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Smithsonian Videohistory Program

Manhattan Project

Session Eight

Collection Division 2: Oak Ridge

Stanley Goldberg, Interviewer

March 6, 1987

**Manhattan Project:
Session Eight**

**Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant (K25)
in Oak Ridge, Tennessee**

**Narrative by
Stanley Goldberg**

March 6, 1987

for the Smithsonian Institution Videohistory Program

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[A cameraman in a motorized cart travels the length of the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant and finally arrives to a corner where Goldberg is seated next to an easel with an aerial photo of the plant. This session is not timecoded]

GOLDBERG: What kept you? Here we are in the gaseous diffusion plant, K-25, the first one built. Let me show you the trip that the camera just took down to where I am now. [The camera] started about up in here, came all the way down here, half-mile to here, did a little jog, and then came up to where we are now, right in front of these windows here.

When this plant was built, it was the largest roofed building that did industrial work in the whole world. It's the first automated plant. It was planned by the end of 1942 to the beginning of 1943. They broke ground in the middle of 1943. The first pieces of equipment that went into operation here, went into operation in about September of 1944. By January 1945, they were producing product. So it took about a total of eighteen months from the time they broke ground to the time they actually started producing product. The building wasn't finished yet.

In fact, all the time the building was being built, there was some question about what kind of equipment would be in it. In the beginning, they didn't know what the pumps would look like, they didn't know what the barrier material would be inside the diffusers, and they had no idea what the diffusers would look like. All of that came together in the course of building the building. People went on building, putting the pipes in, welding the pipes. It was an amazing achievement, but just one of many amazing achievements that went into the building of the atomic bomb during World War II.

[Camera survey of the K-25 pipe gallery]

[Exterior and interior views of the remaining Calutron units in the Y-12 electromagnetic separation plant]

[Exterior and interior views of the Calutron operators' cubicles]

[End of Session Eight]