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Before he became a whistleblower, Robert Rester was an old hand at making McWane pipe. He began his career with McWane in 1978 when he took a job as a

millwright at the M&H Valve foundry, a McWane subsidiary. Rester rose through the ranks, receiving assignments to various plants in the United States and Canada.

In 1999, Rester was promoted to plant manager at McWane's flagship foundry in Birmingham, Ala., a position that paid as much as $125,000 a year, depending on how successful he was in keeping costs down. But keeping costs down, Rester said, meant skirting environmental and worker-safety rules: dumping toxins into local creeks and covering up employee injuries.

Rester admitted that he went along with the scheme. "You got polluted water, wait for a good rain and put it in the creek. Someone gets hurt, put someone else on the line. Keep the pipe moving, that's all that counts," he told FRONTLINE in 2002.

When Rester was contacted by *The New York Times* and FRONTLINE in 2002, he was on medical leave for a heart condition and dealing with the recent death of his wife. He said he was having a change of heart about McWane, and he decided to blow the whistle.

Following the *New York Times* series and the FRONTLINE broadcast, Rester was contacted by federal investigators looking into McWane. Rester consulted an attorney and decided to speak to the FBI and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), who in turn agreed not to prosecute him if he implicated himself in related crimes.

Rester became a key witness for the government and testified at trial. He also filed a whistleblower suit against McWane, claiming he was wrongfully terminated. Rester lost his civil suit and without steady employment was forced to file for bankruptcy.

"I lost it all," Rester later told FRONTLINE. "Horses, guns, the house and land where I used to live. I don't regret. I mean, of course sometimes I look at what I've lost and what I could have now, but I still feel like I did the right thing."

Today, Rester makes a living driving a garbage truck in Anniston, Ala., which is home to two McWane plants.