

Michael Kline: Today is March 7, I think.

John Anvill: I guess. I never kept any record of the flood, but that's when it was.

MK: What is your name? Full name?

JA: John Anvill. John T.

MK: You were born?

JA: What?

MK: Where were you born?

JA: St. George.

MK: Really? Lived here all your life? Who was your dad and mother?

JA: William Anvill and (Loretta?) White.

MK: Have your people been in Tucker County for...

JA: All their life.

MK: And their dad before them?

JA: They were raised here.

MK: Was there a big family of children where you were raised?

JA: Nine of us.

MK: Nine?

JA: I have one brother and seven sisters. I was about twenty-three years old before I ever saw my brother to know him. I was, I guess, two or three years old when he left and went to the State of Washington. He was gone twenty years, I guess, before we ever saw one another. But I've been out to his place three or four times since. But that's a pretty long time. I didn't see my brother for twenty-some years.

MK: So, did you go to school in St. George?

JA: Three miles up from St. George. Up the Location, they call it, towards Aurora. We didn't know where the Hebbs lived up there or the Whites. There's a schoolhouse right there.

MK: What did they call it?

JA: Mount Olive.

MK: Who was your teacher?

JA: Oh, I had a lot of them. Floyd Ball and Mrs. – oh, I don't know how many teachers they did have, Wilson Schaffer and Ball and (England?). [laughter]

MK: How many grades did you finish there?

JA: Well, I tried to finish eighth, but I didn't get a very good job at it. But I'd say eighth.

MK: Eighth grade?

JA: Tried a little bit after that.

MK: Where did you go after that?

JA: But I took some civil service examinations. I made a grade each time. Well, most of it was politics. [laughter] I just didn't get in on the main. Now, my wife got to the post office once through that way.

MK: What did you do after you got out of school? Did you work in the woods any?

JA: Yes. Worked for Kendall Lumber Company.

MK: What did you do for them?

JA: Well, just a little bit of everything. I drove team and cut timber and rolled logs [laughter], whatever there was to do. Mostly driving team.

MK: Did they have some pretty big horses?

JA: Yes. Good horses.

MK: Tell me about some of them. What was your favorite team?

JA: Oh, I don't know. I expect the one they called Doc and Colonel. They were big. But they were a little bit mean that they had to have a driver. But they were powerful horses.

MK: Could they pull a...

JA: What?

MK: Could they pull a pretty big log?

JA: Just about anything you'd hitch them to. If they couldn't pull it, there wasn't any around that would.

MK: Did you drive team before they had a J-grab?

JA: For what?

MK: Before they had a J-grab?

JA: No. No.

MK: J-hook?

JA: Never did. They always had a J-grab, and I'm old enough to...

MK: So, you never lost any teams?

JA: No. [laughter]

MK: Before they had that J-grab, I guess that...

JA: Oh yes. Pretty rough.

MK: Did you farm any then?

JA: Yes. I farmed all my life. Raised on one. Still got one. I guess I've got part of one. I don't know [laughter] how much.

MK: Did you have a pretty nice farm before the flood came?

JA: Oh, I had a nice farm. One of the nice bottoms there was around here.

MK: Tell me about the flood. What happened?

JA: I don't know. I never got to see out on it. I was down there to look over and I don't know what it's done. I know it took the barns and all of equipment. I can't understand how it had got power enough. Now, I had two discs, double discs, the big heavy discs for tractors. I had two tractors up there and it cleaned them out. You never heard their tale. Never were anywhere. All the machinery had cultivators, mowers, and binders, and I don't know what was all up there in that barn. It just swept the barn off as clean as the top of that bin. Not a thing left there.

MK: What about...

JA: Have you been down that country? Have you been on the bottoms any at all? Have you been at Ray Jenkins'?

MK: No.

JA: Well, you've been to the schoolhouse, haven't you? Right street back at the schoolhouse, up just a little is my farm at the bottom over in there.

MK: Well, it did not take the pastures, the fields, out then, did it?

JA: Well, it was over them. I don't know what it's done. It took all the fence, I guess, and everything. But I haven't been up there. I don't know what's been done. It looked like it was from the road at first, it might be mud or sand or something. But there was a road down through about the center of the bottom over there. I have forty acres over in there.

MK: Where were you when the flood came?

JA: I was up Location. You know where Bill White lives up Location? Just about the second house up towards Aurora. I went up there. It was raining and we stayed all night. It was pouring the rain down. Never thought about a flood. But when we got up the next morning, everybody was telling us about the flood. We went down, but you couldn't even get down. [laughter]

MK: You could not?

JA: No.

MK: Why was that?

JA: The water was clear up there to the top of the bank, all over there. Never thought about having that much water.

MK: What did you think when you saw it?

JA: Well, I couldn't think. Now, our ceiling is as high as this, I'd say, in the house, and it was about, I'd say, two foot off the ground anyhow. It was upstairs at least a foot, foot-and-a-half deep.

MK: So, it just took everything you had?

JA: Just cleaned it off. It's gone.

MK: What are you going to do now?

JA: That's a \$64 question. [laughter] What can you do?

MK: What has happened to you since the flood?

JA: How?

MK: What has happened to you since the flood?

JA: I was sick then to start with. I don't know and taking this flu or something. I don't know. One thing brought on another and just, finally, got me down. I can still go and walk, but I can't get around to do much good. Maybe if the weather would open up and I could get back, I'd get out and go a little more. I might get so and be better. Hope so anyhow. [laughter]

MK: Are you going to plant a crop this spring?

JA: No. If somebody else wants to, I might let somebody plant some. But I know I can't because I don't have a thing to work with. Not anything. Not even a shovel [laughter] or a pitchfork. It just cleaned them out down there, just as clean in the barns and took everything.

MK: Did you have any livestock? Any cows?

JA: No, I didn't. I had sold them. Just lucky. [laughter] The old fellas said, "That was just a pop shot." But I had sold them.

MK: What do you think caused it to flood like that?

JA: Oh, Lord knows. Nobody ever even thought about a flood like that. It's just unbelievable.

MK: Do you remember hearing anything from your father about the flood of 1888?

JA: Oh, yes. He talked to that lots.

MK: Tell me everything...

JA: This was about...

MK: Tell me what you remember him saying about that.

JA: Well, he was telling about how high it is. According to his story, this was about six foot higher, just about six foot more water than the [18]88 flood. So, it must have been a pretty bad one. Yes. He's talked about that [18]88 all my life.

MK: What did he say about it?

JA: Oh, he was just a young father and telling about what all they did, how they got along and so forth.

MK: Did anybody die in that flood? Did anybody drown in that flood?

JA: I think there were. I'm pretty sure there were.

MK: So, it was a bad flood in [18]88?

JA: Oh, [18]88 was the bad one. There had been several light floods since that, but then that was the one. I think about 1903 or four, they had a flood that covered about all the bottom land, but it didn't tear things up like this. It didn't get like that. I don't know how deep that was over there in my field. You know where my fields are? Been on them?

MK: Well, just drove there by the clinic, by the school and the clinic.

JA: Oh, you'd never been over?

MK: No.

JA: I haven't either. I don't know what it done. But it's behind the clinic over there. You can see.

MK: Probably left a lot of mud.

JA: Oh, I expect. It's added a lot.

MK: That mud is pretty good. Pretty rich.

JA: It didn't leave any buildings or any machinery. I can't understand how water could get – it had to get something against it to move the discs. You take a twelve-foot disc, double disc, and tractor disc, those are pretty heavy. It's just about all the team can do to pull one of them. It makes the tractor a good load. But they just moved out some of the – feathers. [laughter] I couldn't understand that. It had to get something against them, something fast on them, and just tried to ride along.

MK: Did it move your house?

JA: No, don't think so. It bows it up inside the floors like that, some, but I've only been there once since the flood. I don't know if they've been in and cleaned up some, but I've never been down. I don't know what.

MK: Are you going to build your barn back?

JA: I don't think so. I don't know. Not going to be able to, I don't think.

MK: Did you have any kind of insurance on it?

JA: No. I had fire insurance, lightning [laughter] and fire, but that's all. No flood, had the wrong kind that time?

MK: Yes, sir. So, ever since the flood, you have been up here?

JA: I guess just about ever since the flood. Just a day or two difference maybe.

MK: Did you raise a lot of kids? A lot of children? One?

JA: Got one daughter in Washington.

MK: Has she been over here to see the place?

JA: She was up last weekend, her and her husband both.

MK: Well, it was...

[end of transcript]