

Co-workers celebrate Worrell's 40-year Hanford career

Deborah Dunn, *Fluor Hanford*

When John Worrell started working at Hanford, John F. Kennedy was in the White House, and most Americans hadn't even heard the word "Toyota."

After 40 years of employment at the Hanford Site, Worrell's co-workers at the 222-S Analytical Laboratory recognized Worrell at a March 25 gathering. "I was surprised," Worrell said. "It was a pretty nice cake."

Worrell is a senior chemical technician with the Fluor Hanford 222-S Analytical Laboratory Production group. He works in the organic chemistry lab, checking samples of tank waste for organic content that might include polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, and "semi-volatiles."



Senior chemical technician John Worrell, a 40-year Hanford employee, discusses some of the equipment he uses in the 222-S Analytical Laboratory.

Worrell grew up in Richland. He was a toddler in 1944 when his family moved here from Memphis, Tenn., to join his father, Fred Worrell, who had hired on with the Hanford Patrol in 1943. His father was with the Patrol for the rest of his career. Worrell's mother, Maxie Louise ("Lou") worked at Hanford for 27 years, including 25 years as a senior chemical technician.

The family lived temporarily in a White Bluffs farmhouse, then stayed in Sunnyside until they could settle into a newly constructed Richland prefab not far from today's Richland High School. They later moved into an A House in the same neighborhood, on Roberdeau Street. In Richland, Worrell, his brother and sister welcomed a new brother — "the family's only Yankee," Worrell said.

Shortly after turning 17, Worrell, a trumpet player, joined the U.S. Marine Corps Band. The band played up and down the West Coast — even performing in the Pasadena Parade of Roses — and had inland venues from Reno to Santa Fe. It wasn't all music and performance, however, as members participated in normal combat maneuvers as well. His military service involved a lot of travel and a two-year stint in Hawaii.

"It didn't seem to be that hard to get in the band," Worrell said, "but it was hard to stay in. You had to show constant improvement."

Worrell completed his service in November 1962 and began looking for a good job. Friends suggested Hanford, and he was soon regularly visiting the site's employment office. In March 1963, he was hired as a member of the 300 Area swing-shift janitorial crew. He attended Columbia Basin College during the day, along with half of his co-workers.

Continued on page 8.

Co-workers celebrate Worrell's 40-year Hanford career, cont.

In September 1963, President Kennedy visited Hanford for the dedication of N Reactor. Worrell recalled the excitement among the workers. While he did not attend the dedication, his father was one of the guards for the presidential visit.

After 15 months of work and school, Worrell was able to transfer to the lab. His 40-year career has also included 10 years at PUREX and about seven-and-a-half years at Z Plant. He vividly remembers "the hot and heavy days at PUREX" when the radioactivity in the samples "would scare you to death now."

The 222-S Analytical Lab in the 200 West Area began operations in 1951 as the process-control laboratory for the REDOX plutonium separations plant. The lab has undergone a series of upgrades and expansions since then, including a new hot-cell addition in 1994. With oversight from the Office of Site Services within the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office, 222-S operating contractor Fluor Hanford performs a full range of organic, inorganic and radiochemical analyses on samples of tank waste, air, liquids and soils. The facility is the primary Hanford Site laboratory for analyzing highly radioactive samples to support all major Hanford projects. Worrell said a big change in his work through the years has been computerization of the calculations he and his co-workers formerly did themselves.

Worrell said his 40 years at Hanford "didn't seem to be that long," and he plans to keep working. ■