

4 A All places, you know. It's just a mess.

5 Zimmer was a mess. I worked at Zimmer. You could not

6 find a quality assurance record that you could count on

7 at Zimmer. You couldn't. I mean, the one you wanted,

8 the GAP guy would bring it to the public meeting with

9 Keppler, say what do you think about this one. I don't

10 know anything about it. Well, it's your record. I said,

11 well, what are you doing with it. You know, they stole

12 it.

13 Q Can you have a pervasive breakdown if just

14 one of the criteria, one of the eighteen is nonexistent,

15 is that what you mean?

16 A So, I say if one is not existent, that's not

17 pervasive.

18 Q It would have to be all eighteen?

19 A Sure. Now, whether or not all eighteen on

20 every document or every criteria, every event, I

21 wouldn't -- I don't know. It's a judgment thing.

22 White -- this is not mine, this is hearsay.

23 White uses the example of buying a house. You're going

24 to go buy a house. He doesn't use this with you people,

25 that's the reason I tell you, because you're technically

1 qualified, but he's talking to somebody that is not
2 technically qualified.

3 And you've hired this person to build you a
4 house. He's finished and you go and you look at the
5 house and you're deciding whether or not you're going to
6 pay him for it, go to closing with him.

7 And you go in one of the bedrooms and
8 there's a little holiday in the paint up there in the
9 corner. You say, hey, fix that. Yes, got it.

10 And you go in the other bedrooms, nothing
11 similar, it's okay. You do find a little tile that's got
12 a crack in one of the bathrooms, fix that. He says got
13 it.

14 You're down in the dining room and you
15 remember clearly there's supposed to be a receptacle on
16 that wall right there and it isn't there. He says, hey,
17 I'll get that, you know.

18 You don't even meet the code. The code
19 requires you to have receptacles not less than twelve
20 feet apart. Show me the one that's within twelve feet of
21 that one. The guy says, hey, I missed it, I'll get it.
22 Everything else is okay.

23 The garage -- basement is dry, the garage is
24 level, there's no indication the roof is leaking.
25 Windows and doors fit. All the comodes flush. He says

1 I'll see you at closing. I want the house.

2 Contrasted, you know, you can tell any story
3 you want. I mean, paint holiday -- the paint is falling
4 off. There's signs on the ceiling that it's leaking.
5 Commodes won't flush. You go down to the basement,
6 there's a couple inches of water down there. You go out
7 in the garage, it's kind of got a slant away from the
8 house like that (indicating).

9 You say, hey, you built it, you can have it,
10 I don't want it. You know, I don't want it. It isn't
11 worth having.

12 Is Watts Bar worth having? I don't know.
13 You have to decide based on, you know, is it pervasive or
14 is it something that you see that obviously needs the
15 kind of attention that the person here available can
16 provide. I don't know.

17 BY MR. ROBINSON:

18 Q I don't think the point was whether or not
19 Watts Bar is worth having, okay? A couple of questions.

20 In your experience down at Sequoyah, what
21 was your primary function down at Sequoyah?

22 A To, I really worked almost full-time in
23 support of the Site Director, helping him, advising him
24 on working with White. Putting a philosophy into the
25 place, you know, where he would understand the philosophy

1 that's expected of him.

2 Q With respect to the new nuclear performance
3 plan?

4 A Yes, like something -- yeah, that's right.
5 The fact we're going to revise the previously written
6 Volume I and previously written Volume II are going to be
7 redone, based in some extent and our experience with the
8 Davis-Besse course of action with the Braidwood BCAP and
9 with the Clinton lift stop work orders, all of which we
10 worked on.

11 And we knew that those were acceptable to
12 Keppler. We didn't -- Keppler was going to be coming on
13 this thing, but it just seemed good advice, you know.
14 The things that were of use in Region III are bound to be
15 of some value here.

16 Q Did you come to any opinion as to the status
17 of the quality assurance program at Sequoyah?

18 A Well, not to be, you know, bouncing it off
19 of various criteria. It did seem to me -- see, I saw it
20 before the organization changed. I mean, you know, when
21 we had this scattered quality assurance program, there
22 were a multitude of quality assurance programs.

23 The quality assurance management or
24 supervisor, I guess they called him at Sequoyah, at that
25 time had been there a short period of time. He had come

1 there from having been an NRC resident inspector type of
2 person, I was told.

3 Hey, I better watch this. I'm talking to
4 you about what I know, contrasted to what I'm aware of.
5 That's what I understood to be the case.

6 And he worked directly for the Site
7 Director, and we are always of the opinion that quality
8 assurance must be a strong, centralized program of
9 corporate management, you know, the way you see it
10 organized now. So, obviously, what I saw then didn't
11 suit me relative to what I wanted them to have like they
12 have now.

13 Q Did --

14 A But I didn't see any, I didn't have any
15 examples come to my attention while I was there of the
16 results of poor quality assurance or quality control.

17 Q Do you have or did you have the basis to
18 have any opinion as to the status of the quality
19 assurance program at Watts Bar?

20 A No.

21 Q When you read the earlier drafts of the
22 cover of the March 20th, 1986 letter, were you just
23 reading the cover letter itself, or was there any
24 correlation in your mind to the responses to the NSRS
25 perception? In other words, did you compare the

1 conclusions drawn in the cover letter to the responses?

2 A I'm sure that I did, although as I sit here
3 today, you know, I don't remember making that particular
4 point, but I don't know how you could read it without
5 doing that. That's a pretty obvious thing to do. You
6 should do that. And I did read these things at the time.

7 Q Okay. In your judgment, in your opinion,
8 does it require a breakdown of any kind in the quality
9 assurance program to be in noncompliance with Appendix B?
10 Is one necessary before the other can happen?

11 A Well, that's difficult for me to just pull
12 right off. The thought on being in noncompliance with
13 Appendix B, I never have thought of that concept before.

14 I mean, how are you in noncompliance --
15 well, give -- here will be an example of noncompliance.
16 You don't have a corrective action program, and you're
17 required to have one, and you don't.

18 Doesn't say you're required to have a good
19 one. I mean, I'm begging the question now. But, you
20 know, if you don't even have one, well, that's right,
21 you're not in compliance.

22 But I've been to utilities that are just,
23 you know, pathetic, really, you know. The quality
24 assurance manual has got eighteen chapters, and they are
25 named after the eighteen criteria, and they kind of

1 rotate them, and that's the QA manual.

2 And the QC inspectors work for some service
3 person at the site who also is responsible for other site
4 services such as janitors and yard maintenance and
5 quality assurance. And, you know, a big thousand
6 megawatt plant, might be there with six QC inspectors
7 other places. I don't like that. That's not the way I
8 would do that. He's in compliance, I guess, you know.
9 He does have these programs. They do match the criteria.

10 Q Give me an example of a situation in which
11 you would say the QA program is not in compliance with
12 Appendix B.

13 A A situation?

14 Q (Nodding head affirmatively.)

15 A Well, if you didn't have a corrective action
16 program.

17 Q Okay. We'll narrow it down a little
18 further. Let's suppose that all of the criteria are
19 addressed on paper in a program.

20 A Uh-huh.

21 Q What sort of a situation regarding the
22 implementation of those various programs would have to
23 exist in your definition before you would be in
24 noncompliance with Appendix B?

25 Would there have to be a complete lack of

1 implementation of the program, or I'll ask you the
2 Rickover type question --

3 A Ten percent?

4 Q If there's a ten percent?

5 A I don't know.

6 Q You don't know?

7 A Huh-huh. I would have to see it. If I
8 could see the program that you're telling me about, I
9 could sure draw a personal opinion of it, and I'm a
10 little more critical than most of the people that you run
11 into.

12 Q So, what you're telling me, since you really
13 had no basis to make any judgment --

14 A That's right.

15 Q -- as to the status of the quality assurance
16 program at Watts Bar, when you're --

17 A Except by reading this.

18 Q Yes. When you're reading this cover letter,
19 you can't, you couldn't say whether that statement was
20 correct or not, it just appeared to be correct in --

21 A Based --

22 Q -- tense and language?

23 A Right. Based on these responses, that's
24 right.

25 Q So, you do recall in your mind making a

1 judgment as to the accuracy of that cover letter based on
2 those technical responses?

3 A No.

4 Q Okay. And your contact, your connection
5 with the production of this cover letter was strictly on
6 an informal basis?

7 A That's right.

8 Q You would be coming back in from Sequoyah --

9 A That's right.

10 Q -- in the evenings and kind of seeing what's
11 happening with the rest of the BATA --

12 A That's right.

13 Q -- gentlemen?

14 A I made a little thing before we got started,
15 but I was trying to talk about the difference in what you
16 are aware of and of what you know.

17 And I didn't figure you came, you people
18 came down here to investigate things that people are
19 aware of, but those are, can be classed as rumors you
20 know.

21 Q Can be?

22 A Oh-huh. So, if I -- I'm trying to stick to
23 what I know.

24 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

25 Q Mr. Bass, who was responsible for developing

1 this letter, the response?

2 A White.

3 Q Okay. Mr. White personally wasn't doing
4 this?

5 A He did a lot of it personally. He was
6 heavy -- well, the whole 6th floor worked on that thing
7 and the whole QA organization, the whole licensing
8 organization.

9 Q Was there a focal point, an individual?

10 A White was the focal point as I can see it.

11 Q What input did Mr. Wegner and Mr. Brodsky
12 and --

13 A I'm not aware of Brodsky's input. The
14 awareness that I have of Wegner's input is that Wegner is
15 probably one of the best, what I call word engineers, you
16 know, the ability to express something in words, and get
17 it written down where other people can read it and
18 understand it that I've ever encountered.

19 **BY MR. BEINHART:**

20 Q Would you say Mr. White or Mr. Wegner
21 actually drafted pen to paper that letter?

22 A I don't know. I imagine there were a lot of
23 people drafting the thing. I'm sure -- I'm quite sure
24 the quality assurance people were heavily involved in it
25 at that time. They knew the hierarchy of people brought

1 in there, Kelley, Houston, that circuit. I'm sure that
2 the engineers were involved in it, and obviously
3 licensing.

4 Q Now, is that what you're aware of or what
5 you know?

6 A Aware of.

7 Q Okay.

8 A But it doesn't make any sense, you have a
9 letter like that that licensing is not involved in up to
10 their ears, you know.

11 BY MR. ROBINSON:

12 Q Regarding what you're aware of with the
13 overall situation at TVA, did you feel that that was an
14 accurate, that especially paragraph two of that letter
15 was an accurate representation of the status of
16 compliance with Appendix B?

17 A To the extent that I understood at the time,
18 yes. Otherwise, I would have taken exception to it, and
19 I don't think he would have done it if I would have taken
20 any exception to it.

21 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

22 Q The extent of your knowledge was based on
23 what people were telling you?

24 A That's right. Things that I could see and
25 hear and read, you know.

1 **BY MR. BEINHART:**

2 Q From the Sequoyah viewpoint?

3 A Right. And in the evening back down here.

4 **BY MR. WILLIAMSON:**

5 Q Well, okay. That, the information that you
6 were getting in the evening when you came back down here
7 was being provided to you by individuals?

8 A By the people on the 6th floor.

9 Q Who were charged with the responsibility for
10 responding to this?

11 A That's right. I didn't do any
12 investigating.

13 Q Yes. Okay.

14 A Or verification.

15 Q During this time period, January through
16 March, there were a number of concerns with the employee
17 concern program through the, the QTC. As you recall,
18 Quality Technology Corporation had developed a number of
19 concerns that were somewhat, and if I recall, generic,
20 both implications at Watts Bar and Sequoyah. Were you
21 involved in either the review --

22 A No.

23 Q -- investigation or resolution of any
24 employee concerns at Sequoyah?

25 A No.

1 Q You were not involved?

2 A No.

3 Q Were you involved in any meetings where the
4 concerns, allegations were discussed at Sequoyah?

5 A No. I remember being involved in one
6 meeting that involved some NSRS people that were going
7 into the employee concerns, but it was when they came
8 into Abercrombie's office. They were there. They were
9 making the necessary arrangements for the space they
10 would need on site.

11 Q Okay. Did you recall attending a meeting
12 here in Chattanooga in this complex January the 16th,
13 wherein there were a number of TVA employees, some BATA
14 personnel, I believe?

15 A What day of the week is that? I'm trying to
16 remember.

17 MR. ROBINSON: I don't know.

18 A You got a calendar in here?

19 Q No, sir.

20 A 16th this year or year ago?

21 Q '86 a year ago. Wherein the concern,
22 compliance with Appendix B was the main topic of
23 discussion, and it was discussed from the viewpoint of,
24 as we understand it, are we in compliance, are we not in
25 compliance, and there was a number of people discussing

1 those issues?

2 A I can't recall that, no.

3 **BY MR. ROBINSON:**

4 Q NSRS representatives were at the meeting
5 trying to -- really was stemmed from the December NSRS
6 presentation to Commissioner Asselstine, and Kermit Whitt
7 and Mike Harrison from NSRS were at the meeting, and I
8 think Mr. Mason was initially in charge, and Mr. Wegner
9 participated in kind of heading the meeting, and trying
10 to elicit what NSRS meant by noncompliance and what was
11 their basis for their perceptions. You remember a
12 meeting like that?

13 A No. I can remember discussion of that, of
14 those subjects, but I don't remember the meeting of...

15 **BY MR. WILLIAMSON:**

16 Q Was this issue an important issue during
17 this time period, both the compliance with Appendix B,
18 not only in that are we in compliance, but the response
19 to NRC that we're going to have to tell them?

20 A Yeah, I think that it was important, and I
21 think there was a heavy pressure to respond promptly, you
22 know. I mean, March the 20th was getting to be an
23 embarrassment, because the initial letter says, hey, I
24 want six or seven days or something, you know. That
25 meant I want to know now are you or aren't you, you know.

1 Well, if you got seven days to come up with the answer,
2 you know -- no later than the 9th, six days.

3 Q Would it necessarily require seven days to
4 come up with that answer?

5 A No.

6 Q It shouldn't?

7 A I mean, if you're going to have to, if you
8 have eleven perceptions that you want to treat in any
9 depth, you know, as in this manner here, I don't think
10 you can write this letter in six days, do you? I don't
11 know. Could you write this in six days? Get everyone in
12 the organization who should concur in it to concur in it?

13 Q I guess that's what my question is, should
14 it take seven days to respond to a question, are you in
15 compliance with Appendix B at Watts Bar?

16 A Well, I don't know. You know, you could say
17 no, it should take a minute, a minute and a half.

18 Q A minute and a half?

19 A You know. Of course, I am -- Say how in the
20 hell do you know that? I just know. Well, this other
21 guy says you aren't. He says that's his problem, not
22 mine, you know. Well, we're making it your problem.
23 Now, tell me again, okay? This time it will take an
24 hour.

25 You know, it's foolishness. We ought not to

1 pursue this line of questioning, even, really. It
2 doesn't make any sense.

3 **BY MR. BEINHART:**

4 Q Why is that?

5 A You know, about how long does it take to
6 answer the question, or what percentage has to be, I
7 don't understand, that kind of a question, you know. It
8 is not significant to me.

9 Q I'm having a hard time understanding what
10 you're not understanding.

11 A Yeah.

12 Q What is that?

13 A Well, the little dialogue I just walked my
14 way through there, somebody walks up they say are you in
15 compliance with Appendix B.

16 Q Is that not a good question?

17 A I've never heard it asked before.

18 Q Is it a good question?

19 A I don't think so.

20 Q Why not?

21 A You know, it's just not appropriate. I
22 mean, it's not the issue. Appendix B, you don't comply
23 with Appendix B. Appendix B tells you how to have a
24 quality program.

25 Q You don't comply with that?

1 A No, compliance with your quality program,
2 but you -- you can't comply -- I don't -- I'd have to go
3 through the words again. But I don't know how you comply
4 with a criteria, except to implement the criteria and
5 comply with that. You have to have something more
6 specific.

7 Q So, you're saying that compliance requires a
8 program plus implementation of the program?

9 A Sure, right. In my opinion, you know,
10 that's just the way, if I were setting up a quality
11 assurance program myself, that's what I'd do. I'd start
12 with Appendix B, and then I would develop a program and I
13 would implement the program.

14 Q How would you know if that program was being
15 implemented?

16 A Well, that would be part of my program.

17 Q Which part?

18 A There must be a criteria in there for that.
19 I don't recall the number, but the auditing and the --

20 Q So, auditing would tell you if you're in
21 compliance or not, really?

22 A It could give you a feel for that, and then
23 your own personal involvement in this thing.

24 MR. REINHART: Okay. I'm sorry.

25 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

1 Q Now, I was -- the questioning was trying to
2 determine, you know, whether you really had enough
3 information at your disposal, having been at Sequoyah --
4 A Right.
5 Q -- to adequately respond to --
6 A That's right.
7 Q -- whether this letter addresses the issue
8 or not. That's what I'm wanting to know.
9 A Well, I guess, you know, if you just get one
10 answer, the answer is no.
11 Q Okay. But you were asked to look at it, and
12 you made some comments, and, like I said, your specialty
13 was --
14 A Right.
15 Q -- in reviewing and writing, I guess?
16 A Uh-huh.
17 Q Did you see the final draft or copy that
18 went out, which is --
19 A I don't know.
20 Q You don't recall?
21 A (Nodding head negatively.)
22 Q Okay. Were you asked to comment at all on
23 pervasive, the term "pervasive"?
24 A Not that I recall, no.
25 Q Did you have any input on the term, the

1 overall QA program is in pervasive compliance with 10 CFR
2 Appendix B, the overall program?

3 A I cannot recall discussing these things
4 specifically, as you ask them.

5 Q If you read that, and having been at
6 Sequoyah, would you automatically think about the QA
7 program at Sequoyah, or would you think this was more
8 site specific?

9 A There again, I don't know. What I wanted to
10 have, and I don't know what I was thinking at the time,
11 because I wanted the quality assurance program for TVA,
12 and here we're trying to talk about the quality assurance
13 program as we found it at Watts Bar. This conclusion was
14 drawn and stated here. The quality assurance
15 organization and program that we have today is even a
16 step beyond that, you see.

17 Q Let me go change the subject just a moment.
18 Go back to you were hired in January. When were you
19 informed that you or asked to come to TVA, was that in
20 '85?

21 A No. January of '86. As a matter of fact, I
22 was at Davis-Besse, and I had an office assigned to me
23 there. I got to work at 8:00 in the morning, about five
24 minutes of 8:00, and the phone range, and it's Tuesday
25 morning.

1 Now, they came down here on Monday, White
2 did. It was Tuesday morning and it's Wegner on the
3 phone. He's my associate.

4 He says when can you get down here? And I
5 said, well, I don't know, I -- I've got some things I'm
6 doing, but if I had to be there, I can come down on
7 Friday. He said no. No. What time today can you be
8 here? And I said, shee, I don't know. He said, well,
9 find out and let us know and come today.

10 So, Joe, by this time is in a meeting with
11 Williams, is in a meeting with Mr. Keppler and with Mr.
12 Smart from downtown, his President, and I've got to
13 leave.

14 And, so, I can't get his attention, so I
15 just wrote him a note and had his girl carry it into him,
16 interrupt him, and he looked around and gave me this
17 dirty look, and I did like that (indicating), and shoved
18 off right then. Got here at about 2:15 that afternoon.

19 Q Did Mr. Wegner brief you on why he wanted
20 you here or what he perceived the problems were at TVA or
21 what you'd be doing or anything?

22 A No. When he got here, they did tell me they
23 wanted me at Sequoyah.

24 Q When was that, January the --

25 A Whatever day he came.

1 Q He came on the 13th.

2 A So, this was the 14th, and the afternoon of
3 the 14th I got here. You gave me this meeting date.
4 What was the meeting date?

5 Q 16th.

6 A 16th. That was Thursday. Well, let's see.
7 That first day was late. I remember I got my badge that
8 day. And I did my medical, my MMPI and all that other
9 stuff the next day. So, I was around here. That day was
10 probably the first day I went out to the site. But I
11 don't remember.

12 Q Okay. Did you know Mr. Larry Nace?

13 A Uh-huh.

14 Q Were you aware --

15 A Used to be one of my skippers.

16 Q One of your skippers?

17 A One of the ships I had, he was one of my
18 COs.

19 Q Were you aware of the systematic assessment
20 of identified concerns that he was working on here?

21 A I heard he was working on it, but I didn't
22 have any knowledge.

23 Q Did you have any input?

24 A No.

25 Q Were you ever briefed on the results of it?

1 A No.

2 Q Were you aware of any other reviews that
3 were conducted by either TVA personnel or contract
4 personnel at Watts Bar or any other place?

5 A No.

6 Q Were you aware of the effort of EG&G at
7 Watts Bar to identify welding concerns and problems?

8 A Not in this time frame I'm not.

9 Q Were you aware of concerns identified by QTC
10 at Watts Bar during this time frame which would impact on
11 safety and quality?

12 A I heard about them. I heard about them in
13 an entirely different tone of voice than you're using in
14 your search for quality. You know, usually, you know,
15 Mr. Dean had another phone call from Henry Meyers, what
16 the hell is Meyers talking about. You wait four days and
17 you'd find out, printed concern would come through.

18 Q Printed concern.

19 A And Meyer already had it and is hollering at
20 Dean about it on the telephone, apparently. Apparently.
21 I have no knowledge of that first-hand, obviously, but
22 that was the way we heard QTC. Very strange.

23 Q But they were working for TVA?

24 A That's right.

25 Q So, who was responsible for managing that

1 contract with QTC?

2 A I don't know. I don't know. They reported
3 to the -- I started to say the Board or I started to say
4 the General Manager, and I'm not sure which, but, really,
5 around here, you say the General Manager and the Board
6 sort of as all one group.

7 BY MR. ROBINSON:

8 Q Were you involved in the development of the
9 employee concern program?

10 A No.

11 Q At all?

12 A No.

13 Q With TVA?

14 A No.

15 Q Did -- we may have asked you this once
16 before, but did Mr. Wegner or Mr. White run the final
17 copy of that March 20th letter by you for just for any
18 suggestions?

19 A He asked me if I knew if I was looking at
20 the final copy, and I don't recall seeing what I was
21 identifying as the final copy, no.

22 Q So, there was not a situation where Mr.
23 Wegner said, you know, Bill, this is what we're thinking
24 about sending out, how about taking a look at it?

25 A No.

1 MR. ROBINSON: Okay.

2 BY MR. BEINHART:

3 Q Let me just ask you to try and get your
4 feelings on this, your thinking. Let's just take
5 Sequoyah so we can kind of separate ourselves from the
6 heat of this issue.

7 A Okay.

8 Q If you had to determine if Sequoyah was
9 meeting the requirements of Appendix B, just a general
10 question like that, how would you do that?

11 A I don't know. I'd have to go sit down and
12 figure that out, you know, on the premise I wasn't
13 allowed to give the quick answer and say yes.

14 That's one thing we were working on at
15 Zimmer. Finally ended up developing a thing entitled the
16 program to verify the quality of construction, which was,
17 that would be one way to do it. That was a very
18 difficult and expensive way to do it, and it was going to
19 take a couple of years.

20 Q What if the program is working the way it
21 ought to be working, would you have to go to that extent?

22 A No, I think not. if it were working.

23 Q How would you, just say a normal program,
24 any licensee that had a, you know, moderate to good
25 program?

1 A Well, I think there are a number of things
2 that give you a measure of that, you know, some of which
3 are provided by you, you know, SALP reports, notices of
4 violations, your open items on your own audits, your
5 backlog of maintenance work requests, your deferred or
6 omitted preventive maintenance, the nature of the
7 deficiencies that are being written.

8 I think that gives you all a feel as to how
9 you're doing. And then, of course, you do every now and
10 then, given the, which I did not grow up with, we didn't
11 have this when I was a kid, but this thing of employee
12 concerns where a person can voice his concern at any
13 level immediately, you know. It's an interesting thing,
14 too. I think what you get out of that is very
15 interesting.

16 I can remember working one at Zimmer, and we
17 had to fall back and redo some RayChem splices, found out
18 that they had, in fact, made a number of RayChem splices
19 that did not meet the spec. Difficult recovery program.
20 And very precise instructions as to how to do that.

21 And there was one instance where, when you
22 have crimped the connection, you know, you're getting
23 ready to take it the rest of the way, where a dimension
24 is taken of the crimp, and that is really to determine
25 that you've got the right size sleeve.

1 And, so, to come up with this dimension, the
2 engineers, they crimped some and they measured it and
3 they put that down as their criteria for that dimension,
4 and they put it down in three significant figures, .063.

5 One day, they were down in containment in a
6 radiological environment, protective clothing, crimping
7 the thing. Now, you know with that kind of dimensions,
8 the inspector has got his micrometer calibers with him,
9 not really appropriate, but he has them.

10 He measures .067. And, so, he makes the guy
11 stop and he -- their boss puts them in a low rad area to
12 stand by, and the foreman goes up and makes the call to
13 his engineer, and says, hey, I got .067 where you gave me
14 .063 on this particular spliced fuse, identifies it.

15 The engineer says wait, and comes back in
16 just a minute and says, hey, that's fine, .070 is fine,
17 and I will put a rev to that sketch and I'll make you an
18 honest man before you can get back out of the
19 containment.

20 So, he went back down, told him, hey, .070
21 is okay. We'll have the sketch revised by the time we
22 get out. And the inspector signed it off, and then
23 promptly wrote himself up as, you know, hey, I can't do
24 that, I'm required to work with approved written
25 instructions, Criteria 5 says so, and I didn't have

1 approved written instructions. I had this thing, but
2 it's a .063, we measured .067, and I ain't signing it
3 off, and they proceeded without my sign-off.

4 You know, that's really the way it worked.

5 Q I see.

6 A And, so, is that a violation or a breakdown
7 in the QA program or not? By the time you get out, the
8 sketch was revised, so there is a proper paper trail.
9 There's no question as to what you have in there, and the
10 work document will not be closed until the final revised
11 drawing is filed with it. But the inspector saw that as
12 a deviation, noncompliance with Criteria 5. And Region
13 III sent a couple of you guys in and had to talk to them.

14 BY ME. REINHART:

15 Q We talked about pervasive.

16 A What do you think about that? That's a very
17 interesting thing. Do you have an opinion about that?
18 Should you do that or not do that, or just get everybody
19 the hell out of containment and get the revised drawing
20 and then go back down tomorrow or next shift and do it?

21 Q Without knowing all the details of their
22 program, I couldn't say.

23 A Couldn't say. Go ahead.

24 Q When we spoke of a pervasive breakdown, did
25 Zimmer have one of those, did Zimmer have a pervasive

1 breakdown?

2 A In my sense of the matter as I recall it and
3 as I think I saw it there, I think they did.

4 Q So, basically, their whole QA program across
5 the board --

6 A Uh-huh.

7 Q -- was just --

8 A You couldn't find anything you could count
9 on. You know, it's a funny thing. You go out and look
10 at the plant, take a specific area and put an inspection
11 on it. First class in nearly every respect. That was
12 disconcerting.

13 I would have been happier if you kept
14 finding a mess, you know. But everything you checked
15 came out about right, but you couldn't prove it, you
16 know. You had no paper trail, no drawing mod, no
17 detailed sketch of as-built.

18 You could sometimes find the sketch and see
19 where the -- if you take -- if you were lucky enough to
20 get the right copy, you get the copy where the pipefitter
21 boss said, no, now, look, do it like this, you see, and
22 give it to the guy and he'd install it like that. That
23 never got picked up on the drawing.

24 Why, you'd go look at it, it would be just
25 fine. If it had been on the drawing, if it had been

1 engineered, if it had been QA'd, it would have been okay.
2 But it wasn't any of those things. And, of course, the
3 intimidation and harassment thing was out of all
4 proportion high there.

5 Plus we had a lot of people, Jim Keppler had
6 a lot of people helping us hold up the table. We had a
7 lot of people sitting around the table, and the Miami
8 Valley thing and the GAP thing, and they were in full
9 force.

10 The GAP fellow called the President one
11 time. He says, I want a copy of all your maintenance
12 procedures, and you're required to give them to me under
13 the law. The guy says, I'm not going to do that, all of
14 them, that's ridiculous.

15 The GAP guy says, never mind, I can probably
16 get it before you send them to me, anyway, and hung up.
17 And it was just stuff, you know, walked out through the
18 door.

19 **BY MR. ROBINSON:**

20 Q Getting away from the Zimmer arena and
21 getting back to the TVA arena --

22 A I thought we talked about the one --

23 Q How would you characterize from your
24 knowledge, not from your awareness, but from your
25 knowledge the effectiveness of TVA's corrective action

1 program in the January through March 1986 time frame?

2 A I have no knowledge.

3 Q How about your awareness?

4 A I got an opinion and awareness.

5 Q Give us your awareness.

6 A I never in the least dug into it. During
7 that time frame, I think that some things were being
8 corrected, but it was not the formality and the control
9 that I like to see that we now have, you know, in the
10 procedures that have been developed to straighten that
11 out. Now, whether or not that allowed anything to get by
12 us that I'm aware of, I don't know.

13 Q Getting away from Zimmer, if a given QA
14 program has an effective corrective system, is it
15 possible for that program to be in noncompliance with
16 Appendix B?

17 A Well, you mean with the other criteria?

18 Q (Nodding head affirmatively.)

19 A Well, I would think so, you know.

20 Q Like even --

21 A Like this example I give you about not
22 having an approved written instruction for the work, they
23 had a good corrective action program, but they let this
24 job go without it. Of course, it was picked up within
25 about three-and-a-half minutes after it happened by

1 inspector action.

2 Q And if this particular QA program had an
3 effective corrective action program, and it had written
4 guidelines for the other criterion, and, yet, those
5 criterion were not being implemented, would that program
6 be in compliance or noncompliance with Appendix B?

7 A Well, I don't know. Just by the sound of
8 it, if you have something that should be implemented and
9 you do not implement it, it sounds like you have not done
10 what you're supposed to do, that's right. You're
11 supposed to implement it and you didn't, why, then, yeah.

12 MR. ROBINSON: I have no further questions.

13 MR. WILLIAMSON: You have anything?

14 MR. REINHART: No.

15 BY MR. ROBINSON:

16 Q Are there any other comments, Mr. Bass, that
17 you feel would be pertinent to our investigation that we
18 haven't discussed that you want to comment on at this
19 time?

20 A No, I -- I really don't. I can see that if
21 I gave you more precise specific answers to your
22 questions, I could have been a lot more help to you. I'm
23 just sorry that I couldn't do that, but I think, you
24 know, if you got precise answers to the kinds of
25 questions that you're asking, you could readily, you

1 know, draw your conclusion one way or another. I'm sorry
2 that I couldn't give you the more precise answers that
3 would let you do that.

4 Q One final thing. You indicated that Mr.
5 Wegner was probably the best of the group at the word
6 engineering or the --

7 A Writing, he's the best writer that --

8 Q Was --

9 A Uh-huh.

10 Q Was there a lot of very careful wording in
11 that letter to your knowledge?

12 A (Nodding head negatively.) Not to my
13 knowledge. But I would presume, you know, no more than
14 in any other. You know, you write for Admiral Rickover
15 for about twenty-six years as he did, who himself was a
16 pretty good word engineer -- that's a Rickover term.

17 Q Word engineering?

18 A Right. You ought not to put any implication
19 in that.

20 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

21 Q Do you know, Mr. Bass, whether this letter,
22 this response to NRC went outside of TVA for review by
23 anyone else?

24 A No, not to my knowledge, huh-huh.

25 BY MR. REINHART:

1 Q Do you know if, let's see -- do you know or
2 have an awareness of yourself or anybody calling people
3 in the NRC and trying to get terms defined or gain
4 acceptance for the letter before it was sent or anything
5 like that?

6 A Not to my knowledge. If I were writing it
7 myself, that's what I'd do. If I were writing it, if it
8 were -- if I were writing it and I were signing it, I
9 would certainly do that. I mean, I don't know whether or
10 not it's been done or not.

11 Q Call the person you're going to send it to?

12 A You bet you. Call him, go see him, I'd call
13 him twice a day, I'd read him this paragraph.

14 Absolutely. Hoist him right aboard all the way.

15 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

16 Q You know if that was done?

17 A I don't know.

18 Q Did you have any occasion to review
19 subsequent correspondence between NRC and TVA after this
20 letter, wherein there was a question about what was meant
21 by the letter and whether it was properly responded to?

22 A Well, I don't remember that clearly. I do
23 remember there was another letter, seems like about in
24 June that tried to talk to the subject again.

25 And, so, there probably was something

1 between March 20th and June that brought that about, but
2 I don't remember that letter, no. And I don't remember
3 the June letter very clearly as we sit here except that I
4 remember there was one.

5 BY MR. REINHART:

6 Q And you weren't involved in the June letter,
7 in writing --

8 A Well, I probably was, you know. I probably
9 saw it. I don't have any strong recollection of it.

10 MR. REINHART: Okay.

11 BY MR. WILLIAMSON:

12 Q Mr. Bass, have I or any other NRC
13 representative here threatened you in any manner or
14 offered you any reward in return for this statement?

15 A No.

16 Q Have you given this statement freely and
17 voluntarily?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Is there any additional information you
20 would like to add to the record?

21 A No.

22 MR. WILLIAMSON: Okay. This interview is
23 concluded at 2:10 on March 24th, 1987.

24 END OF INTERVIEW

25

1

CERTIFICATE OF OFFICIAL REPORTER

This is to certify that the attached proceedings before the UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION in the matter of:

NAME OF PROCEEDING:

AN INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW OF:

WILLIAM BASS

DOCKET NO:

PLACE: Tennessee Valley Authority
Chattanooga Office Complex
4th Floor, Lookout Place
N-1 Conference Room

DATE: Chattanooga, Tennessee

March 24, 1987

were held as herein appears, and that this is the original transcript thereof for the file of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

(Sigt) *Christine B. Smith*
(Typed) Christine B. Smith

Official Reporter

Reporter's Affiliation

SMITH REPORTING AGENCY
POST OFFICE BOX 6127
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE 37401