

Michael Kline: Hello, there. Today is December 19th. Hugh Rogers and I are on our way to the Stonewall Jackson Lake area. It is raining. Well, I suppose a logical place to start would be how long you have farmed here.

Mary Aspinall: Well, we've been here forty years.

MK: Forty years. Where did you come from before that?

MA: Well, originally, the dam was proposed on the West Fork River, and we owned the farm over in that area, in the Roanoke area. So, around the bush, we heard that they were going to build that dam. So, we came over and contacted JR Jones, who owned this farm. It took us about three years to talk him [laughter] into letting us have it. Then of course, after we bought this one and left over there, they decided to expand the area of the dam onto Big and Little Skin Creek. So, that's the story of our coming over here.

MK: At some point, the West Fork River Watershed Association, was that the name of the –

MA: I don't know how old that association really is. Do you?

MK: No. But it seems like we have heard Barbara Heavner talking about its beginnings in the –

Hugh Rogers: Early [19]70s.

MK: Early [19]70s, was it?

MA: I really don't know. This might not be the right thing to say at this time, but I just sometimes wonder, as I'm looking back now, if we had just accepted the thing maybe forty years ago. As I'm looking back over it now at age 75 and having to start my life over, so to speak, I think personally, I would've been better off, forty years ago, to have given up.

Bill Aspinall: Well, we went to Washington long before that and had it stopped. Then they started all over again. That was long before the watershed ever started. Long time. I don't remember when – that was when Smith was governor, wasn't it? Hulett Smith, wasn't it? The one that had the short –

[talking simultaneously]

MA: No, that wasn't Smith.

MK: Who was that then?

MA: Our governor. Oh, I can't think – Okey.

BA: Okey Patteson.

MA: Okey Patteson. Then we had Secretary of Agriculture who was very much opposed to it

because of the great agricultural ground here.

BA: Johnson.

MA: J.T. Johnson. Then another man before that. Then it became –

BA: McLaughlin.

MA: Yes, McLaughlin. Secretary of Agriculture, McLaughlin. They were openly opposed to it. Their political background didn't enter into it. They just lived up to the fact that they were agricultural people. They thought it was a disgrace to do what they were doing to this type of land. Then the thing simply became, as I see it – of course, they can – others may see it differently – a political thing. Lewis and Harrison County elected the officials. I mean, there's a difference now in the way it's proportioned, I think. But at that time, if you were pleasing the people of Harrison County by suggesting flood control and water supply, then everybody there didn't go into it to see what this whole thing was. They just voted for it. So, consequently, it started out, I think, with Cleveland Bailey. He received the benefit of it. Then we had Neely and the rest of them, and they simply used it for that, I feel. That's my opinion.

MK: So, it was presented in different ways to different groups of people.

MA: That is right. That is right.

MK: Nobody could see what the whole thing really was.

MA: Now, we have a group in town that's very unpopular to most everyone, I think, namely Judge Fury, Adler, and the Democrat paper, which is a handle for the bank in Clarksburg. So, how can you whip that if farmers just really can't whip an organization like that? We have lately had a steady stream of traffic up through this area here since certain segments of this new road are finished, and they will stop and talk to you. I didn't know that this area was even here, you know? So, it really wasn't publicized in the right way. Then the way I feel about it, there were a lot of people talking about it that really didn't have any business talking about it. Maybe if Francine had had a little better help and of a different – maybe we could have gotten along more. Now, I don't know the whole story of Mrs. Heavner's situation. The way they did it wasn't right. But let's face it, we're going to have to go. So, my God isn't telling me to hang in here and be abused like that. He's telling me to get out of here [laughter] and save my health and my mind. That's what he's telling me. Now, she may be dealing differently. I don't know. So, let's face it. But there are so many different angles to resettlement. If you approach people to buy property, they want to know who you are. Then their immediate reaction is, "Oh, you're in the proposed Stonewall Jackson dam." Then up goes the price. You're just really battered from every angle of it.

BA: Cheapest place that he had offered we could even consider [inaudible] was \$450,000. We had to spend \$150,000 to \$200,000 to ready it for [inaudible]. Then on up to a million. One guy got \$1 million for his land and had to buy buildings in his own house. [laughter] How about that? [laughter] I can name them all to you.

MA: Beautiful farm. Just when we came to it, I said, "Well, this must be it." Then the government comes up with a pittance for you to go out and replace yourself. Then they don't give you the money. Now, just on the 22nd of December last year, I received a telephone call. A young man told me he would be there on the 24th to discuss this matter with me. I said, "Well, young man, that's the day before Christmas. You're not approaching me the day before Christmas." I mean, he was from the Core – from the office down here. I told him, "It may not mean as –" this is the way I said it – "a damn thing to you, but it does to me." He said, just a minute, he'd get out his book and see when he could come again. So, he said, I think it was the 27th of January, would I see him then? I said, "If the weather is good, yes, I'll go along with you." Well, that happened to be a terrible day [laughter]. He didn't come. But he called me a day or two later. I asked him what his knowledge was of appraisal. He said he'd been doing it for two years. I said, "Well, young man, I don't think you're the man for this job." I wouldn't want to go in and appraise someone's property with my knowledge of what I've put into this and all. I think it just takes a little bit more. So, now, here it is here, and we've never been condemned. But we've had people here running in and out of the house and all the buildings and making appraisals that – and we're supposed to be out in April, disperse the dairy herd, an Angus herd, flock of sheep, and ourselves and everything. But April, no money. Now, if that's the American way, it isn't any wonder we have protesting in this country. If I were younger, I think I would be a real – something, had this been done to me in this space. It just isn't right. I have a lot of young men working for drilling companies and for gas companies who stop here. They ask me, "Do you have to go, Mary?" I say, "Yes." Then I tell them, "Are you buying property?" They say they are. I said, "Well, brother, listen to this then." Because I'm too old to do much about it now. But these young people, they better get on the ball and get the right people in the government or get these laws changed or something. Because you really have no security whatsoever. Do you think I have any security the way I presented this to you? At my age, I'm 75 now, and I'm supposed to be happy to make Weston free of floods. They aren't trying to help me a bit. There's no one ever tried to help me a bit. So, I'm just real bitter. I really am.

BA: You've got more property downtown [inaudible].

MA: In the flood area. We own property on West Second Street. Judge Fury is our brother-in-law. Mrs. Fury is Bill's sister. Okay. The reason I feel sure that he thinks that this is the best thing that ever happened to Lewis County is his home and property there is never going to flood again. I don't really think he cares about anything. He says it's the most wonderful thing that ever happened in Lewis County. But he doesn't go on to say for him, you know? Sure, if the water doesn't get up in the house. But now, the water hasn't been in that house since [19]50. Now, that's thirty-four years. What's his gripe?

MK: What about your property on Second Street? Was it –

MA: It stays rented all the time. Why? Because it's in a good area there, and the federal government offered flood insurance. Okay? What do you have to worry about? Those people, they just clean up, move up, and it's where the traffic goes to. It's where the business is. So, what? I used to stop at an antique shop in Parkersburg. Every time the water got up, she said she had to move everything. Well, I just sit there, "Why do you stay?" She said, "Because this is

where the business is. I can't afford to move it up." I think this whole thing is eventually going to be a sad thing for – I don't know too much about recreation because I don't indulge in recreation. My pastime is hard work, I think. But the type of persons who came through here during deer season, I don't know what they had to offer the economy of this area. They came loaded. They stayed loaded. They –

MK: You mean they were drinking.

MA: Yes.

MK: Probably had their guns loaded too.

MA: Yes, that's right. I just don't know what that kind of recreation has to offer to a community. So, I just hope I live long enough to see the result of this thing so that I can hand it back to some of these people that work for it.

MK: I guess that has been the experience over on Sutton.

MA: Yes, in Grafton. Now, you look at the roadway they are building over here, and all the roadways they're building. Did you ever go over to Tygart Lake?

MK: No.

MA: Through Grafton? Well, you'd actually take your life in your hands after you cross the bridge and start out into the lake area. They didn't build any of these fancy roads for that. I can't help but think that this is all a big get-rich thing for the contractors. Who knows? It may come out –

MK: I have seen more guardrails in this end of the county than I have seen in whole other counties in West Virginia. You would not find this much guardrail in all of McDowell County, I do not guess.

MA: Well, I don't know. To build a road like they're building into this thing, I just don't know. Then here's another thing they do to you. They come through, and they take all of the buildings – all the buildings on our farm. That's where the survey – they did that. So, what have you to fight back for? I mean, [laughter] then when they come and explain to you what they're taking, they're leaving you with 50 acres of a knob, way on one side of your farm, your farm being split by the road. Then on the other side, you're left with 142 acres of what they say is worthless land – we'll see – and taking all the best for roadway and recreation.

MK: You mean the water is not going to actually come up on this property.

MA: Do you think the water will ever come up on this property?

MK: I do not know.

MA: I hope that you will come back when it's finished –

MK: I will.

MA: – and see for yourself.

MK: The water is not going to touch it.

MA: Well, how could it?

BA: We don't think it will. But we're not –

MA: We're not engineers, but we have lived here for forty years. If you have water from a flood, like, if it rains quite a bit, it's up. You go out in two or three hours, it's gone. Of course, I understand now, they're going to impound that water. But it's spread out over such an area. Wouldn't you think, just from a common man's viewpoint, that what with evaporation and everything concerned, that you're going to lose a tremendous amount of water that way? I don't know. If you just sit down and just look at it from your point of view, not a knowledgeable point of view, but just from what you have observed over forty years, you just wonder what this thing is really all about. Other than flood control for what is in Weston, where have they to expand when they cover up all this land? Where do they have to expand? I think that they made a survey one time. I was told by a member of the higher ups in the Citizens Bank that Lewis County was in real trouble. There was no place for expansion. Well, they're covering up their expandable land. It could have been for housing and who knows. All of us offered land. All of us said we were giving to make these multipurpose dams like they have out on in the Pole Creek area. They said it wasn't feasible. Well, if you've got people wanting to build a thing like this with all the money and the politics they have behind them, there isn't any need to talk feasibility, is there? No. You're whipped before you suggest it. So, that's my story of the Stonewall [laughter] Jackson Dam. We've lost a lot of good people in this area from heartbreak.

MK: What do you mean?

MA: They died. They lost their mind. They did. I can tell you two men who actually lost their mind. They just died cursing the Stonewall Jackson Dam. I mean, that was just all that was on their mind. Yes. Then another man who just – his attitude was just – he just damned the dam continuously until – he had a heart condition, of course. But no question about it, it hastened it. Then another marvelous lady who just didn't think she could leave. Her husband found her dead ahead of time I'm sure.

MK: Was that Eleanor?

MA: Eleanor, because I talked to her three or four days before she died. She just couldn't imagine – after seeing how the Corps allowed a certain element of people just to come in and tear down things in a non-respectful way, of all of the heritage back, of all these buildings they were tearing down. Just tear it down. Take it a few miles away and throw it down. Everybody just trying to get something for nothing out of it. She just couldn't imagine how she could have

her home torn down, board by board, that way. So, I think just gave up [laughter]. Well, I'm too mean to give up. [laughter] I'm 75. But I do hope that I can live to see what benefits they're going to derive from it.

MK: What do you think the benefits would be?

MA: Well, I wouldn't want to say on [laughter] tape just what I think it will be. But I can't see how it's going to be what they've painted it to be, right? If it does, it will be so many years coming that those who have pressed so hard for it, they aren't going to be around to see what it is anyway. I am just wondering if they are taking into consideration what the younger generation would have liked it to be. There are certain types of people who, back of all this pride – this municipal pride and everything, there's just that spark of greed, yet personal greed, you know? I think that exists. So –

MK: Also, those people have so much already. What are they going to do with –

MA: Well, [laughter] to go back to it, I think that the government should reimburse a person. I think I told one member of the organization, and I don't recall now just who he was, that my theory was that they should have come in here and appraised and settled with everyone before any of this was started. Give us the three or four years then to have relocated ourselves in a fashion that we didn't have to feel like we were being evicted, you know? Even though we know we're going to have to replace ourselves, then we would've known. We'd known how much. Certainly, it would've cost them a lot less, I think. You know how property has risen in the last, let's say, ten years? The cost of building the thing has just gone up tremendously. But the government doesn't have to worry about that sort of thing. But they must have to worry about something as slow as they are about paying people once they even get the claim processed. You go to court, and you are given a certain amount of money. It's two or three years before you get that. I know, two or three years.

MK: What stage in that process are you at right now?

MA: We haven't even been condemned yet. Though we have a letter stating what we are going to be – what the government is offering us. But we never received that check. We have never been actually condemned. When the utilities come to drive stakes, they even know that we haven't been condemned. But they ask for the privilege of doing it, which I say, "Well, so what? We are going to be condemned pretty soon." Well, we thought we would get what they have offered us probably in November. No, it didn't come. December, it's gone now. We received a letter from our lawyer the other day. He thinks that we'll be in January. But he still says, "Now, keep on keeping in mind that we have until April to get out." But I just would like to know who you could really talk to in the government to just simply bring them and show them and tell them what has gone on here. I don't really think that the government would want us to be treated this way. I'm sure the people don't approve of the way they treated Mrs. Heavner. Our milking sanitarian – we call him the milk inspector – was here about a week or two after this all happened. He goes up in the Panhandle, I think maybe does a dairy or two in Maryland, up in the Oakland area. Those people had seen that, and they were questioning him about what was going on. They couldn't believe that the government would do a thing. He said, "Certainly,

there must be some mistake." That they wouldn't put a person in chains in this country. He said that he guessed that's the way it was. He didn't actually see her, but said he knew that it was so because – you know. So, I can't imagine – I don't know. I am perplexed and sad and disappointed. I really am. We've really worked hard. Even people I see, "Are you still working as hard as you did, Mary?" "Yes. Doing the same thing. You know, I like it." It's my own choosing. But even when you do that, in this day and age, when there are so many people seeking everything for free, then you think that your government would actually appreciate a person who has given forty years of his life and never asked for anything. See? That's the way I think the government should handle things. But –

MK: Do you think this dam, as much as it costs and everything, fits in with the current administration's idea about cutting back and saving money?

MA: Well, have we really cut back any yet?

MK: Well, they are talking about cuts and all [inaudible].

MA: They're talking about it. But it's just like every representative from every angle of it says, "Just wait until we get in our different committees. Wait until we get there. It'll be this and that and something else." So –

MK: But they do not have enough money to keep everybody on Social Security. So, they are cutting people off of Social Security. But they are spending \$250 million on a recreation area. It does not –

MA: That's right.

MK: I cannot make it add up in my own mind.

MA: Well, the way I look at it with Social Security, they abused it. They added things onto it that should never have been tacked onto Social Security. Then it would've been a good thing. But when you just simply send – now, I know of one child that was put through college on Social Security, bought a car. Now, I think the original persons who wrote that, just like the constitution, they're just reading things into this that those men would fall – well, turn over and hope to die. I just don't think – all this thing about your constitutional rights. If they'd have been abused like we have, you'd have had a right to talk about constitutional rights. But some of these things they put under that category, it's sickening to me. Yes. My urge is just to – [laughter]

MK: Do you think your constitutional rights have been violated then in this case?

MA: I just don't think that you should just run for an alibi for everything. I think that you should discuss the thing, how it applies to each individual. Now, there are people who have bought up land. How could they be abusing their constitutional rights when maybe four or five years ago, they bought something? Now, they're screaming just as loud as anybody else, when probably in the back of their mind, they were hoping to get undercover on this deal and all that sort of thing, you know? I just –

MK: We heard mention of your brother-in-law as having bought property in the area.

MA: Did he?

MK: Then reselling it very fast, had a perfect profit.

MA: Well, [laughter] never do for me to get into that. Far as I'm concerned, he's an SOB. Well, we got rid of him, didn't we?

MK: Yes. Right.

MA: Yes, we did. We've got a real man in there now. Yes. We have a real man, I think, a man who has been a state police and understands all of that angle of it. Then he decides that he doesn't want to spend all his life – then he goes to law school. He comes out and is accepted by a very outstanding law firm in Buckhannon, Hymes & Coonts, then goes on, and without wavering, just takes over. I think it's marvelous. We have young men like that, that people really realize that's what we need, right? Because if he walked in here now, you'd just be just like he'd known you all your life. That's the kind of fellow he is. Yes. Like, "Hi, I hope I see you again," that kind of a fellow. He's very intelligent. So –

MK: One other question about this whole transitional period, do you have gas on this property? What is happening to your [inaudible]?

MA: We'd own the mineral rights. But in regard to the coal, we will receive half the benefit of the coal. They allow the landowner stripping rights, half of the value of the coal. So –

MK: Do you know if they have done that with everybody, or is that just a [inaudible]?

MA: No, that's the law now. That's the law now.

MK: I heard some complaints from other people. They will get nothing separate for the mineral rights.

MA: Well, maybe they didn't go into court. Maybe they didn't have core drilling done. We did that. It's expensive. But if you're going to fight them, you have to have a weapon to fight them with. We knew the coal was here and – well, I don't know if I should go into this or not. I called the Joneses who own the coal and head of Bridgeport Bank, law firm in Clarksburg, and asked him if he would like to go into it with me. We'd go share the cost of the core drilling as I thought it would benefit him as much as it would me, certainly. He was very enthusiastic. He was going to get back to me, but he never did. I feel now, he's going to reap the benefit of that. He'll get a letter from me when it's all settled, finding out what I think of him, you know, me, the farmer.

MK: Push you aside.

MA: Yes.

MK: You do not.

MA: I'm paying to try to save my hide, and he's sitting down there doing everybody he can at the Bridgeport Bank [laughter]. I hope you follow. I don't care. He knows this too. He knew that I called him, and he was – oh, he was going to go right along with me. But I suppose I didn't get the outfit that he was affiliated with, you know? Well, I'm sure I didn't. My lawyers were Steptoe & Johnson. [laughter] That isn't Jones Williams and Weston Jones. So – well –

MK: Tell me a little bit about your own people, who your daddy was and where they lived.

MA: Well, I really have no roots in this – both my grandfathers are naturalized citizens, one German, one French, right? You've wondered why I'd be the scrapper, wouldn't you? Well, okay. Then my husband's people are the Fletchers in Lewis County history. It used to be Fletcherville, Weston was, you know. The Fletchers owned where the courthouse is, the post office, and all of that in there and where the state hospital is. Now, we still own land along with the Furies on either side of the state hospital to Cox Town Bridge and out to the Pole Creek Bridge on either side there. Well, when the Commonwealth of Virginia decided to build the courthouse and take all that land, they told Mr. Fletcher that – well, they dealt with him the same way that we're being dealt with. They didn't give him anything. Tommy said, "Mary, Bill is just going to go through with the same thing as his ancestors went through. He is going to get taken." Yes, you can read the history. I think a Smith wrote the history of Lewis County. It tells all about it in there. So, they were going to evict him. He told [laughter] them that he didn't have – that the only hay he had was for his cow, and he would have to keep his cow over there. So, it took him three years to feed his hay out over there. That's how he got to stay on his land as long as he did. Can you imagine that? So, he had to figure that one out. But he finally said then that he had finally moved on the side of the river where the state hospital is now up. The original old home just burned down a few years ago up there. He said he would never cross the river again. They took it. They could have it. He went by horseback and buggy and in the Jane Lou area and bought his feed and groceries. He never went back over. He had had it with that outfit. So, that's the way we feel about this. When we get out of here, we're not coming back. We've never been down the road to see the destruction. But we've had people tell us, they just came that far and turned around and went back, said, "I can barely look at it anymore." So, that's the Fletchers. Well, then on Bill's mother's side, she was a Kitson. They came from England here, and Kitsonville is named for them. They owned Kitsonville, you know where Kitsonville is downtown there, as you come up the old 19th through there. Mr. Kitson was supervised and built the state hospital. He was a stone mason. That was his – and when Bill's mother's parents came here, they had two children in England. They were expecting another one, and she was born on Ellis Island while they were still in quarantine. We have all the history of all the people, really very interesting. Then the Aspinalls owned a lot of other property where we own where the – are you familiar with anything in Weston around there? Well, the Hope Gas Company and all as you go out Pole Creek out there and behind where the judge lives and all that, we still own all that and all the hill out there. We have never sold off lots or anything. So, we just thought in bitterness here a while back that we would just let a big oil and gas outfit drill wells on. How about they're going to do exploratory drilling on? Maybe we'll give a chapter on that. [laughter] Well, a woman called me yesterday. She said, "Well, they're going to drill wells back at the

residential area here." I said, "Ma'am, how long have you been there?" She told me how long she'd been there. I said, "Well, would you –" I said, "All these years, we really have paid tax on that and received no benefit from it, you know? It's just like it was. It's just land." I said, "Would you rather we talked this over?" I said, "Would you rather we sold it off in lots and people put trailers on there, built inexpensive homes, and you had all that to contend with? Or would you like to have nice gas wells and with all the restrictions there are on drilling now? Once the drilling is over with, and it's reclaimed, wouldn't you rather have two nice gas wells back of you than a lot of hubbubs? How about that? Would you?" She hesitated. Well, said, "Come to think of it, I believe I would." Well, I said, "Okay. That's the way we felt about it." So, well – but Bill says I lay awake nights thinking about terrible things. But I really have a [laughter] – as the judge once said, I really have a criminal mind. [laughter] At the table, we used to discuss things. I'd call his hand on a few things. So, he says, "You have a criminal mind."

MK: If I had never seen this country before that is being taken for this project, how would you describe it to me? How would you describe the way this community was?

MA: Just typical, wild, wonderful, West Virginia. I mean, it's just like when you come off the interstate, and you would go down through this valley. People will stop and say, "Well, I just couldn't believe that this was here." It was this much level land and all the nice buildings and cattle and everything. Then you go on down. There's cattle farms, and there's cattle farm, you know? It is just unbelievable. Same way over in the Roanoke area and then over on Little Skin Creek, it was real nice too.

MK: Good people?

MA: Yes, been there a long time. Then on up here, we have people that have been here for generations. When this whole thing was proposed just a year or two back, the little Village wasn't going to be bothered, you know? Then somebody got the bright idea. I never did ask because I thought, "Well, if they're going to do this kind of thing, why ask?" But then they go up into this little village. They take every house out and the little church, which is really very nice for our – way above what you think the community could support. Well, they did take it all the way through up in there. All those people now are in the process of tearing down their homes and moving some – and they don't know for what, you know? If the water got up there, I mean – now, the one boy, before he built this new home, he went to them and asked them if he was safe to build the home. They said, "Yes. Go ahead." Now, then he sold his home, and it's been moved away. It was a nice, little, modern home. He's gone to his mother-in-law's, the head of the creek, as we say, [laughter] in the woods. See, he's the husband. He gets to stay there. But everybody has been misinformed. I call that a form of abuse. If the person who is giving out the information doesn't have the qualifications for giving out that information, then he should just refer them to someone else, you know? But instead of that, they believed that information that they got from the local core office. Then he went ahead and did this.

MK: Well, that is evidently the kind of situation that faced you when you moved over here.

MA: Same thing. Same thing.

MK: I think it is going to be on the West Fork.

MA: Oh, yes. I think that you could check on that. That is very true. Very true.

MK: How many years ago was that?

MA: Forty. Forty years.

MK: That is when you moved?

MA: Yes. We owned what was called the Rhodes Farm. There were a lot of those people. It boiled down to one maiden lady who lived there. The core kept that home as a – well, we had that house restored. It was absolutely beautiful. The stairway was so nice that the man who did the work, he actually took glass and did those little spindles over there and the curve in it and everything. It was so nice. The floors and everything, they were going to keep that. They bought it from a Mrs. Gooding. I think she's still in Weston. They were going to keep that. But now, would you believe, as a historical site, that they didn't protect it? They say that people have just gone in there and simply destroyed it. Now, would you believe that they would –

MK: Now that I have become familiar with what has happened to everybody else around here.

MA: They can't wait for you to get out until their scavengers are there. Because Mrs. Butcher told me that they didn't get all of their things out of the basement. A lot of the things really didn't have monetary value, but a sentimental value of the – various members of the family would say that (March ?) I don't have – now, Mrs. Butcher is Jack Linger's sister, and they lived down here. They'd say, "I don't have room to store this. Could I put it in your basement?" You know how it is, maybe a coffee grinder or old Christmas tree trimmings that people would love to have now, the antique thing, you know? She said to her husband – they were old. They thought, "Well, we can come back tomorrow and get –" and she insisted they should carry on. But she finally gave in to her husband. The next day, they came, and it was gone.

MK: There is one thing that – picture of your life. You started out by saying that if you had it to do over again forty years ago, you would not have fought. I mean, you would have just gone with it.

MA: Yes.

MK: But you moved from the West Fork River over here to avoid being run out.

MA: Right.

MK: Then they came over here and got you. Where do you think you would be safe going that – or would you just continue to spend your life if you had it to do over, possibly moving from one place to another whenever they decided it was time for you to move?

MA: Well, we've contracted to buy a place, and I said to the lady, [laughter] "Do you think there'd be any chance of us having to – what have you been pressed for here?" She said that's why they moved there. But she lost her husband, and she couldn't see any need for her trying to maintain a farm by herself. If she could sell it to a person that she really liked, she thought she would like them and keep it up. She'd be proud to drive by or to stop and chat. She'd sell it and build a home – just a little home for herself. Her son's in California. So, I said, "Have you been pressed for pipelines?" She said as far as she knew, there was no coal under the place because everything else had been stripped around, and they said there wouldn't be and all that sort of thing. So, that's the kind of a place we've bargained by. So, [laughter] who knows?

MK: What if they come now wanting to build a four lane across it, what would you do?

MA: No, they're not in this area. They're not going to. No. I'm sure. Other than mineral exploration in that area, I would say you would be perfectly safe. I would say, and –

MK: But that is what you thought when you came here too.

MA: Yes. I really – Now, there again, you have faith in your government. They said they were going to build it on the West Fork River. Okay. Find a place. Then – you know, which you just wonder, it has to be politics back of all of it, has to be. I don't understand politics. I wouldn't be fit for politics because I like to tell it the way it is. I don't think a politician can tell it the way it is because he wouldn't get any support, would he? I mean, I think everybody has to finagle in politics. You pat me on the back on this deal, and I'll support you on the other. Not that maybe both of those deals wouldn't happen to be the right thing, you know? I'm not saying everything's crooked, but surely they do put a lot of things through that shouldn't be.

MK: Why do you think Randolph pushed so hard?

MA: Well, I think [inaudible]. I had a very influential person in Elkins one time tell me – we were at a flower shop buying baskets. He happened to hear me say something about being in this area. It is still another – well, I talk to everybody when I go shopping [laughter]. Then he asked me about this. I said, "Well, if it hadn't been for your man, why maybe –" you know? He said, "God bless, cousin –" no, uncle, I believe. He called him so-and-so and says, "You're right." He said, "But he still keeps on. He's never going to hang up, is he?" Every day, I get a quote in the paper that he's still doing these things even though he's retired. I like to think of the people ought to – if you haven't left behind young people that are capable of taking over, there's where you should have done the good right there, you know, helping the man who's going to take over for you, not you hanging on and trying to still do something. You ought to just fade away. Who was it that said they should just simply fade out of the picture and enjoy life? I was never as overjoyed in my life as when we had opposition to Baird. I was hoping he'd get it. But they say he's too powerful. But I'll be glad if he's happy that all he's done in there is provide sanitation and pat old people on the back. Now, I'm 75. I certainly wouldn't expect you, as young men – if I hadn't done anything to try to look out for myself in my old days, how could I feel good living in housing that you're going to have to sacrifice from your family for high taxes to take care of me when I didn't do anything to help myself? That, to me, is terrible. These old people running around, holding each other up to get cheese and stuff, I just – do you know I could show you the

stub from my milk check that they take out 50 cents, 100, every pound of milk we ship for the cheese program? Now, it's not my fault that the government program is over abundant in what they're doing. But they tax the dairy farmer, and they're talking about adding an additional 50 cents. If we don't have strong enough people in there, they will \$1, 100. Just think what that means to the poor dairy. Then you've seen where they're selling them out. Well, look what that \$1, 100 could be. Okay, if you are selling a ton of milk a day, that's 2000 pounds. Look what that \$1, 100 is there. Look what I could do. I could buy some Christmas, couldn't I? Every other country is in trouble, no food or anything, and they just down the farmer continuously. When you hear them talking about all this money they're giving the farmer, why don't they narrow that farm payment down to a monetary level? The rich man who keeps the farm to get out of taxation, he doesn't get in on this surplus deal that the government sponsors. But the little man who's trying to pay his taxes, educate his children, and keep his head above water, if you want to help him, okay. But they just talk like everybody is getting rich, and it's the rich farmer and the man who really doesn't farm. I used to think that the rich farmers shouldn't be in farming. But there's one thing there I will have to give him credit for. He does sponsor the best breeding programs so that we that don't have the money can get the benefit of that for breeding animals, I mean, that sort of thing. But there are a lot of things. I don't know why we don't have more people really interested in people who try to help themselves other than being so interested in people who expect those people to take care of them. Now, that young man who's walking back and forth in here now, there were seven in that family. They have been kept all of their life. They still get three checks. They get one for keeping a member of the family who is a product of the family. You understand what I mean?

MK: [affirmative]

MA: She just is not so tall. They get a check for that because the government claims it's cheaper to pay them to keep her than just to put her in an institution. I don't question that. Then they get Social Security, which they never worked for. There's where Social Security abused, you know? If he'd have known that he had to work to qualify for Social Security, he'd have worked, wouldn't he? But he didn't have to. Then he gets another black lung. I think the only place that he ever was near a mine was if he went and picked up a little coal at the mouth of the mine. I would say that was his extent of black lung. But there again, see, we have the physician who signs the paper to qualify him. Now, how are you going to combat all this stuff? Getting back to us, they just – our life is an open book because you have all your records and what you did and when you came here, how you've done, and your Social Security you've paid on your men and all that sort of thing. So, the whole thing is they really should revamp the whole thing from one end to the other. There's going to be about half the population that isn't going to like it [laughter]. But how much longer can we go on this way?

MK: I do not know. But I do not think we spend a fraction on welfare programs that keep people, as you say, that we do on subsidies to the rich. In the form of oil subsidies, in the form of tobacco subsidies, and these other subsidies to wealthy farmers and wealthy –

MA: Well, there's where I say there should be the –

MK: See, I do not think welfare amounts to very much when it is stacked up alongside of those

benefits.

MA: Well, now, this man, his brother that works for us, he got around \$700 in food stamps. They had seven children. Oh, \$700 food stamp. We paid him \$300 a month. I paid his Social Security. We gave him a gallon of milk a day. I paid his electric because he didn't pay. It was going to be shut off. So, I said, "Well, I'll pay it," and furnished his coal for his house. Now, we have thousands and thousands of young people who are striving to hold their head up and walk alongside you and me and doing it the right way. He didn't even want to work. So, what does he do? He quits. He moves over to another area, in a house that has no gas, no electric turned on in it. So, he goes down, and he gripes. They turn the electric on. They're going to pay for that. You may think that's right, but I don't. I'd like to see them sitting over there in the dark. Let them go to bed before dark. All they do is sit and watch the television or listen to the radio. Let me tell you, if there's a giveaway, she went for it. If they were giving clothes away in Upshur County, they said anyone could get it, she'd go. There are people who just absolutely have trained themselves to think that they're going to be taken care of. It doesn't make any difference. There should be some sort of a work program. You should have to give some of your time and your – so –

MK: So, I would like to come back and –

MA: – for a very wealthy timber organization. That's where I was born. I've been above Whitmer. The little saw town is called Horton. Then he moved from there to Davis, you know, where they call Babcock's grade, where all the – it's still where all the virgin timber was sought out before you go into Davis from Hendricks and in that way. Well, okay. Well, he saw that out for Babcock Lumber Company. Then he went to Cherry River Boom and Lumber in Richwood. Then he went on farther south. We were in North Carolina and every place. But up at Pickens, he sawed that out too.

MK: He was in all the big timber.

MA: He made the money for the people, you see. The Curtins were always after him. He could have been a Pardee Curtin for them. Like, when war was going on, see, then he'd bring in that timber. He had the intellect to see that for the – you know when they built all those big vessels with wood during World War 1, the Kaiser Corporation and all?

MK: [affirmative]

MA: Yes, that outfit. He had the intellect for that. That's my background, wild and wonderful. Getting back to the cows, now, I – and God, I pray every night that I can sell them as a unit to someone that will not abuse them. I know they can do a good job for them. So, what happens? I contacted a man, and he thinks he is going to be able to relocate the herd in two units with the Plain people.

MK: The Plain people?

MA: In Lancaster County, you know?

MK: Oh, yes, people who love animals.

MA: Right. People who are dedicated like me. Right.

MK: So, you will not have a herd at all?

MA: We can't have a dairy herd, no. They're interested, I think, in all of them, the milking youth and the young ones I've kept, which are super-duper – do a good job for them.

MK: Would you be able to –

MA: My son's a veterinarian. We know everything is up as far as health goes. So, we're going to only be able to keep a few Angus. We have an Angus herd and sheep. We can't keep them.

MK: How many acres do you have here?

MA: 426. Then we own another farm.

HR: So, what are you moving on to?

MA: We're moving on to 100 acres. [laughter] I think the man – it's in such good shape, I think he kept thirty head. So, we'll pick out thirty heads and start out with that. Then if it doesn't maintain that much, we can always cut down. But we do have another farm up here. But we wouldn't live in this area. I wouldn't want to live there.

MK: Why is that?

MA: After what I have seen going down the road associated with recreation during the deer season, I don't think I'd be happy with that class of people. Now, I don't know any of them individually, but it was this zip banging white – we didn't allow deer hunting on our place. Up the creek, they didn't either. We didn't allow it because I don't call deer hunting – driving along the road, shooting deer on the farmland, I don't call that hunting. Two old gentlemen came up and asked me if they could shoot a deer down in the field. I said, "Do you want to go hunting?" They said they did. I said, "Okay. I'll write you a permit." You know what I said to him? "You get the hell out and get your gun. You go hunting, and I'll give you a permit to go." Well, he wasn't able to do that. I said, "Well, that's not hunting what you're doing. Forget it." I don't think that's what they intended hunting to be, just driving along the road with high-powered equipment. So, didn't get any in mine. [laughter] I don't know. I just don't identify with that type of hunting. I think if you want to hunt birds, use your dogs, and get out where the hunting is. But they abuse everything, those kinds of hunters. If they see something, they just shoot it. Then they asked me what I'm going to do with all these – have you noticed the Canadian geese?

MK: [affirmative]

MA: They asked me where I got them. "Where did you get them, Mary?" I said, "Well, the

government gave me them. They must have put some on the lake over here, Stonecoal Lake." Well, okay. About seven head came over here. I thought, "Oh, beautiful." I do think they're absolutely beautiful. I was sad they didn't get on the stamp instead of the other one because I [laughter] got to like them. But I fed those seven up there. Would you believe I got so tamed that I could go up and just feed them like they do the chicken? Then they stayed. They nested. Then they raised little ones. So, they went back over to the lake. They told them, "Man, you ought to come over there. She puts out corn." Then we take the manure out from the dairy barn, put it on the land every day, and of course there's plenty of feed there. One day, I counted 152. [laughter]

MK: Have you protected those from the hunters?

MA: Well, they just don't hunt on that old red-haired bag's place. [laughter] I still own it.

MK: What was it like when they took the land for the Stonecoal? Was it a similar thing to here? Did they drive people out or what [inaudible]?

MA: Yes. Yes, they did. But now, they were dealing with – some of those people were different types of people. Dr. Linger, the eye specialist in Clarksburg, his original home was up in that area. Now, how they dealt with a man like that, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if he was sentimental about it. But his mother was still living. Because my son, who's a vet, went up there. They had cattle, and he went up there and did all their work for them. Because he always said that Mrs. Linger came out and rang the dinner bell, which just thrilled him to death. She would prepare food for the doctor who didn't get out too much in the country when they did the animals. They would sit down and eat and talk about the history of the place. Now, it's gone. Now, how he felt about it, I don't know. They didn't solicit any help in doing it. The Taylors over here, I do know they didn't get enough out of it. I think that that hastened Mr. Taylor's death. Because his land was so clean and he was so dedicated to it that if a thistle came up, he nipped out that day by hand. He did that. When a man's dedicated like that, you just don't go in and buy him out. What he got for it, it wasn't right. So, I don't know whether he fought or not. He was a very close-mouthed person, and she chatty as all get out. [laughter] What she said didn't – he did the wheeling and dealing, but they kept the hillsides. You'll see black cattle over there when you drive through there, and you'll see black cattle way over here. Then they built a home down as you go down over the steep hill, that little brick home. Well, she's in very bad shape now. They added on, so they could have a small family live in part of the home and sort of check on her. One son keeps a few black ones there. The other son keeps over there on the hill. He's a retired county agent from up in the Panhandle, came back here. I think together, I think my son, when he bled them, they have in the neighborhood of 100 heads of cattle. But they just simply had to move up and give up all their level land for that thing.

MK: Well, I understand people in this area were not even allowed to do that, people who were asked said, "We would like to move up onto the hills."

MA: No. I don't know what they're doing –

MK: [Inaudible] for recreation.

MA: – why they're doing this to me, unless they're going to come back and take it for nothing, right?

MK: Well, you are real up ahead here. I mean, it could not be much water.

MA: What do they care about? I still think there's a motive for leaving me with this. I don't know whether it's spite. "Well, girl, let's leave you with that," you know? But I got news for them. I've had a lot of offers already for it. Yes. It's beautiful up there. You wouldn't believe it. They say it's – well, in their estimate, it was nothing. But if it was a pretty day, I'd just like for you to see what's up there.

MK: We might see it.

MA: Yes. You are back sometimes it's pretty – yes, I want you to see the sites that are up there. As a matter of fact, one out of state party has already been here, wants it for development. I said, "Well, I hadn't pay –" [laughter] I can imagine how much tax I'm going to pay, you see. Now, see, and they could have helped me out. They could have given us this payment in [19]84. Then I could have dispersed my cattle in [19]85. Then now, everything's going to go, and we're going to give the government back a pile, aren't we? I resent that. I hope it goes up and doesn't come down. [laughter] Yes. I don't care. You just get so you're just bitter to the – as I say, if I'd been tee totally worthless, I wouldn't have – I thought, "Well, you didn't work that hard for it. But, brother, I worked." It's like my husband says, he never has been able to go to the outlying parts of the farm because he couldn't walk that well. But when the hired man – and I've been with me now for about eighteen years and lives in the little house down here. I'll say, "Well, what happened here?" "Well, you know that big ash tree that stands back there? Well, now, that's where I found the cow." My husband always says, "Now, where is that? Point it out to me?" Right? Because he doesn't know. But we identify with everything that's sauna, you know? Yes, we do. Mr. Jones who lived here, he owned it. He was –

MK: Every bush and tree.

MA: He knew everything about it. He said he used to sit on the little – we have high four posters with the little thing in the middle upstairs. He used to come out in the evenings and sit there and said all he surveyed was his, he said. That's the satisfaction. It wasn't a land grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia. We're the second owners. Now, there are two or three little tracts back in there that he bought up during the Depression that people wanted to move away and go to Ohio. They came and asked him if he would buy it from them. I know the course that this is the only place that they have taken that they didn't have a little trouble in recording. In the recordings, well, I've got a thing that big before we bought it. We had the abstract all done because I'd heard of that sort of thing. You go and work forty years and then someone comes along. Now, like over here on these properties, one old fellow never recorded his share of two or three of these properties over here. I forget how many years ago. Now, they had to go to court and would you believe, that cost one of them \$1,000 and the other one \$2,000 to get it straightened out, so they could give it to the Core? Now, why wouldn't they just go ahead and do that? But it falls back to the landowner because he didn't have a clear title. Those

people, there are no heirs. All they have to do to settle it, now, it's so far back, is publish it, I think, what is it, three times in the paper. If nothing is done, why, it'll cost you \$1,000 or \$2,000. How about that? Don't you just love all this? [laughter] Aren't you really getting an education?

HR: Yes. Yes. We are impressed. We just learned today, now Mrs. Heavner has finally found a place.

MA: Oh, has she?

HR: She is going to try and get her stuff together. She owes a \$6,000 storage bill for the stuff that they moved out of her house.

MK: That the court moved out of her house, they are making her pay \$6,000.

MA: Well, someone asked me if I had a place. I said, "No, I don't." But for heaven's sake, let's get our heads together and tell them to ram that van up you know what and save her. I would rather have my stuff stored in a barn someplace, wouldn't you? We could have put –

HR: Well, a lot of it was apparently – is on other people's farms scattered here and there. But –

MK: What they did take –

HR: – the court did what they wanted to do.

MK: What the moving company did take, they were billing her \$6,000 for storing it. Of course, it is –

MA: Well, she didn't sign for that or anything. Can they take that from her?

HR: Well, we hope to find out. We have just learned this from someone.

MA: Oh.

HR: We could ask –

MA: Yes. You have to –

HR: – Ms. Heavner herself what happened.

MK: I'm afraid –

MA: – and everything. They wanted someone to – one person didn't want to go in over there. They wanted several people to go so that the Core couldn't say, "You did this and that or something else." Then they got her brother to go with them. How my man said that they just hadn't sewed things in the corner or something. You know, farms sales just bring a fortune, like quilting frames, you know? Well, these young people are taking up quilting now. As a matter of

fact, the lawyer's wife, I gave him a quilt one day down there. I said, "I have so much stuff here. How about giving you a quilt for your wife?" Oh, he said he didn't want to take anything. I said

—

MK: Why do you think they singled out Barbara and Bobby though for — if they were going to make a demonstration of force, why would they — I mean, she is not even living in the place where the lake is going to be.

MA: I said to someone, "Why didn't we all go and ask her if we could pull it off?" Just let her stay there. If she wanted to stay there, what harm could that have done? I thought we could go on to some higher ups and just let her stay there. Then they're going to come back with a thing and say, "Well, we're not going to maintain roads." "All right. Barbara, they're not going to maintain the road." It isn't very far down in there, you know, out too over there. If she said, okay, okay. She'd stay. Why not let her have that? That's what I would've done if I'd done. I thought that we should have all done that for her. But then they said, "Well, we're not making any exceptions."

HR: Living in the cemetery right across, same height. No living people, just the dead ones.

MA: That's okay because they don't tell, do they? Well, they've all been very peculiar people. Her husband used to work for us. They're Seventh Day Adventists, you know, never were much of a part of the community. Everybody respected them to the nth degree. They never were much of a part of the community. They were loners, let's say, like the Amish. They looked after their own and asked for nothing. I used to get terribly mad at them. We had a dairy over there. When the water would be up, we would have to carry our milk across the swinging bridge. They would go by us on Saturday to church, and they wouldn't have carried a quarter of that milk over there. I used to wish, in my juvenile way forty years ago, that that bridge would break, and they'd get soaked. They didn't think like I did. I couldn't tell them anything, and sure as hell, they didn't tell me anything. But now, they're that way. They're just loners. I would say that that's why they didn't get the support. They didn't have that — well, if you've never done anything for anybody — now, take like me, if they want something, if they want \$10 or something, I wouldn't give it to them. Or can I borrow this? Or we go and plant the man's corn or something. Well, they never did anything like that. Who knows what's at the back of all of it? I don't know why they didn't get the support. She was active. But when she was active, she was too — it is not the proper classification. It was far out. It wasn't applicable to maybe the situation right there. So, I don't know.

MK: Well, we've taken a lot of —

MA: So, I thought as well, very well.

MK: Would you start that over again? There was a surveyor for the Core —

MA: Well, there was a mob of them. They were surveying. They drive stakes. Well, as soon as they drove them, I took them up. Because you can't leave those things in your meadows and then buy a high price mower, one of those new kinds, and run out there and tear it up. Then

you've got a big repair bill. So, I just took them out, threw them over in the ditch. If they wanted them, okay. But then they parked their van with all the tools and things right in front of the gate. I said, "Would you please move that? I can't get my cows out." So, they smiled, and they went on. So, I thought, "Well, you just fight fire with fire, you know?" So, I got my spray paint, and I painted. [laughter] I did. Bill says to me – my husband says to me, "Did you notice all that stuff on that truck out there?" I said, "What stuff?" I look, and I say, "I painted the headlights, the side mirrors in beautiful designs. So, [laughter] they knew what had happened, but they didn't do anything. So, in a week or two, they came back. They were doing some more. When I came home from some place down in front of the house, there it sat in front of my house right where I parked. That poor man, he ran and cleared down the [inaudible]. I grabbed my paint, and Bill said, "No, no, Mary, don't do that." So, I fixed him again. He won't park there. He'd pay the price for it.

MK: Why do you suppose they act that way?

MA: Oh, I don't know why they act that way. They asked the man, so – you know. I didn't know anything about it. So, no, they didn't ask me. No, they didn't ask me. Bill said, "Do away with that." I said, "Why? Everybody keeps spray paint around. Why would I want to do away with my paint?" [laughter] Probably everybody in the community had a can the same color, right?

MK: [laughter]

MA: So, that's the way to do it. Don't deal with me, man. I'll fix you. [laughter]

[end of transcript]