

Present: Roger Powers, Chuck Crabtree, Michael Nobel Kline

Michael Nobel Kline: Okay, this is tape number seven. And will you say, "My name is?"

Roger Powers: Roger Powers, member of the Grundy Town Council.

MNK: Now you were—you've lived in this town for a while?

RP: All of my life. Almost all of my life.

MNK: What is your date of birth, please?

RP: September 9, 1934.

MNK: That's my dad's birthday.

RP: Oh, is it?

MNK: And could you tell me just a little bit about your people and where you were raised?

(007)

RP: Well, I was originally from Haysi, Virginia. Moved here when I was nine years old. My grandfather was in the hardware, furniture business, and he built Jackson Hardware and Furniture Company here in Grundy in 1936 when I was two years old. And we moved over here in 1945. And we still operate the business today. It's still a family business that's still owned by my family. And it's still in operation after sixty, I believe sixty-two years or sixty-one years of operation.

MNK: I guess '37, '57, and '77 are kind of magic numbers.

(015)

RP: Yes, I don't remember the '37 number, and in '57 I was in the Army at that time. But my wife was here during the flood, and of course Jackson Hardware and Furniture Company, along with most of the other buildings downtown, flooded. I think that the water was about six feet deep in the basement of our buildings in 1957. Just the basement though. Of course in 1977 it was about five or six feet deep on the street level. And we lost—of course we had some flood insurance, but we lost a lot of merchandise in Jackson Hardware. And then I had another store building that I owned myself next door to it. We lost everything in it.

MNK: Had it been raining a lot that week?

(025)

RP: Well, in '77, yes. We had had—the best I remember we had had a lot of snows during the winter. The ground was saturated. And then during a three-day period of time there in April, I think they said there was about fifteen inches of rain fell in three days' time. So the water was up into Main Street out here.

MNK: What do you remember about that day, that morning, the night before?

(030)

RP: Well, of course the biggest thing, I went home. And I live about a mile out of Grundy up Slate Creek, and I had to cross a bridge. And at the time that I went across the bridge the water was already about almost a foot deep going over the bridge. So I just got home in order to take care of the home and family, didn't worry about anything else. We'd already moved everything out of the basements of the stores downtown that we could move out. So I didn't worry about anything else until the next morning. Then I go down when I could and see the devastation that we had.

MNK: Did you know it was going to be pretty bad?

(036)

RP: Yes, oh, yeah. We knew that that was the highest water we'd ever had. It like about—it took everything in the basement of my home and like probably a foot being into the main floor of the house. But didn't come all the way into the main floor.

MNK: Filled up the basement with—

(040)

RP: Oh, yeah. Lost the furnace and everything that was in the basement.

MNK: Did you get a lot of mud?

RP: Oh, yes. The mud was terrible.

MNK: So what did you—what time did you go downtown, and what did you see when you got down there?

(043)

RP: Well, I don't remember the time. It was sometime that morning when the—matter of fact, I think we had to walk around the mountain. I couldn't even go across the bridge to get downtown. And of course everybody was just down there surveying their damage. And there was mud everywhere. And eventually then some of the coal operators, and I was in the coal business at that time myself. We started moving a lot of heavy equipment in, end loaders in particular, coal trucks in. Most of the merchants would just take their merchandise and throw it out into the street, and we'd pick it up with end loaders, put it in coal trucks, and haul it off. If it hadn't been for the coal companies here, I don't know if we'd have ever gotten Grundy cleaned up or not. But they did a wonderful job. There was—they would allow anyone in that had a pass to get downtown, and of course they gave me a pass since I was involved with equipment to come and go as I could. We did—actually I forgot to say we did have to move out of our house for two weeks because it wasn't that the water got in it, but there was a mud slide on the home next door to me. And I thought it was going to take us, so we did move out. We moved to Bristol for two

weeks. During that time, I came back and forth every day for the cleanup.

MNK: So the house right next door was taken...

(058)

RP: Yeah, it was taken. You might have heard them talk about Jack Lester's home up in Long Bottom. He had built it up the side of a mountain, and all the water and everything just loosened everything, and the house just slid off the mountain. It came within about four or five feet of coming down on top of my house. So we were afraid to stay there. Moved into a—he ended up just taking end loaders and hauling the house off, as a matter of fact, in trucks. It was a terrible time.

MNK: So downtown and your own store—what did your store look like?

(065)

RP: Well, on the main floor, the water had come in from the Slate Creek area with such force, just threw the door. It just took out the doors, the windows, and everything. And it just actually washed refrigerators, washing machines, and everything just into a corner of the building, it had such force. And so we lost everything on the basement floor, plus the main floor. But we had a third floor that we had moved some merchandise up to the third floor, but we lost more, most of it. I can't remember the exact figures, but I think it was over \$200,000 worth of merchandise.

(073)

MNK: No insurance on that?

RP: We had some, I don't remember how much, but it didn't cover very much of it.

MNK: Only the...

RP: Some flood insurance—

MNK: —merchandise.

RP: ...

MNK: So what—tell me about this current effort to take Grundy up out of the flood waters.

(077)

RP: Well, I am on the task force and the Grundy Town Council. And to back up a little with the plan that was proposed last year that really took everything from Royal City down almost on the riverside, I was the one person who was opposed to it. I voted against it. Mainly because I felt that it just took all of Grundy, took all of the businesses. There wouldn't be any tax base left or anything of that nature. Now it has been revived and rerouted now to where I favor it very much now. I think this will be a wonderful opportunity for the town of Grundy. It leaves most of the business districts in Royal City intact. Leaves the new motel site intact. Leaves the law school.

The other plan took the law school. You now, we just now opened it up. It leaves it intact, and basically moves the area down here, which is flooded the worst, and moves it over across the river. So I'm very much in favor of this plan.

(090)

MNK: Moves it over across the river?

RP: Yeah, across the Levisa to the old, what we know as the depot site.

MNK: Can you describe that site a little bit?

(092)

RP: Well, as I understand it, they're going to move the Norfolk and Southern Railroad back against the mountain and create about ten, approximately ten acres of level land. And we'll build a retail center, plus all the town office buildings, the teen center, and office space, and possibly even some apartments there with walkways coming over to the courthouse from that area. A new four-lane highway will go in where the buildings now sit, and that will have a ring wall with it, which will protect the courthouse and the rest of the town from the river. So I think this is a good plan.

MNK: And you're willing to pack up your business and move it?

(102)

RP: Well, like I said, after—naturally I've got a lot of sentimental value, but after sixty-two years, you know, I hate to see it tom down. But, yes, for the progress of Grundy. I don't know for sure that we'll move, but we're willing to sacrifice the business. I'm not an active participant in the building anymore. The family owns it, but I'm... the business. I don't spend very much time with it.

MNK: But you do have some sentimental feelings about it?

(107)

RP: Very definitely. Certainly do. Grew up there.

MNK: So you can understand opponents of this idea who are saying that this is our, this street is our heritage?

(111)

RP: Yes, I can certainly understand it, and naturally you hate to see it go. But Grundy, in my opinion, is not going to develop anymore until we have better parking facilities, and better transportation in and out, and some type of flood proofing. The downtown area. What we're speaking of. You can see now half the buildings down there are vacant now. So I don't think that's going to improve any until we can have a flood plan or some type of redevelopment plan.

And I think this will be it.

(118)

MNK: Are there any models for this sort of development?

RP: Yes, there's the Corps of Engineers and the architects out of Lexington that are developing models.

MNK: Are there other towns?

(121)

RP: Oh, no. As I understand it, there is not any other town that's done this. Now I have visited Williamson and Matewan, West Virginia, where the Corps did the flood proofing that was mandated, as I understand, by Congress at the same time it was mandated that they flood proof Grundy. And what they did... job is a ring wall around, completely around both towns. But I think this will be a much better plan, because this, their plan just left the same old buildings and just protected them from water. This would create a portion of a new Grundy, brand new, and protect it from the water. So I think this is a unique plan and a much better plan than Williamson or Matewan.

(130)

MNK: What about the issue of jobs? Is this development going to bring, the actual building of it going to bring new jobs in the community?

RP: I feel sure the construction portion of it will bring a lot of new jobs. Oh, yes, I don't think there's any doubt about that. And then I think once it's finished, that there will be additional jobs created. And I think there will be additional businesses created after it's completed.

(136)

MNK: Anything else you want to—

RP: No, that's all I can think of. I just like, if we are going to do it, let's do it and get started, because we've been stymied for years over this flood plan. So I think now is the time to go ahead, and let's do it.

MNK: Great. I hope it works out.

RP: Thank you very much.

[tape turned off]

Chuck Crabtree

(142)

???: ... Can you get me a copy of that speech?

???: What speech?

???: The speech that you gave the other day....

???: ...

MNK: Well, let's see. This is--

(149)

Chuck Crabtree: Did you get this close to everybody? I'm sorry.

MNK: It's how you get a good.... You get into all kinds of interesting space issues. Today is August 29....

CC: 1979.

MNK: '79?

CC: '97, '79, '97, '77.

MNK: Did you just say--

CC: I'm just acting on, carrying on.

MNK: Can you say, "My name is?"

CC: My name is Chuck Crabtree.

MNK: And your date of birth?

CC: April 4, 1952.

MNK: And tell me just a little bit about your people and where you were raised.

(160)

CC: Born and raised right here in Buchanan County. My family was originally from West Virginia, moved down to Grundy in the late 1920s. My grandfather came down with the coal mining industry. He was one of the first contractors for Harmon Mining Corporation at Harmon, Virginia. He actually mined coal with ponies and pulled the coal out of the mountains with small ponies.

MNK: Now where did they live? Did they live in a camp or did they live in town?

(170)

CC: Actually, they lived in a small camp. It was—the houses in this little area, there were six of them that were owned by the Harmon Mining Corporation. And they were company houses. He lived in one of those and then later on purchased the house from Harmon. They were originally from Big Creek and More, West Virginia, is the area they came from before they came here.

MNK: And before that? (177)

CC: Before that they, from Illinois area and also Tennessee area, Rockwood, Tennessee, area.

MNK: From Illinois.

CC: Yes.

MNK: I always think of all that development as going from east to west, but it didn't always work that way.

CC: No.

MNK: And a little bit about your own coming up.

(182)

CC: As I said, I was raised here in Grundy in Buchanan County. My father was in the mining business and mining industry too. He was an engineer. His engineering education came from.... He did not have a degree in engineering, but there wasn't anything that he couldn't do. He retired with Island Creek Coal Corporation as their chief field engineer, which his responsibilities included all the gas wells that Island Creek had. If a mine was to catch on fire, his responsibilities were knowing where to drill and where and how to put the fires out. He was on the early stages of all the new methane gas lines that they're taking out of here now that Consol's doing. He was in on all of that groundwork. And from there—the reason he retired—he really didn't want to retire, but his eyesight started failing, and he had to retire. And he is retired now and lives in Bristol, Tennessee. My mother was from this area also. She was raised on Convict Hollow and—

MNK: On?

(199)

CC: Convict Hollow. And it got its name—it's in the lower end of Buchanan County towards Harmon, Virginia. And it actually had a convict camp in the head of it. That's how it got its name. Her parents were from West Virginia also, and they migrated here due to the mining industry and the logging industry. I have one sister. She's four years older than I am. She moved away about twenty years ago. But myself, I'm not leaving. I love Grundy and Buchanan County.

MNK: Graduated from high school here?

(209)

CC: Yes, sir. Went to Harmon Elementary School. Went to the junior high, Grundy Junior High School here in Grundy. And then also graduated from Grundy Senior High School and attended Southwest Virginia Community College, which is all local here.

MNK: And then?

(214)

CC: And then spent my early days—my first jobs actually were with the coal industry again. I spent the first five years of my working career after being married to a beautiful young lady here in Grundy also with United Coal Companies when they first started back in the early '70s. I was with United until right after the '77 flood. And from there I went into private, wanted to go into business for myself, and was in and out of several businesses and was fairly successful at those businesses, and had the opportunity that most people do not have in life is I got to do exactly what I wanted to do. If I wanted to try this business, I tried it, it was successful. Then if I had an interest in something else, I tried it. I did it, was successful. And I got an education—

MNK: ... get into community arts, for example.

(229)

CC: Yes. The lord's blessed me with a lot of talents, as far as artistic ability and creative mind. And got to use it all over my years. I haven't—most people have to do one job all their life. They—if it's a pharmacy, or pharmacist, or whatever, they stand and count pills every day. They spend a lot of time in college and a lot of money just to count pills. I've been very fortunate. I've got to experience life. I got to experience different type businesses, everything from owning a flower shop to—did my apprenticeship as a mortician here in town in Grundy with one of the local funeral homes. I've owned and operated a convenience store. I was in the purchasing department of United Coal Company in the coal industry. So I've actually had the opportunity to learn and experience, which is something that most people do not have the opportunity to do. And it's an education in itself.

(245)

It's more valuable to me in what I do now than anything that you could learn at college or from a book. Everything I've done in the past has actually focused me to what I do now. Just as if you are doing a dinner reception for the town or the IDA, my past experience as a florist and designing to sit those—it just all feeds in together and makes it work. And I give the Lord all the credit for that, because he's guided and direct me in what I'm doing. And I feel like that's the reason that I'm still here and I'm doing what I'm doing. To be able to take my experiences and not from a book, but from actual hard knocks experience and education to put it to use to better the town, and the community, and the people that are here.

MNK: Great. Where were you living in early 1977?

(260)

CC: Early 1977, actually I was living here in Grundy. I had a home at Harmon, Virginia, that my, when my grandmother passed away it was left to me. We were in the process of remodeling that house, and we were living with my mother-in-law, which is in the corporation limits of Grundy. She also owns the restaurant here in town. And that restaurant is probably, or is the oldest restaurant in Grundy that's still going. And we were living right here in Grundy when, early '77.

MNK: Was that—early April, was that a particularly wet time?

(272)

CC: Early April is always a wet time. The reason I know this is my birthday's, April 4, or April 3. The flood of '77 actually hit the 3rd and the 4th. So as long as I can ever remember it's always rained on my birthday. I can't remember it not raining on April 3. So early April's always wet.

MNK: And this particular one?

(277)

CC: This particular one, as I said, I was working with United Coal Company. I had been at Duke University Hospital having some tests run at that time. I flew back in to Richlands' airport on April the 1st, came back home. It was raining. The water was rising. And so I was home, wasn't working during that time due to the fact of an illness I had. But it brings back a lot of memories, being it's your birthday and being the destruction that happened on that time.

MNK: What happened that morning then?

(287)

CC: On the morning of the 4th or the morning of the 3rd? Both days have a lot of memories to them. My wife was attending Southwest Virginia Community College. She was taking a nursing program. The water was coming up. And I'd advised her not to go that day, but she went anyway. She didn't miss any days of school. When she got to school they'd called school off due to the fact of the rain and the flooding. She turned around to come back home. She got part of the way back in. She did get a message to my mother-in-law to let me know that she was on the other end of town staying with a friend. When the water got up there was no way to come from the lower end of Grundy to the upper end of Grundy. And so we were separated with no phone lines, no power, no water, no sewage.

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After a restless night not knowing where she was really at and with all the destruction that was going on in Grundy at that time, I did have my son, and my mother-in-law, my sisters-in-law. They were with us at the house. But my wife, Vicky, was not there. So at daybreak on April the 4th, just as soon as it got up to you could see a little bit, I proceeded to walk from the lower end of Grundy corporation limits, which is a mile from downtown Grundy, walking by myself,

looking at all the damage and the--As it being cold on that April morning, the water was just a little bit warm, there was a little bit of steam coming off from it. The mud was steaming. Trees, cars, just total destruction. Came on through, and there was a few people stirring that morning, not a lot, but a few people at that time.

(320)

Coming through downtown Grundy, the mud was about to your knees, a little above. It was real slick mud. Tight mud, that if you walked and you put your foot down in it, it would actually suck your shoes right off your feet because it wouldn't let go when you went down into the mud. I proceeded through town, and I couldn't believe the devastation that was there. Went on through and made it up to what they call Walking... the upper part of Grundy in the Royal City area, which is another mile, mile and a half from downtown Grundy. So I walked just about three miles. I was able to locate my wife. She was with one of her friends and my friends, Dave Bevens' houses.

(333)

She spent the night with them, and then I got her and we came back home. To actually see your town and the area that you were raised in--The destruction was totally unreal. You couldn't--you really couldn't comprehend that this had really happened. It's easy to sit and watch it on TV, and watch the other towns and the other people, and you say, "Well, I kind of feel sorry for those people." But when it's actually happening to you, it's actually your property, or your home, or your family, or your town, there's no comparison. People can't judge what you see on TV or in a movie compared to when it's really there. My wife, she couldn't--I don't know, it was hard for her.

(350)

It was harder for me to see her the way she was, because as we walked through town she cried the whole time. You know, you walk for two miles in mud, and it's hard to stand up, it's slick. Most of the time if you fell or somebody fell, you'd kind of chuckle at them and go on, but this time, you know, you don't chuckle. This is serious. This is real. This is happening. It's not a movie. It's not the newspapers. It's not someone else's town. It's your town. It's your home. So walking through town, it was--we didn't say a lot, not to each other. We just--you just looked, and everywhere you looked there was more destruction. Cars turned upside down. Trees and logs sticking through windows.

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Trucks sitting on the side of the road with trees on top of them that were three or four feet in diameter. Bridges gone. No windows in storefronts. Actually whole sides of the building's gone with the whole interior exposed to the elements. You can't comprehend unless you've been there. There's no way anyone can tell you what to expect or how to prepare yourself for it until you actually go through it.

MNK: You could probably almost taste the mud.

(376)

CC: Oh, yes. You could taste it. You could smell it. Flood mud, as we call it, has a smell. It's a slimy mud. It's a moldy, musty mud. So it's one of those situations that you never forget. It's just like if you work at a, into police work, or funeral service work, or ambulance service work. Flood mud has a distinct smell. It's—if you ever smelled a burnt body, it has a distinct—it has—you can't—if you ever smelled a burnt body, you never forget it. And if you ever picked the scent up, you know exactly what it is. And when you have a flood that size and that type, you know it, you smell it. It's—it has a distinct smell as in a burnt body.

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So it's—I don't know, it's hard to describe exactly what it's like. But we made it home through town. And to listen to my wife tell her mom what downtown looked like—I guess as far as my mother-in-law's home, we were very, very fortunate. The water got up all around her home, but it just got up to the rafters underneath the house. At that time my wife and I did own another little business, and it was a little clothing store business. A little wood frame building, A-frame type building, and it was on the banks of the Levisa. And to watch your building and your business actually float. The water got up, and the building floated. It rocked. Floated, rocked. And thanks to the good lord the water stopped.

(409)

And as the water receded, the building rocked, and it went right back over the bank. And when the water was down, it was all over and done with, the building was probably about a foot and a half up on the front side and about six feet down over the bank on the back side. So I had a building just sitting on the bank at a slope, of about a forty-five degree slope, ready to tumble on over into the river. So we know what it's like to lose in the flood. We know what it's like to actually have to rebuild from the flood. And I'm sure that most people that's been through floods, until you actually shovel flood mud you don't know what it's like. It's indescribable.

MNK: Tell me about the Levisa Fork as though it were someone you knew. Can you describe its—does it have a character like that that you can talk about or—

(431)

CC: Yeah, I think the Levisa River has a lot of character to it. As a kid growing up, it was—when you got up to the age that you could ride a bicycle, mom or dad let you head out. You always go down to the river and fish. You take your bicycle, and your fishing pole, and your night crawlers, and off you went. Or you'd catch you some minnows or crawdads, and you headed to the river to fish. It all started back when one of my next door neighbors used to take all the kids in the neighborhood and on a Friday night or a Saturday night you'd head out to the local fishing hole, which was down behind Hardee's now. Hardee's wasn't there at that time. And it was one of the deepest holes in the river. And you'd take a washtub with you, and you'd actually catch enough fish to fill the washtub up. And you'd take the fish home and have a fish fry.

(448)

But as time changes and over the years, like everything else does, you know, the water isn't the same, the river isn't the same, and times aren't the same. Later on in life we moved to Harmon Junction area. Mom and dad moved, and we actually lived on the river then. And the river was a playground. It was a playground for all the kids in the neighborhood. We would--We spent so much time on the river one of the boys in the neighborhood, his name was Curtis Hess, or Junior Hess, excuse me. Curtis was his brother. It was Junior. His father was one of the local doctors and one of the owners of the Grundy Hospital here in town.

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We spent so much time on the Levisa River that Curtis could actually stand in the water and not move for hours, and he'd catch a fish with his bare hands. A lot of people probably wouldn't believe that, but I've watched him stand there for hours. And I mean we'd just sit there and watch him, and he'd catch a fish. Sooner or later he'd stand there with his hands in the water, bent over, and had them ready to cup together, ready to grab it. And at the right time the fish would come through, and he'd get it. So the Levisa has a lot of memories to me, not only when she shows her mighty force, but also in the calm and peaceful times. Mud turtles, catching those. Crawdads. But we lived on the river. We respected it. We enjoyed it, and we feared it. So it has all the emotions that a river brings with it. Even back when it would freeze solid. It doesn't do that too often now, but used to. It would freeze solid, and you'd actually skate on the river. But that was, you know--Now today's kids roller blade and roller skate, but back then we ice skated just with shoes. You didn't have ice skates, you actually just skated with your old shoes. So the river changes, we change and grew up, and we were living on the river at Harmon Junction in '57 when the '57 flood hit. I can remember we lived in an apartment on the second floor of the apartment. And you could look out the windows and actually see the river. And I don't remember when '57, I was just a little kid,

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but the memories of seeing the old milk jugs, and the bleach bottles. And the amazing thing that got me is all the basketballs and all the balls going down the river. I wanted those balls. I thought we could net those balls and, you know, everybody in the whole neighborhood would have balls. So--but we never could get them because mom and dad wouldn't let you near the river when it was up. So the river has a lot of history. Calm, peaceful, good memories, and bad memories. It's part of our heritage here in Grundy. But there's one thing about the river and the Levisa River, she always gets her way, you know, no matter what you do. The buildings are there or not there, when she comes, she comes hard and she comes forceful. You go out in the Midwest, Mississippi, the other rivers, you have a lot of backwater. The water raises, or it rises, and it might take it two, three, four, five, even a week for it to crest. And then you got the same thing when it starts receding. You might wait another week or two weeks for it to recede back down. But the Levisa, she's altogether different.

(524)

She's--within forty-eight hours she can come and she can go. And you don't have time to put sandbags up. You don't have time to do this or do that. When she starts rising and the water doesn't stop coming down, you'd better shut your flood doors and pull out. We're not

fortunate in one way as they are in the Midwest and other places. It's sad that they do flood. We know what they go through. But at least they do have time to prepare. I've had people ask me, says, "How much warning do you have? Why don't you prepare for these floods?" If a storm front comes through and that front happens to decide to come north or south and it's got a real punch to it, it can drop upstream maybe seven inches of rain. And in that seven inches of rain time, if it's dropped at the right place at the right location, you don't have time to put sandbags up. The only thing you have time to do is put what few belongings you got in a vehicle and maybe move them to a third floor of a building, if you have a third floor, and cover your tail and run. Because you don't have that liberty of time to wait.

MNK: So Grundy has suffered severely in '37, '57, and '77, '83, and there have been some scary—what is the solution? What is the town going to do about this?

(563)

CC: Well, we can sit here and do nothing for one thing. But doing nothing's not going to correct or solve the problem. We can sit and say it's never going to rain again to the extent of flooding. I guess if we had a direct line to the good lord, we could answer that question. But god has his way with Mother Nature, and we don't, we can't predict that. As far as Grundy goes, we have an opportunity before us right now that is an opportunity that most of the nation would love to have. By the wonderful works of the Corps of Engineers of the Huntington District, with the wonderful job that the Virginia Department of Transportation is doing, with our Congressmen, and our Senators, and our Representatives, we have an opportunity as a small town that,

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by the cooperation of the federal government, the state government, and local government to make a change for Grundy. As far as the Levisa River goes, I don't think anyone wants to take away its beauty. We don't want to try to take away its force. We don't want to try to take away its peacefulness. We have the opportunity to let her go on as she has for centuries and centuries. And we have an opportunity to take our town and make it a better place.

(604)

The buildings that are on the Levisa Fork that are in the bend of the river, these buildings are old, they're dilapidated. It's like anything else, with time and age it gets the best of everything. The buildings aren't going to be able to withstand her force much more. And with the Corps of Engineers and their unique abilities to make things happen and change, we have an opportunity to put our town on the other side of the river out of the bend of the river, out of the hundred year floodplain, and develop something that no other town has had the opportunity to do.

(621)

With Grundy being a coal mining town, and we all our lives have depended on coal. But at a point, just like everything else with time, our coal reserves are not what they used to be. We have approximately ten to twelve years of coal reserves left in Grundy in Buchanan County. And with the opportunity that the Corps and Virginia Department of Transportation has given us, we have a golden opportunity to diversify, to rebuild, to make our town grow, to give us property that we

never had before to develop, to give our children a future and something to look forward to, hope to look forward to, to be able to—for the residents that do live on the river, it gives them an

(645)

opportunity, a chance to lay down at night and not worry about their businesses, not worry about their homes being flooded. Until you are flooded, and every time it rains, it rains hard, you're up. It's like an alarm clock. And I think the peace of mind that people will receive from this project is worth every penny you could put into it. To protect not only homes, businesses, but also lives. And you have an opportunity for new roads, new buildings, new parks. It just goes on. It's just a wonderful project, and it's—to me it's a blessing from god that we have it, and we have the opportunity to make it happen. And it wouldn't happen if it wasn't for the cooperation between the Corps of Engineers, and Virginia Department of Transportation, and our local government, and the people that's been behind it and making it happen, (673)

including Congressman Rick Boucher (?sp.). Congressman Boucher has done a wonderful job to make this project happen. He's put a lot of time, a lot of effort into it. Along with one of our Delegates that's no longer there now, is Delegate Don McLaughlin. This is one of his first projects that he worked on many, many years ago. And due to his work then, we are still reaping benefits from when he was in office. So it's just a combination of everybody working together, making a better place for our community and our people.

(691)

MNK: What is Grundy's part financially going to be in this?

CC: It's another... Usually it'd be about twenty-five percent of what the flood proofing project would cost.

[Side Two]

CC: It's another blessing from god. Usually it'd be about twenty-five percent of what the flood proofing project would cost. With some brilliant minds and brilliant people, we have the opportunity as far as Grundy, our finances are not the best in the world. We are financially stable right now, which we still have a little bit of coal left. Things are going to change down the road. We have to get creative. But with the Virginia Department of Transportation working with the Corps of Engineers, Route 460 coming through Grundy is a federal highway system. It runs through Kentucky.

(011)

Kentucky has a section of Route 460 that's not four laned, as well as Virginia has a section of 460 that's not four-laned. Kentucky has taken theirs towards the Elkhorn City area, near the... Park. Virginia is going to take theirs through Grundy and hopefully take it down to Elkhorn City, Kentucky, and tie it in with the... Park. This project's been going on for a long time. By taking these two projects and seeing a vision of the future, both states, Kentucky and Virginia, and VDOT and the Corps of Engineers, by taking this road and four-laning it through Grundy and using the flood project together, when VDOT buys and has to do property acquisitions for the

road, the federal government and the Corps of Engineers have agreed to let that acquisition be Grundy's portion of the project.

(023)

So by doing that, that relieves Grundy of the financial burdens that they would have to pick up. And for a small town that only operates off of a million dollar a year budget, to have, to come up with twenty-five to thirty million dollars for this project, it would have been almost impossible for us to do. Matter of fact, it would be impossible for us to do. Financially we couldn't do it. But with the help and the cooperation of VDOT, and the federal government, and the state officials, and our Congressmen, and on and on and on again, they make this project happen. It shows that federal government, state government, and local government can work together to make projects happen. And it falls down to a simple thing as cooperation and working together, different parts of our government working together to make something like this happen.

(034)

And the strange thing of it is, even though it's an expensive project, it's actually costing everyone less because VDOT, it reduces their cost on the project by working with the Corps. It reduces the town's cost and the Corps of Engineers' cost because the road that will be coming through will act as a levee for the town. That helps the Corps without having to build a floodwall. It helps VDOT by having a place to put the four lane, and the four lane's actually the levee. So it's just a wonderful project. It's a project that's—it's a genius of a project. And I'm just, as a resident of Grundy, proud to just be a small part of it. And I commend everyone that has had the foresight and the vision to make it happen this way. And it's just wonderful. (047)

MNK: Describe how the levee will protect the oldest portion of the town that includes the courthouse and Walnut Street and then how the new town is going to be on the other side of that system.

(050)

CC: In the bend of the river, the Levisa River, is where Grundy's heart is located. As the town stands now, you have a row of buildings that roll around that bend. So when the Levisa gets up the force hits the buildings straight on. By taking those buildings and rebuilding the town across the river on the other side, it takes you out of the forceful part of the river. By removing these buildings, that allows us to have a place to put the four lane, Route 460. In the past, Grundy was a bottleneck. They couldn't get through Grundy.

(060)

The cost of bypassing Grundy was more than what this whole project is. So they build a levee in the bend of the river. They build it up to probably four to five feet above the second floors of where we are sitting now. And on top of that levee they put the four lane. The remaining area behind the levee will be back filled also. That gives Grundy a unique chance to redevelop that area that used to be an area that was flooded all the time. So by putting the road there it also gives us redevelopment area to redevelop on. It protects our courthouse. It protects the buildings on the Walnut Street area, which is also our jail is there.

(072)

It creates a park atmosphere in front of the courthouse. It creates parking that we never had. By being located in the mountain area, parking is a big problem for us. It puts the town on the other side, but yet it still joins the courthouse area. You still see each other. You take the river that is usually mighty and forceful, and you make it into a part of the community that is no longer feared, but makes it a scenic river in the heart of the town, which our river is our heritage too. Our courthouse is our heritage. This area's protected, and we also have new area. So we save the old and also build new. We save the history of our river and save our beauty. So it's just a wonderful project.

(086)

There's not any negatives to it that I can find. There's concerns about it, but those concerns you solve and you handle them one at a time. If you looked at this project as a whole from start to finish, there's a thousand things to be done. But the way you accomplish all of these is you take it one at a time, one day at a time and one problem at a time. And you solve them, and you overcome them.

(093)

But as far as the future of our home, and our county, and our heritage, we preserve it all. We preserve our courthouse, our river, the people here. We take a project that gives our children hope. We have places for new businesses. Now, as it stands, the buildings here in this row are old. They're full of asbestos. They're full of lead paint. They still have flood mud in them. The wiring is gone. The roofs are gone. Those buildings, we can't put new businesses in. We have no place to put new businesses. This gives us an opportunity of hope, glimmer, and light. And I guess you could put it as Grundy's always mined coal.

(101)

We've always been in the middle of a coal seam somewhere, and with this project we've been able to have a few jewels pop up around it, as the Appalachian School of Law, the new hotel's coming to town, the Comfort Inn. We have a new community center. We have a wonderful teen center for our kids. But with this project—I think with all the mining we've done it's coming to an end, but with this project we've actually found the diamond in the center of the... of the coal. And the glimmer of that diamond is just now getting ready to shine. And it's going to shine and make Grundy a future. And we, as the people of Grundy, have to thank the Corps of Engineers, the State of Virginia, and Virginia Department of Transportation for making it happen and caring about a community that has a chance of hope and life again. That's where it should be and the thanks should be, is to those people.

(120)

MNK: Thank you very much.

CC: You're welcome.