

**NASA GLENN HISTORY OFFICE  
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

# **Edward Krawczonek**

**Interview by Virginia Dawson  
with Dennis Brown  
January 23, 2003**

One of a series of filmed interviews conducted on January 23, 2003 with former Rocket Engine Test Facility employees for the documentary video "Fueling Space Exploration." Dennis Brown is the videographer.

DAWSON: Okay, I guess we're ready. So if you would say your name.

ED KRAWCZONEK: My name is Edward Krawczonek, K-R-A-W-C-Z-O-N-E-K.

DAWSON: What was your position when you were at Lewis Laboratory?

ED KRAWCZONEK: My position? I started out in 1949 as an apprentice. And I ended up being a mechanic leader, aerospace mechanic leader at South 40.

DAWSON: What is an apprentice? Do they still have nowadays?

ED KRAWCZONEK: I think they still have an Apprentice Program, but it's not like it used to be.

DAWSON: So, if you could just say, the Apprentice Program was to train blah, blah, blah.

ED KRAWCZONEK: The apprentice program was to train individuals in the different fields, mechanics, machine shop, all different stuff that goes on at the lab.

DAWSON: And so, where did you receive your training? What part of the laboratory did you go to?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Just about every place that was -- that was back in 1949, so there weren't too many facilities around at that time.

DAWSON: So how did you end up being connected with rocket testing? Say I ended up in rocket testing.

ED KRAWCZONEK: I got involved in rocket testing back in, I believe it was 1957. At that time I was working in the wind tunnels, and I kept getting shifted around from facility to facility.

And at that time, nobody wanted to work at the Rocket Lab for some reason. And I volunteered to work there because you never get out of there. Why were --

DAWSON: Well, why did people want to work there?

ED KRAWCZONEK: I don't really know. I just heard that story.

DAWSON: Could you say that it might -- they might -- the perception might be that it was dangerous?

ED KRAWCZONEK: No, I don't think that was it. I think some of the people didn't care for the supervision at that time. But, that's only hearsay.

[ Laughter ]

DAWSON: Okay. What attracted you to rockets in particular? Did you like the work?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Oh, yes. I went through the rocket lab during my apprentice program, so I had some familiarity with the work there. But, I think when I went there in 1957 or '58, I'm not sure which year it was, I just worked in the old Rocket Lab up until 1964. And then I was transferred over to the Rocket Engine Test Facility at South 40. Again --

DAWSON: What did you do there? What was your job in --

ED KRAWCZONEK: Where at?

DAWSON: At the South 40.

ED KRAWCZONEK: Oh, at South 40, I was a mechanic leader there at that time.

DAWSON: Well, what does that -- what do people do when they're doing mechanics?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Oh, we were responsible for building up of the hardware, installing it and assisting in the testing of it.

DAWSON: So who told you -- who designed what you were going to do? Who said -- who figured out --

ED KRAWCZONEK: Oh, it was the operations and the research engineers, mostly had all the input on what we were going to be testing.

DAWSON: Was there a test that sort of stands out in your mind that -- for one reason or another?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Oh, as far as the testing goes -- I can't say there was really one because there were a lot of them where we would prepare the test in the daytime and then we would run it

at nighttime. And the test would disintegrate. We'd have an explosion, blow up. And you just put another one in and start all over again.

DAWSON: Did you think that working with liquid hydrogen was dangerous?

ED KRAWCZONEK: I didn't think it was dangerous because I -- I respected it. And I think if you have respect for the liquid hydrogen and know what you're doing, you're not going to have too much trouble.

[ Inaudible Conversation ]

DAWSON: Sure, sure.

BROWN: Rephrase the --

DAWSON: Yeah, we like what you said. And so we'd like to get it again, because it's sort of the essence of what we're trying to get at in liquid hydrogen. So, if you could talk about how, you know, you didn't mind working with it even though you knew that it was dangerous because you respected it, you know?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Okay --

DAWSON: You can --

BROWN: You said that you have respect for it, but we need to -- I don't know if you put hydrogen at the front part of your answer. You said, you had respect for it, but [inaudible] well, what is he talking about?

DAWSON: Yeah, you know, so we need to say it.

BROWN: So just liquid hydrogen. I really had great respect for liquid hydrogen or something like that.

DAWSON: Right.

BROWN: Yeah.

ED KRAWCZONEK: I really had great respect for liquid hydrogen. I worked with it for a number of years, so I wasn't afraid of it. As long as you knew what you were doing and followed procedures, I wouldn't have any problems.

DAWSON: Perfect. That's pretty good, right?

BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAWSON: Yeah, yeah. Great, great. What about the scrubber? Can you tell us a little bit about the scrubber and how you were involved in that? Because that was kind of an important part of the whole setup. And so if you could tell us like from your point of view, what made it important?

ED KRAWCZONEK: As far as the scrubber, actually,

[ BREAK ]

DAWSON: -- involved with most.

ED KRAWCZONEK: Oh, mostly the installation of the testing, the tests that we were conducting. The loading of the fuels and the propellants. The buildup of systems.

DAWSON: Can you tell us a little bit about loading? Is there anything special? What sort of procedures did you go through when you loaded liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Well, as far as loading liquid hydrogen, we followed a check sheet that we -- when we were doing our transferring. Or safety equipment that was required.

DAWSON: Good. Yeah.

[ Inaudible Response ]

DAWSON: Fine. Like you know, I think there was a lot of testing of combustion instability. And you know, was there something about any of those tests that was tough or, you know, do you remember?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Well, as far as testing combustion instability that was one of the first programs I was involved on the testing end when I first was transferred down there. At that time I recall seeing a memo written by Silverstein, Abe Silverstein, that he wanted that facility run every day. And if it wasn't running every day, he was going to get people that would get it running every day.

DAWSON: That's great. We need that. That's wonderful.

ED KRAWCZONEK: And if -- the thing with the combustion instability testing, you could prepare for the test, and you got ready to make the test, you didn't know how long it was going to last. You'd push the button, it could end like in a second. And you never knew how long a test would last.

DAWSON: Was Silverstein not satisfied that you were able to run it enough?

ED KRAWCZONEK: I couldn't tell you.

[ Laughter ]

DAWSON: That's a great anecdote, though. That's -- wish we could find that memo. Do you remember a guy by the name of John Sloop?

ED KRAWCZONEK: Not -- vaguely I remember him. But I don't have -- never really had anything to do with him.

DAWSON: Yeah, I see, I see. Well, I think that that's good.

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**EDWARD KRAWCZONEK**

**Interview by Virginia Dawson  
January 23, 2003**

**EK: Ed Krawczonek**

**GD: Ginnie Dawson**

*Transcript lacking interviewer questions for several of the following responses.*

My name is Edward Krawczonek. I started out in 1949 as an apprentice. And I ended up being Aerospace Mechanic Leader at South 40. I think they still have an apprentice program, but it's not like it used to be. The apprentice program was to train individuals in different fields of mechanics, machine shop, all different stuff that goes on at the lab. I received my training in the lab just about every place. That was back in 1949, so there weren't too many facilities at around that time.

I got involved in rocket testing back in, I believe it was 1957. At that time, I was working in the wind tunnels, and I kept getting shifted around from facility to facility, and at that time nobody wanted to work at the rocket lab for some reason. I volunteered to work there because you never get out of there.

I don't really know why people didn't want to work there. I just heard that story.

GD: Could you say that the perception was that people thought it was dangerous?

EK: No, I don't think that was it. I think some of the people didn't care for supervision at that time, but that's only hearsay.

I went through the rocket lab during my apprentice program, so I had some familiarity of the work there, but I think when I went there in 1957 or 58, I'm not sure which year it was, I just worked in the old Rocket Lab up until 1964. Then I was transferred over to the Rocket Engine Test Facility, at South 40.

At South 40, I was a mechanic leader at that time. We were responsible for building up of the hardware, installing it and assisting and testing of it. The operations and the research engineers mostly had all the input on what we were going to be testing.

GD: Was there a test that stands out in your mind for one reason or another?

EK: I can't say there was really one, because there were a lot of them. We prepared a test in the daytime, and then we would run it at nighttime. And the test would disintegrate, would have an explosion, blow up, and we would just do another one, and start all over again.

GD: Did you think working with liquid hydrogen was dangerous?

EK: I did not think it was dangerous. I respected it, and I think if you have respect for the liquid hydrogen, and know what you're doing, you're not going to have too much trouble...[do over]... I really had great respect for liquid hydrogen. I worked with it for a number of years, so I wasn't afraid of it. As long as you knew what you were doing, and followed procedures, you wouldn't have any problems.

As far as the scrubber, actually....

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I was...involved mostly with the installation of it, the testing that we were conducting, the loading of the fuels and the propellants, the build-up of systems.

As far as loading liquid hydrogen, we follow a check sheet that we, when we were doing our transferring, or for safety, the equipment that was required.

As far as testing combustion instability, that was one of the first programs I was involved with on the testing end when I first was transferred down there. At that time, I recall seeing a memo written by Abe Silverstein that he wanted that facility running every day. And if it wasn't running every day, he was going to get people that would get it running every day. And the thing with the combustion instability testing, you could prepare for a test, and got ready to make the test, you didn't know how long it was going to last. You'd push the button, it could end in a second. You never knew how long the test would last.

GD: Was Silverstein satisfied if you were able to run RETF enough?

EK: I couldn't tell you if he was.

GD: Do you remember a guy by the name of John Sloop?

EK: Vaguely I remember him. But I never really had anything to do with him.