

Michael Kline: He had been deviling the rest of them all day about getting out.

Freddie Bonner: [laughter]

Tom Bonner: That evening. Yes. Just whenever they pulled the trailers up, he was acting a fool with and deviling about to get out there, and all that stuff. Yet, he wasn't going himself. He had went...

FB: He is going to show you where that limb was on that Locust Street down there.

MK: Yes, I can see it.

TB: He was telling those boys they better get out there. All right. Those boys, they were. But yet he was fooling around. He had gone back in the house and now what – he probably setting stuff up or something, probably moving stuff up. He knew it was up that neat and he was probably moving furniture or something until too late. But he told those boys he was the deviling about they better get out of here. Well, they'd come down there and they couldn't get across. One could swim, another one couldn't. So, the one jerked his coat off and he started to jump in. My brother's boy said, "Hell," he said, "I can't swim." He said, "What am I going to do?" So, the other boy didn't go. Whenever he said he was to go, he couldn't swim, he wouldn't leave him. So, both of them took off and they waded out down through this bottom here. They got down there and it was up around the waist where they crossed the road, and said whenever they'd get off in the grass, it would start moving their feet. They'd get back on the hard top. They held together and they come through that. But that was at least forty-five minutes before Raymond came down. They made it out, see? [laughter]

MK: Just waited too long.

TB: Just waited. He just misjudged it just like everybody else. He waited too long. Now, he was deviling those boys about getting out. But yet he wasn't getting out himself. He was fooling around. He was that way all the time, deviling around like a fool. But he wasn't worried at that point. I guess, he just didn't think it would get that bad enough. But he thought he could get through, come down here. But see, he knew he couldn't get up the river. But maybe he knew he couldn't get down too. I don't know. But it's, like I said, if we couldn't get to him, but he depended on us to get him. But we couldn't, wasn't nothing we could do. We done all we could do. If it hadn't had been for fog and rain, the helicopters come in, they'd had plenty of time. They could have come through Pittsburgh. They'd see everything was ground there and it was real foggy and raining. So, it rained hard you couldn't see, plus the fog again. If they took it to come to Pittsburgh and got them in the time, totally washed out. But they wouldn't let nothing out. Now, Elkins Fire Departments, like I said, they got here probably, oh, I don't know, it might have been ten minutes. They were trying to figure out the strategy to get over there and maybe they would've tried it. But then something hit the truck and turned it around again. That was the last I saw of them. So, that ended it all.

MK: Is there any kind of religious message in all of this for you? Well, obviously his time had come, but do you think that that is how he was meant to go or what do you do make of it?

TB: I reckon. I guess that's about it. His time just came. It was supposed to be that way. I guess that way for us all. I think your numbers, you're already plotted, but you don't know it. Mine is too. I think it's that way. I don't know how you believe. I'm going to the bathroom. Give me a minute.

MK: [laughter]

FB: [laughter]

MK: Tell us your full name anyway.

FB: All right. My name is Freddie Bonner.

MK: Freddie?

FB: Rachel.

MK: Rachel?

FB: Waybright Bonner.

MK: Waybright Bonner. You were a Waybright same as Edith?

FB: Yes.

MK: Any kin to her?

FB: Yes. She's my sister. [laughter]

MK: I will swear.

FB: Yes.

MK: She is, is she not?

FB: Yes.

MK: I can see it now.

TB: Couldn't miss it. [laughter]

FB: [laughter]

MK: Small world. Well, tell me what you remember about November 4th.

FB: Well, about 3:30 p.m., my nephew, Joey called and told me the water was running over the road. That the bus couldn't get down that way. So, I called my daughter-in-law to go around and go up to Jenningson and get Tom and her kids, the five grandchildren. So, after she left, well I thought I'd better go out and turn the cows out of the meadow because the water was getting deep. I turned the cows out of the meadow and Raymond was down the road at that time. He was checking on the water. I thought about going up to his house, but I didn't. I thought I'd better come back to the house because Tom and them would be coming back and they'd be wondering where I was at. I just wondered whether I could get back to the house if I went up there. So, I came on back to the house. By that time, why Tom and the kids come and they couldn't get in our driveway. They had to come through the meadow. It just seemed like you just lost all trace of time. You don't know what time it was until 7:00 p.m., when the electric went off. You did know that because our clocks had stopped. That's about the same as what he told you from that time on. Just everybody didn't know what to do or nobody knew what to do. All you had to do was just walk to the floor and look out the window and go out in the rain and look. That was about it.

MK: Did you ever think there was a chance the water would go down and they would somehow come through it? Or what did you think?

FB: Well, you never thought that the water would be that high to begin with. But then after you knew they were gone, you still had this feeling that you would get up in the morning and just by some miracle they'd still be there. But that's about it.

MK: What has it been like for you since then?

FB: Well, that's a good question. [laughter] It's just not the same.

MK: They had lived here for fifteen months.

FB: Yes. Me and Dorothy were good friends because if she wasn't down here, I was up there every day. If we didn't go back and forth, we talked to each other every day. I did her hair and we did things together. She always went shopping with us and one thing or another.

MK: That has been, I think fifteen weeks now, has it not?

FB: Well, all I know, it's been a long time.

MK: Lonesome for you?

FB: Yes.

MK: What about their kids? Did they have children?

FB: Yes, they had two boys. One's in Pennsylvania and the other one's in Virginia. She kept her three grandchildren all summer, which they were one girl was eight, and one was six. Then they kept the little boy too. He was Raymond's pride and joy. He was something.

MK: You were raised right out here at this house right by the bridge? Is that your home?

FB: No. I was raised on Shavers Mountain.

MK: Oh, that is right. You said that a while ago. How did you two meet?

FB: Well, I think we always knew each other. [laughter]

MK: How did you really meet when you knew that there was something a little bit special about him? Or had you always thought that, too?

FB: Ask him. [laughter]

MK: Was it at a ballgame or church social or?

FB: Oh, it's been so long ago. I don't even remember.

MK: You just forgot that?

FB: Oh, of course.

TB: You just don't want to fuss out how hard it was.

FB: [laughter]

MK: [laughter]

TB: I had a hard time triggering her, but I finally got her to trigger me. [laughter]

FB: [laughter]

MK: [laughter] You had a hard time triggering her, but she finally got you triggered.

TB: [laughter] That's it.

FB: That's about the way it was.

MK: [laughter] Well, thank you.

[end of transcript]