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Portsmouth, Virginia
March 4, 1982

1300

I, Thomas Stanley Gills, hereby make the following voluntary statement to Mr. E. L. Williamson, who has identified himself to me as an Investigator with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. I make this statement freely with no threats or promises of reward having been made to me.

I am the owner of Stan Gills Body Shop located at 820 17th St. Portsmouth, Virginia. I have been at this location since 1976, when I purchased the building from John Knox III, of Portsmouth, Virginia.

At the time I bought the building an industrial laundry occupied one end of the building. The company, Southern Space Inc, whose home office is 811 - South Edisto Avenue, Columbia South Carolina, was the laundry in that space. For a long time I did not know what they did. From 1976 to 1979 they were only open two-three times a month. Their main customer was the shipyard laundry. I eventually discovered they laundered clothes that had been contaminated by

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Nuclear waste or radiation. In 1979 their workload increased dramatically when they started doing the clothing for UEPIC in addition to the shipyard. They operated six and seven days a week. Southern had occupied this building since 1968 or 1969. When I took over as owner I raised the rent and told the owner, Mrs Benrden that I would give her a year to find a new location, but they stayed for approximately four years, vacating in the fall of 1980. They removed most of their equipment, washers, dryers etc during this time but they continued to pay me rent until ~~July~~^{August} 1981. It was approximately nine months the building was vacant because Southern Space was having some difficulty decontaminating the area the laundry was in.

In January 1981, most of the equipment ~~was~~ had been removed and there were two Southern employees, from their home office, Columbia, S.C. in the space attempting to decontaminate the area. These employees were middle-age black men, whose names I don't recall spent two-three weeks decontaminating the sub surface waste water storage tank. This tank was

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Approximately 3 feet wide, 5 feet long and 5 feet deep. It was rectangular in shape with the top recessed lower than the floor in the building. There was a 2'x2' square hatch-type cover that allowed access to the tank, but it stayed off all the time. There was a hose going in the tank, and some concrete placements on the floor, used to guide water or spills to the tank. I understood this tank held the first rinse water, and after settlement occurred the water was pumped to another holding tank, where it was checked and released into the city water system.

During the time the two employees were cleaning the tank it was explained to me by Mr. H.C. Wilson, the manager of the local Southern Space office, that the reason it was taking so long to get it tank clean was that they were waiting for the levels of radiation to go down. These two employees worked on and off for several weeks, decontaminating the tank. They worked in the tank during this time.

While this decontamination was going on

Thomas S. Ellis

it was learned by someone in Southern Space that some of the cracks in the floor were giving elevated levels of radiation. At this time two employees of Southern, the same two black men, started breaking up the concrete on the floor and removing the debris in barrels. I remember the truck used to haul the barrels had warning signs on them, because of the levels of radiation. I was told by one of the Southern employees that some of the concrete was "too hot" to carry, so it was transported to their new Portsmouth office, for future disposition.

The floor in the building that housed the Southern operation had approximately six inches of concrete on the floor; four inch foundation and a two inch cap. This was all broken up in the front 1/3 of the building - around the sub-surface storage tank. All that surrounded the tank at the time was dirt.

There was some concrete debris left in the area and it was thrown into the storage tank. At the same time the workers took mauls and knocked the top

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of the tank into the tank. When the floor was poured the waste water storage tank was filled with concrete and the concrete debris. This was in the Spring, 1981 - the exact date I do not recall. I witnessed this action. Also present during this operation were the Williams Bros. Construction workers, the two black guys from Southern Space and Les Case, General Manager, Southern Space.

Sometime after this operation Les Case advised me that additional concrete would have to be poured because higher levels of radiation were found in the other $\frac{2}{3}$ of the floor. Case contracted people from Williams Bros. to break up the rest of the concrete - the back $\frac{2}{3}$ and Williams Bros. sub-contracted the operation to a local man, who broke up the two inch cap and hauled it off to his residence. I do not know this man's name but I can find out and will provide this information to the NRC. The cap was replaced with four inches of concrete over the entire floor. I do not know what the level of radiation on the concrete debris

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was, but I assume it was "hot".

This action was the last taken on the floor. According to Les Case, the building was decontaminated and ready to be inspected by the NRC. This was in July, 1981 and when the NRC inspector found the additional radiation activity outside the building, as well as inside on some junction boxes, window sill and a drain from the toilet. Les Case was present and agreed to correct the problem. Case then brought in people to remove the dirt on the side of the building and replaced it with fresh fill. They also dug a hole under the side of the building and replaced part of the drain pipe that came from the waste water storage tank as well as the sink and toilet. This ~~was~~ line went off the city sewer line.

During these later operations by Southern, there was an older man from Southern Space Headquarters, that supervised the operations. He mentioned that he could not get the radiation levels down as long as that storage tank was

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in the area. He thought the problems were coming from the buried tank, and it should have been removed according to him. I do not know his name. He seemed to be frustrated about the way the job had been done. He did tell me he drove a mobile unit for Southern, but that is all I know.

After the high levels of radiation were found in the dirt, someone from Southern Space discovered some of the cinder blocks in the area of the storage tank were contaminated and William Bros. was contracted to replace those blocks. This was done in September 1981.

During all of this construction activity that surrounded the Southern Space operation a Southern technician was usually in the area taking surveys and recording the results. She told me that everything was alright - but they kept digging and finding more contamination.

In late August 1981, Les Case told me he had talked to an engineer about doing additional work on the

Thomas S. Case

Foundation of the building. This was a result of an NRC inspection which detected more levels of radiation on the side and back of the building. Case dug out the area ~~to~~ around the corner of the building and put in new footer and placed concrete under the building. The floor was supported by jacks. After the concrete was put under the foundation, some of the Southern Space people drilled some holes in the concrete floor inside the building and poured sand in the holes for additional shielding, according to Case. Case had said the additional concrete provided more shielding.

I recall that during some period of casual conversation with Les Case, he told me that the waste storage tank had ruptured at one time and it was caused by the city, during some construction beside the building. This was a problem with the soil contamination according to Case. I also remember a conversation with where in he told me he had removed the storage tank. And I reminded him that I knew that the tank was still in the ground. He just said they had

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removed one of the tanks, And I told him we both knew which one he was talking about - the above ground tank.

In January 1982, I talked to Les Case, and told him we were going to be doing some drilling in the floor of the old Southern Space building and asked him if he wanted to come up. He responded he did and he came and watch us drill 18 three inches whels approximately 24 inches in depth. He took surveys of each hole and said he found nothing. He said it was a waste of his time and the radiation levels were lower than he expected. He asked for a core of the concrete as a souvenir. I told him I was going to call the NRC and make sure the levels were O.K. He said that was alright because I apparently didn't trust him anyway.

I am now ~~the~~ concerned about this tank in the ground in my building. I don't know if it is a health hazard, or not but it causes me

Thomas S. All

great personal concern. I think the tank and the surrounding contaminated soil should be removed by the person responsible.

The only people that saw the waste water storage tank being covered and buried in concrete were myself; Les Case, two black employees of Southern Grace and three construction workers from Williams Bro. Construction.

I have read the foregoing statement consisting of ten handwritten pages I have made any necessary corrections and have initialed them. I have signed my name in the margin of each page. This statement is the truth to the best of my knowledge and belief, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on March 4, 1982 at 1745.

Thomas S. Galt

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 4th day of March, 1982

P. M. Chambless
P. M. Chambless, NRC, Inspector

E. L. Williamson
E. L. Williamson, NRC, Investigator