

Michael Nobel Kline: We got a signal there. So we're in good shape. We're rolling. Can you start by saying, "My name is."

Ronald Cole: My name is Ron Cole, and I'm the operations manager for Virginia-Kentucky Broadcasting here in Grundy, Virginia. We operate AM radio station WNRG at 940 and FM station 97.7 WMJD and TV 7, which is a cable TV station here in Grundy. All the programming originates here.

MNK: And how long have you been doing that?

RC: Gosh, I have been the operations manager for--Hmm. Okay, I came on board in 1973, so that puts us, what, at roughly twenty-one years. Something-- No. I can't add, that's why I'm working radio. About twenty-six years. I'm sorry. I've been in broadcasting all of my adult life at, most of the time in Kentucky and back here in Virginia. Most of the time it's been here at home. So with the exception of a three-year stint, I left newspaper, excuse me, I left radio and worked in newspaper for about three years, still mostly in advertising. At the time of the flood in Buchanan County I was working at the radio station. About three o'clock in the morning, my wife and I were living in Oakwood, Virginia, which is on the eastern section of the county, I received a phone call, and it was John Hash, who was then the civil defense director in Buchanan County. And he told me that they had detected some large water systems that were moving in, storm systems that were moving in that had heavy water cells in them and that we were going to get a significant rainfall. That he was sure, and all of the other people who had viewed this were sure would lead to a flood in Buchanan County. And he asked me then if I could get out of bed and go and open the radio station early. The FM was on twenty-four hours a day, but it was automated. The AM was only on from sunup to sundown. So he asked me to go open the radio station and begin to announce to people that we were going to have this flood and that people in low-lying areas should make provisions to get out of the way, get their families out of the way, and as much private property as they could, given the time that they had to remove it to higher, safer ground. And I say here that we were extremely fortunate, given the gravity and magnitude of the flood that there was only one life lost in Buchanan County due to the flood situation. I'd like to take a lot of credit for that, but we can only take due credit. The situation is that once people found out about it they started calling their neighbors and everybody, you know, was alerted of the situation. Anyway, John Hash, as I said, being the civil defense director, has authority over a radio station, which is a federal trust in a situation such as this, and he can ask me to go on the air to make this kind of safety announcement, which supersedes all other authority. And we did this. So we stayed on the air throughout the day. The rain began to fall indeed, and as the day went on we got more and more rainfall. The river began to rise. We were getting stories throughout the day that the bridges at Hoot Owl Creek and the bridge behind the Grundy were both beginning to block with debris in the channel. And the water was backing up, sloshing over the bridges, making them unsafe for traffic. And I think at one point in time the debris at the Hoot Owl Creek Bridge had to be dynamited in an effort to get the water flowing again before the entire bridge was blocked and gave way in a huge kind of a floating juggernaut of trash and debris, excuse me, and whatever else had backed up behind the bridge. So that was open. But during the day, I think about four o'clock that afternoon, the power had risen, or the water had risen sufficiently to get into the Appalachian Power Substation at... Creek, and it was under the large transformers. And just shortly after that the ground under them was undermined

sufficiently so that the transformers began to fall over. And the power lines were gone. The phones, of course, were gone. We were still doing pretty good, or the general populous was doing pretty well until darkness fell. And then it became very obvious that nobody in the county had any electricity. In the Oakwood area, where I lived, as I found out later, they were in fairly decent shape. Most of the flooding--The channel is small there, the mountains are steep, and the runoff had begun there earliest. So it was hitting Grundy kind of last, as far as the flood stage was concerned. The flood waters had risen to the front door of the radio station. And as the power went off we had no reason to stay there. So I had my staff come outside the building, because at that point I was afraid that the waters might undermine the building and it might topple under, or topple over and then go under water. So I was afraid to let them stay in there for the night. We moved our cars to higher ground and spent the night in our cars. We have a gentleman here in Grundy named Gary Street, who works for me as a consulting engineer. He is an electronics instructor at Buchanan Vocational School, and he's a licensed ham operator. So that night he became our only communication link between Buchanan County and the outside world. He was on the ham radio all night talking to people in the Bluefield area. And they finally got--I think the Richlands and Bluefield units of the National Guard mobilized so that as dawn came the next morning they could begin to try to get some supplies in here. Of course that day people had listened to the warnings on the radio stations. They had literally just picked the grocery stores clean. They had taken all the non-perishable items and everything that they could think of that would be of some use. The clean drinking water that they could buy from the shelves. Charcoal for cooking and some heating purposes. Lots of people ate awfully well that night because lots of people had food in their freezers at home, and as the food began to thaw it was either throw it away or cook it. So nearly everybody was cooking something on a grill in their front yard and feeding everybody. "Hey, have a steak," you know. Have this, that or the other. And so people who had no means to keep this food just cooked it and ate it, gave it away, whatever. So it was both an extremely dangerous atmosphere, and yet in some areas it was almost a party atmosphere going on. I didn't find this out until later. We were stuck in a parking lot all night. I started telling you about Gary I'm sorry, I keep bouncing back and forth in my story. Gary kept the communications open with the other ham radio operators, so we got the National Guard assistance the next day. They brought in fresh water. And they began to bring in some emergency generators. The old Buchanan Hospital at that time had their own emergency lighting system. And they had generators to keep going, as it was safe to do so. But now the flood waters were in the basement floor and the first floor of the hospital. So they had to move all their emergency patients to the third and fourth floor, trying to stay ahead of the water. The downtown area, when I looked at it the next morning--dawn came up. I got into Grundy about six o'clock. And it's--I've never been in a war zone, but it looked to me like what one would look like. All the storefronts were gone. There were sandbars in the middle of Main Street. There was still river water running in some places because--One of the oldest structures in town is now the Miners and Merchant Bank Building, what is known as the Richardson Bank Building. I think the flood waters crested something like twenty-six feet up on that building. So that as you can well imagine anybody on the main street of the town, the water would have been at least fifteen feet over their head. So all the businesses were wrecked. The entire downtown retail community was gone. Everything was just completely destroyed. Everything was inundated. All of the merchandise was ruined. The seating in the local theater was ruined. The drugstores, all of their preparations on the shelves and so on had to be thrown away because, of course, nothing could be used after a situation like that. I went by the ABC Store, and there was a large sign that said,

"closed due to emergency." And a friend of mine later remarked, "It should have said open due to emergency." But I understand that all of their merchandise had to be destroyed as well because the seals had been under water. We had no electricity the next day. There were no phone lines. And we began to get generators to restore some power to absolutely necessary locations.

MNK: Go back to that dawn scene and talk a little bit more about that. What-- Were there any sounds ... you know. What...clearer picture of what that was like when you first saw it.

RC: I came out of the radio station, and I wasn't really sure what the situation would be with regard to the highways of Grundy. And I started to walk toward town. We're about two and a half miles west of the town, our offices. And some traffic was coming in. They had been held at different points and told not to come into Buchanan County because of the flood situation, or not to try to get into Grundy because there was water and debris in the streets. A gentleman named Ken Padberry, who had to spend the night away from town, away from home, because he couldn't get in the previous night, was on his way home. And he gave me a lift into town. He came to his house and went home, and I walked the rest of the way into town. And as I turned the corner at the bridge on Main Street it was fantastic. There were cars askew. The flood waters had washed automobiles sideways, and they were turned in the streets. And as I said earlier, it looked kind of like a war zone. It looked like they had been blown there or blasted there... except for the water. The sandbars, there were at least three on Main Street. There were still sounds of rushing water because Slate Creek was still trying to get into the main channel. Most of the flood waters had receded, but there was still sufficient water so that it made, you know, the noise that flood waters make, rushing waters. There are cliffs coming from Slate Creek, turning the corner starting west on 460. So there was lots of water, you know, running out of the cliff, as water does. So you hear that. It sounded like a fountain almost, because there was so much runoff still taking place. There were very few people in town at the time, so there was not any automobile traffic. As I got closer I learned that as many as, I think, eighty people had taken refuge in the courthouse, in the Buchanan County Courthouse, and spent the night up there on the third floor sleeping on benches in the courtroom and finding shelter as best they could. Gene Cecil was one of the first gentlemen that I saw on the streets that morning. Gene, a longtime friend of mine, and he operated a business on Main Street called Gene's Department Store. And I walked up to his department store to look in because I was concerned that my friend's property had been, you know, flooded. And you look inside and just all the clothing was just--It was an unbelievable scene. There was mud. There was, you know, water. There was nothing left in any store that looked like a store anymore. All the furnishings, the fittings, the shelves, the hangers. Whatever their merchandise was, nothing was upright. Everything was knocked askew by the waters in every store all through town. This was the case from the bridge in town. I can't remember paying too much attention to the stores beyond the bridge, proceeding west on Main Street. Jackson Hardware, they suffered flood damage. Jacksons was there. I believe there was a Western Auto store there then. Fairway Department Store on the extreme end of town. There were--I think the Dollar General Store was there then.

MNK: Was Trivett's...

RC: The Family Shop was there then, of course. And Roger Powers, I think, had a store there then. Where there's a store now called 310 West Main, I think it was called Rogers and Company

at that time. If his store was there, that's what it was called. He had a clothing establishment also of about the same caliber as the Family Shop. Anyway, all those stores had been inundated. All the wares were damaged. Nothing, literally not one thing in the whole town of Grundy was available for sale that day because all of the merchandise had been under water. Nothing could be sold. There was a huge cleanup effort that had to be taking place. I hadn't been home for two, for a day and a half, and I finally caught a ride from Grundy onto my house. One thing. When I came to the hospital and found out what kind of shape the hospital had been in, I met Dr. Bob Baxter. And Bob had been at the hospital all night. And one of the stories that he told me was that he needed to get down to his office, which was on the basement floor. He wasn't worried about all of his diplomas, or all of his medical paraphernalia, or any of his equipment. There was a picture that someone had given him, a photographic rendering of Christ, and he wanted that picture out of his office. And he said of all the things that had washed off the wall, and turned over, and messed up, that picture was exactly where it was before the flood. It was amazing. I mean, you needed stories like that at the time. Rife Furniture and Appliance, which was on the right side of Main Street just in front of where, well, just exactly where it is now, rebuilt. A building that had been there for twenty years was completely gone. There was not a brick left. Everything was gone. Just below the road, Central Auto Parts was another business attached to Mrs. Johnson's building, where the *Virginia Mountaineer* is now located. That was completely gone. Nothing left of that. One thing, before the day was down the Rife brothers had gotten back to the location of where the store had once been. And whatever inspired them, I don't know, but it inspired us all, they put up an American flag. They had that thing flying there. And, you know, it seemed to say to people, "This is a land of opportunity. We've built it before. We'll build it back." And they have. Anyway, I got home to Oakwood, and not knowing what kind of shape my wife and young son were in, and of course they didn't know any more about me. But when I walked into our house, we had TV. My son was on the floor watching Sesame Street, and my wife was fixing lunch. And the phones were working after a fashion up there. The phones were open. You could pick it up, and there was somebody talking, but you couldn't dial them, you know. They were just that kind of state. In Grundy there were no phones at all. I mean the lines were just dead. There was no electricity. By the end of the day, the first day after the flood--Jim Fuller was then the local manager of General Telephone Company, and they were working furiously. They were putting in new line. They were putting in new poles. And by the end of that day they had a phone line, one phone line was open out of Buchanan County back to Bluefield. And that's all there was. The State Highway Department and the National Guard had brought in enough generators so that they had some artificially generated electricity in the courthouse and some other levels. But as far as the town of Grundy was concerned, there was no regular electricity restored before, I think, the third or fourth day. That was the soonest that they could restore the lines coming into Buchanan County and Appalachian could string new lines to the transformers and then try to get their electric service restored to all of the county. It was an incredible time. People were trying, desperately trying to get clothing, to get food, to get some kind of shelter. People were walking the streets. They came into the radio station when we finally got a generator back at our tower site, we're trying to get back on the air. People were coming in and using that as a form of public communication. And we let them just line up and say, "hey, my name is Herb Schmo, and I've got family in Elkhorn City, Kentucky, and if you're worried about me, I'm okay," you know, "I'll get home as soon as I can." We did lots of personal messages, things like that. The merchants in Grundy were doing the best that they could to get all of the damaged stuff out of their stores and use just water hoses, whatever means to get it washed

up and cleaned up just to look at the stuff. And 99.9 percent of it was--Kind of a wasted effort for everything except cleaning the building out because nothing could be resold. People just didn't have anything that was, that they could put back in the store to try and sell again. So they were snatching all of the people off the street that they could find that were willing to come in and work for them, give them a hand, you know, do this. We had lots of people who were sightseers who wanted to come into Grundy and see what had happened. The word was out that we were, you know, totally destroyed as a town. And they became a hindrance to the cleanup effort, because if you have all these people that were just curiosity seekers and sightseers they get in the way. So we had to have extra policemen here. They sent us a large detachment of extra state police that they gathered up all over the state. And there were checkpoints at all the entries into town, and people were asked what business they had here. And if they didn't have some good reason for being here they were just turned back. Of course they were rerouted if they were traveling, you know, west of Buchanan County and had to get somewhere else, then they told them, "You go down 83 through Haysi," if they could get through that way, and go around. But they couldn't come through Grundy. The night of the flood a good friend of mine from Big Rock, Virginia, Paul Elswick, owner and operator of a business called Paul's Repair Shop, Paul had a helicopter. He was flying all night long, in the darkness and in the rain, getting people out that needed to get out and getting supplies into people where he could. United Coal Companies had a helicopter. Their copter was flying all night long. Indeed, they were flying all the rest of the next two weeks. They were just, you know--The helicopters were, outside of Gary's ham radio, were the only way that we could get word in or out to anybody. United was poised at the time with lots of equipment. They were doing a lot of serious mining, strip mining, and that sort of thing in Buchanan County and other parts of southwestern Virginia, eastern Kentucky at the time, so they were able to lend a lot of expertise and manpower that the State just did not have time to get in here at the time it was needed. The State Highway Department did a wonderful job down here, but it took a while simply to get the men and material out to the sight. United rebuilt two or three spots along U.S. 460. There was one point about two miles west of town where U.S. 460 had been undermined. The flood waters had undermined it, and the road had just fallen into the river and had been swept away. People that had to drive outside of what had been the highway and get almost all four wheels into the ditch before they could get around that spot. Well, the next day, or the next three or four days, United had their crew down there with the rock drills and so on, and they drilled and shot this huge cliff and overhang and pulled it out of the way, then used their dozers and made a road around that spot. So they got out of the mining business, got into the highway building business all of a sudden. But they did a great job. They did not stint on their resources. There are people here--There were heroes at the time. And I'm not doing them a good service, because I can't remember all of the names. But this went on. It was a time when the only thing that stopped the people in Buchanan County, a lot of them would lean up against a wall and draw a couple of breaths, or maybe have a cigarette, or a cup of coffee if they could lay hands on it, and then go right back to it. People were on a twenty-four hour schedule, and they were just trying to get things back to some kind of normalcy, which I'm not really sure ever happened. We are where we are today, and a lot of the young people who are working in town today don't remember that time because they were children in other parts of the county and had no reason to be here. But the people who were left had a tremendous task in trying to get things back to rights in Buchanan County. After about four days we were able to get off the emergency generator that the Highway Department had supplied us. And Appalachian restored our regular power to us, and we were able to go back on the air as a radio station. We did not do any commercial

broadcasting for about three weeks. We just--We kept running-- ... could run is flood news. If a merchant came in and said he needed people to help him clean this store or that store, we'd put that on the air and ran until somebody responded to it. If a merchant was cleaning out a number of things and said, "I have some good living room furniture left or dining room furniture. If somebody will come and get it and haul it away, they can have it," you know. So we put these kind of things on the air. And we didn't make any effort to return to our commercial business until the people in town said, "Okay, that's it, we're ready to go again. We got everything pretty well cleaned out. We restocked, and let's try again." So that was the way the thing went. It was a scary time, but the thing about a disaster of this magnitude is that people--All of a sudden there are no class distinctions. There are no religious differences. There are no political differences. Everybody looks at the problem at hand and says, "Okay, let's sink our teeth into this thing, and chew it up, and get rid of it." So that's what we've done. Or that's what was done in Buchanan County at the time. And in Grundy especially. And everybody did their part. And just after the flood the word went out that there was a town rebuilding here, and we needed lots of talent.

And we got lots of new folks who came in here from other places. We got lots of new attorneys. We got some new doctors. Lots of young folks who came in here and said, "Okay, this looks like a nice place to be. This is where we'll stay." And lots of them did. So that was good. And it was owing in some part to the fact that the news went out that the coal industry was starting to boom here and that a new town was being built because of the flood. So all that kind of came together. But just about the time that the merchants began to get a good foothold on rebuilding the town, there came a slowdown in the coal business. A couple of malls opened up in other parts of the country, and so our retail community went the way of all other small town retail communities. It just--As the people drifted away to the larger shopping centers, and that's what kind of happened to us. That can't be blamed on the flood. I can't see that conditions have changed that much, with regard to all of the conditions that cause flooding. In southwest Virginia our mountains are so steep. They're certainly not as big as those that are further down in the Blue Ridge chain in North Carolina, but they are steep. And the problem with that is that there's no way to hold the water. That heavy rain came in a wet season. The ground was already saturated. It couldn't hold much more water. We had between three and seven inches of rain in, I think, a five-hour period. And the runoff just caused a flood. There was certainly nowhere for the water to go except to overflow the river channels, and there it went. During the night you got all kinds of stories. The Pikeville Dam broke, you know, this, that, and the other. And of course it wouldn't have mattered to us, except maybe to let the water runoff faster. But of course none of those things were true. But the conditions that I started to say a minute ago still exist. I think that we still have built too many structures in the river channel. There are too many obstructions to it. Some kind of flood proofing is going to have to be done. You don't need it in the upper ends of the counties, because the channel is different up there. And the runoff, you only have one or two small creeks and the headwaters of the river, which itself is small. But as the river progresses toward town, then you've got like a half a dozen more tributaries feeding into it. Slate Creek has never really been a flooding problem. Slate Creek drains rather well. But the channel comes abruptly into the main channel of the Levisa River. So that when that channel is at flood stage, the secondary channel can't gain access, so the water backs up. And they did have flooding in the Long Bottom section, which is the first large community that you come to proceeding up Route 83 on Slate Creek. I think when that's changed, when there's a better access, better graded access for Slate Creek to gain the main channel, then that will solve a lot of that problem and, as far as flooding is concerned. But, again, I keep getting ahead of my story, we keep building houses in

the river channel. We don't clean it properly. We don't maintain it properly. And nobody can, I think, accurately predict--And they talk about hundred year floods, and fifty year floods, and twenty year floods. The truth of the matter is when you get a sufficient water cell over this part of the country that drops all that water, you're going to have a flood. If you got one on last Friday, you get another storm like that next Friday, it would be the seven day flood, I guess. But when the water comes down, you're going to have a flood. We're going through all kinds of situations. I was looking at a piece on television this morning. They were talking about the El Nino this year, which is going to keep the Pacific several degrees warmer than it should be for as much as three months longer than it should be. And the climatologists say that they don't really even understand what that's going to do to our planet-wide weather system, except that they're sure it will have significant changes. Some areas are going to be warmer longer. Some areas are going to be colder longer. It's going to cause more rain (knocking at door) in some areas, no rain in other areas. So these things will all contribute to our little part of the world. These clouds float around with water in them, and sooner or later we're going to get dumped on us again, and if we don't have some kind of protection here it's gone again. That's all there is to it. So we had the people who responded last time. And if we have another disaster, they'll respond again. But I think (knocking at door) some of this can and should be prevented by us.

MNK: So you were saying that the conditions have not significantly changed.

RC: They have not changed, certainly not for the better. If--Actually I think--And this--I have no professional opinion as far as it's concerned, because I have no professional standing as far as climatology or topography is concerned. But it seems to me like that since the flood we have more filled lots where people are pushing more debris toward the natural river channel. We have more buildings that have been built toward the river channel. And people don't seem to think about or understand the fact that when you put an obstruction in the river channel, even if you make it strong enough so that it doesn't wash away your structure, that's going to throw the thrust of the current against something else. And you can't go tinkering around with this. The river makes its own channel through the course of years. And everything that men put into that thing changes something that has naturally developed. And so when we start building things in the river channel, you're just asking for trouble. People need to look at the studies that have been done on the Mississippi River and what's going to happen to New Orleans. I think the Mississippi changes its course once every 350,000 years or something like that. And it's in the course--Or it's in the process of changing its course again. And they can build all the levees, and all the dams, and everything else that they want to, but that river is going to change course, because it changes as the platelets move under the crust of the Earth. It's going to come down across that part of the continent in a different way. So I think what I'm trying to say is that we need to look at something that's designed to help the natural process of water flow here. We don't need to stick anything else in that channel that's just going to turn the natural current in a different direction. So--Then you can take that opinion and a quarter and still get a cup of coffee in some places!

MNK: So how about the plan? How about this new town? How about the whole flood protection plan? What's your assessment of it?

RC: I think it's definitely a step in the right direction. I had just done a--

MNK: Can you include the question in the answer, if you know what I mean?

RC: Okay. Looking at the new plan for redevelopment of Grundy for the flood control, flood proofing of Grundy, and the raising of the downtown main street areas, I think this is progressive. I think it's a good idea. I think we need the flood proofing, of course, for obvious reasons, for flood control and flood protection. As far as the buildings along Main Street are concerned, we're sort of dead in the water. There are three or four businesses left there now. But we can't get a lot of people who want to come back in. The rents are high. The people who own that property can't afford to give it away. They can't afford to repair it to attract new renters. And of course once you're designated as being in a floodplain, then that makes the expense of trying to ready your business property for rent or lease overbearing. You can't find too many renters who are willing to pay you a rent that is sufficient to recapture your expense for redeveloping the building. So--And plus the fact if you buy a lot that's designated in the floodplain with a structure on it and that structure is destroyed by fire or any other cause, you can't rebuild in a floodplain.

So that's kind of got our hands tied down here. I just completed a study just before we found out about the flood proofing project on the redevelopment of Grundy, Virginia, as a tri-state shopping center. And could that refurbishing and redevelopment be achieved. And I did surveys in Williamson, West Virginia; and Pikeville, Kentucky; Bristol, Tennessee; Virginia; Bluefield, West Virginia; and other areas where I could find people who lived closely enough to Buchanan County to shop in Grundy, and who had, in days gone by, shopped here. And to ask how many people would come back again. We got an astounding number of people who said that they never shopped in Grundy and would not come back, and this, that, and the other. Well, I kind of looked at the answers that they said that they did not care to shop in Grundy because it was too far away as being the fact that we needed a highway. They couldn't get in here conveniently. They did not have a real good selection in Grundy, so they went other places. One of my professors who looked at my paper, it showed that people who did shop in Buchanan County bought cars, high ticket appliances, like color TVs, refrigerators, stoves, this sort of thing, and jewelry. And he said, "Boy, Grundy must be a Mecca for cars, and jewelry, and furniture." And I said, "No, that's all that's left," you know, everything else is gone. We have two car dealers. We have, I think, five or six jewelry stores. And we have at least a half dozen furniture stores. But the little department stores and a lot of the other things, small, independent restaurants –

MNK: Bookstores.

RC: Bookstores. Things like that that gave the town its flavor and character are gone. We were unable to capture and hold enough of a recurring crowd to make it profitable for people to do that anymore. I think, looking at relocating the town--My conclusions were, at the end of my study, was that Grundy would continue to exist as a ZIP code, but that was about all. That the commercial center could not be redeveloped with all the problems that we talked about a moment ago. This redevelopment gives us an area where people will have a new Grundy. They'll have new stores. They'll have new store buildings. They will have new and better parking facilities. We will begin aggressively to seek people once again to come into Grundy to open these businesses to stay here so that Friday afternoons didn't look like people fleeing an atomic blast site. From three o'clock on trying to get out of Grundy. All of a sudden it looks like



you're in the Darlington 500 or something. Everybody's trying to get out at the same time. So what we need is reasons, are reasons for our people to stay here. And I think this flood planning and the new town planning, of flood proofing a new town planning will give people those reasons to stay at home and develop our home again as a commercial center where we the citizens who stay here can buy the things that we need, enjoy the business life that we need to secure our own futures financially and give a, mainly to give our children a reason to come back home after they're educated rather than go somewhere else and seek employment. It's a wonderful place to be. People who had the opportunity to grow up here I think have to agree on that.

MNK: What do you mean?

RC: Just the things that we had here. We--It was isolated enough so that the same thing that kept a lot of opportunities away kept a lot of trouble away. We didn't have drug problems here for a long time. We didn't seem to have the kind of major crime problems that you see in other places. And it was--When I was a kid growing up in the section of the county known as Big Rock, Virginia, there were dirt roads. There was one telephone in that little town, and it was in the coal company office. So if people wanted to call somebody, they had to go over there and say, "Hey, can I use your phone," or whatever. But everybody knew everybody's children. If you were getting in trouble, somebody would come by and say, "Hey, you're so-and-so's son, aren't you?" "Well, yes, sir, I am." "Well, I don't think he'd approve of you being here," you know, "Why don't you go home." And, you know, they'd keep you out of trouble. You knew you couldn't get into much before your parents found out about it. It was all like a big family kind of experience. And I would like for other people to benefit from this. It's an absolutely wonderful place to be, and it always has been. The families who have been here, 'the people are just--We all know each other. That doesn't mean that everybody runs up and down the street hugging at everybody's neck every time we meet and things like that, but it's the good things, like I said earlier. In the eye of the flood, in the eye of any disaster, all of the barriers go down, and everybody's one, and we say, "Let's solve the problem, and we'll get on with being whatever we—Whatever shirt we wear every day, we'll put that back on on the other side of this." So if you had a choice of places to grow up, you could make a worse one, but you couldn't make a better one. And I'd like for it to stay that way for all the children to come. I'd like--My son is going to work in Raleigh, North Carolina, which is great for him. But I wish he was closer home, because I don't want to leave here. These are my family. These people are my people. And I want everybody here to feel that way. And I want everybody who comes to Grundy to feel that way. And the people who decide to settle here can find a good life. And this all leads to that. There's nothing magic about it. I don't mean that automatically it will be like the land of Oz once we get flood proofing. That's ridiculous. But I think that when we start trying to talk to people in larger industries that we want to locate factories here and plants here. We want national chain stores to come in here and open up operation. Or we want people to invest their money and open their own stores here. If they know that they are in a physically safe community, that they don't have to worry every time that the clouds darken up that they have to start, you know, saying, "Have I got enough shelves high enough in here to put my merchandise so it doesn't get wet or wash away?" That's part of the flood proofing. When we tell people that we want to come and locate in Buchanan County, yeah, we've got a brand new four-lane highway through here. Four-sixty is beautiful. It's scenic. And we're working like crazy on the Coalfield Expressway. We're going to improve our

transportation system. We're going to get raw materials in. We're going to get finished products out. We're going to be part of the 20th century. And all these things lead us in that direction. Standing there and standing still is--I don't think there's any such thing as standing still. You either progress, or if you try to stand still, time passes you by, so you're actually going backwards. And I think that time that Grundy developed to the point where it was just before the flood, and then we got into kind of an arrested state of development after the flood, and with the decline somehow of some of the coal business and opportunity, our employment opportunities, that has gone past and we have to look for something else now. We have to look for a way to attract other industries that our going to help us to survive. And people who look at us and say, "Well, you guys down there are not making any effort at making your community safe, at improving your transportation systems, at giving us a place where we can come in and have a bright, new, fresh storefront operation, we're not going to talk to you." So it's all tied together, sports fans. You do it right from the ground up or you don't do it at all.

MNK: Absolutely ...

RC: The one casualty of the flood. A dear friend, a fellow named Bob Crockett, who lived over at Hurley, Virginia, the Hurley section. I think the little place where he probably lives there is closer to Roseanne. But they had a small bridge across from the highway to their home, and he lived with his parents. And debris had floated up under the bridge, and he was afraid that the pressure of the water against the debris was going to destroy the bridge. And he was out there with a long stick trying to get the debris away from the bridge, and he fell into the water and struck his head on a stone and was drowned. And he was a beautiful person, well-educated fellow, well thought of throughout the county, a teacher in good standing many, many years. And he has been, and still is, sorely missed by the people in this community. And to think that that one person was the person who was the casualty of that awful situation in Buchanan County is almost unbelievable. But, again, I'll say the thing that I said a moment ago, we were so extremely fortunate to have all the material that we needed just at the time when it was needed most in this community and the people who were willing to use it.