

Forest Blume: – PMP. Korean people – 5'5" is a big Korean man. They were definitely scared of them Turkish people. So, we took them up there and turned them over to that. But anyway, after we got all this done, I still had about four months to go. Our company broke up. Being a big company, broke up. They put us over in a trucking outfit, the whole ammunition and stuff, to finish our tour over there. They kept guards on the depots at night. We had big fields way back out where we stacked bombs and mortar shells and stuff like that. So, them colored guys were scared plum to death of them. We were out there one morning, caught one of them sitting out there on a post with a rope wrapped around his neck. One of them sneaked up behind him and just put it around his neck and tied it. That probably was one of the rougher things I'd seen over there. But I was unfortunate enough to have to go get him help – get him out of there. But –

Michael Kline: But this flood was just something that –

FB: It was just –

MK: – more than your mind could grapple with at first.

FB: Right. What was going on – it never even crossed my mind what was going on. The only thing that crossed my mind, what had to be done, more than anything else. Like I said, I take medical training. I went over to be a frontline aidman. We've been trained to expect the worst and have to deal with the worst. We'd be shown all kinds of films of young men with their legs blown off and their hips blown off and how to cope with and everything. I thought, from that, everything would – was pretty well seasoned in to expect stuff like this. But like I said, I got up here and tried to sleep. It never even went through my mind what really had happened. I guess some of them really went through a living hell that night, some of the emergency people there. But they burned up new ambulances. A little bit of everything went on that night. Then came the politicians. One man made a statement. I had to laugh even though it was hard. He said they'd put a pump on them damn politicians' elbows, we could pump this dry in a day's time, [laughter] when they were running around shaking hands. It just hit me, and I had the heat all on that one. But Lord, these boys here, they spent half their time meeting them people out there and hauling them around sites. Sand tours are really all it was amounting to. I don't know. After you were tired and everything, it sort of about halfway got on your nerves really. Every time you looked up, here came a helicopter in and out. It ran through my mind several times, with the money that was wasted, they could sure help put these people back on their feet, wasted with sightseers. Then we had the problem with sightseers. Oh, Lord, trying to redo the roads and stuff. You try to be nice to people. A lot of them would pull up. You'd say, "Where are you going sir?" "I'm just sightseeing. I'll turn around and go back if you want me to." You just point for him to go back. If they were nice enough to tell you that, send them on their way. But of course, people wouldn't get back into their homes and everything. They didn't understand why they couldn't go right on. The construction work on the roads and stuff stopped. It got to be right down nerve wrecking there before it was over with. Of course, everybody was tired and all this. The night of the flood really was a rough night, but the next week was just about as rough though. It really was. Like I told you, to start with, I have a little back problem. How the hell I survived it and came out, my back's in better shape than it has been for years. But standing up there and blocking traffic and stuff like that, it's rough. Then we had to check out all reports on – was trying to find them two people washed away up there. We walked these riverbanks up on

these big – got over the nursery, brought them on a big pile of debris and coming down to where more or less smelling. That was about all you could do there. Where there were more roots and stuff and washed out trees, there were some pretty weird smells anyway. But we were right up on top of it, just up about two stories high. I got to probing too, where I smelled something. I got probing too, there, and a den of snakes, had the worst den there. Now, I said, "Lady, you just going to have to stay a little while because I'm not staying here." I got the hell out of there now real quick. Now I swear I believe it was little rattlesnakes. This old boy told me, "I killed one." "Don't kill them. Don't kill them." They come running over. They got probing around. They had seen the big one and seen several more. I got out of there because, well, I guess probably several dens and stuff like that. So, this summer it's hard to tell what we're going through with snakes and stuff. It's – because everything is in a different situation than what it was before. But then –

MK: It really changed the lay of the country, did it not?

FB: Oh, altogether. Altogether. I didn't – I'd never been to Roseburg until – since the flood – until Sunday. Have you been down there since the flood? I swear halfway down through or half the road is gone. All that white water that was down there. There lays and rocks out there, dry as a bone, and the river's over against the bank running smooth. It's amazing. Down 7 Island Road, I went down there. There are places down there that water is 50 to 60-foot deep going through that canyon. It kept way up in the trees there, litter and debris piled way up in the trees there. The further down it went, I believe the more force it had. Well, through these narrower places, it had to go somewhere, I guess. It just piled up. But it's just amazing we didn't lose a couple hundred people. Now that's all I can say.

MK: If it had come a few hours later at night.

FB: Yes. I don't believe they could possibly get them out there at night. Of course, there's a few of them who wouldn't leave. There were a few of them, just plain refused to leave. They were lucky they survived. The house didn't wash away. There was a fellow stayed in the trailer who ended up in the pulp mill bottom. That trailer washed all over the place over – but he and his family made it. It was one of the few trailers that didn't really tear up bad over there. It tore it up bad, but it was still – they were still able to maintain control and stay, all right.

MK: So, several people mentioned around 9:00 am – well, Craig Wilfong was one of the people, and Amy Moore said that a wall of water had come down.

FB: Right.

MK: That's the one thing that I have not been able to get a satisfactory explanation about.

FB: Well, only thing we can figure on that, this railroad bridge up the Blackport bridge going out town, all them trees and stuff had washed down there and piled in Kingston. Then after that, the house has got the worst way in piling up against them. It just put a complete barrier across there. It built a dam. It built its own dam. At this time, according to – what the best I can gather on it from talking to people. The Shavers Fork broke over, going out of town above the pond,

above the sawmill. It broke over. Within five minutes, one end of this debris broke loose on that bridge. It broke over the bank. Once it started moving, this stuff got moving out. It broke over, it turned three rivers loose on us at one time. Is what happened. Within five minutes there, both rivers broke over.

MK: The Shavers Fork broke over the –

FB: The dam up above the pond going out of town there. It broke over. Five minutes later, it broke over the bank up there at the Black Fork Bridge. When it broke over and relieved some of the pressure when it broke over. When it broke over, it took some of the top and gone with it. But when it relieved some of the pressure there, that's when some of that debris fell down and opened the channel back up. So, that put a big shut down the river plus a big shut down across the slew in the country there. It took this boy's trailer over on Billings Avenue and went into that slew bridge, and it blocked it completely off for a while. Of course, that turned everything – there was no place for water to go but hit the high country and the land. I was beginning to wonder how high we were going have to go to stay out of it when it was coming up a foot. There for a while, it raised probably 5 feet there in ten minutes, just like that. You just couldn't believe – there was a fella coming through there while the light was still working. I was trying to flag him down, get him to stop, because I know what he's going to run into out there. He ran right up to the stoplight before the water got him and stopped him. It stopped him. He had the motor wide open, the wheels just rolling in that water. It just stopped him and started floating. I ran out there and jerked his door open. He was going to sit in there. I told him, "Get out of there." "Well, what about my car?" I said, "Get out of there. Your car's going here in a minute." Almost had the bottle there – man, take him out of that vehicle. Well, found out he was half drunk, and he was late for work. He's going late to work, and he's been drinking. About five minutes later, there went his car. That was the one – if you've seen the picture – the one car sitting up on top of the other one. That was it. It just went floating right past us, around, down front of the far hall and slammed right up on top of them. A lot of things happened to people they brought on themselves after this happened, being foolish such as that. Then with the vehicles, of course the farmer's vehicles, we couldn't move because they were down at the hospital. They had turned over and they – of course, they had their keys in their pocket. But looking back on it, hell, we could have warned them people in Preston County and given them six hours to take care of ourselves.

MK: They could have warned you too.

FB: Well, somebody said they did call from Harmon, but nobody talked to them. Somebody said they did get a call from Harmon, that it was coming, and it was coming deep. But I believe if it ever happened again, which I hope to God never happens in my lifetime, but I believe we would be a little better prepared to warn people and try to do the right thing. I guess it couldn't have worked out any better because these earthly things don't mean a whole hell of a lot when it comes to a matter of life and death. But like I say, we're just lucky people. We didn't lose a pile of people. I understand the one man drowned down here, he wouldn't -- he refused to leave. What can you do? They've done their best on it. The other two got drowned. The water come up on them so fast and got in behind them. I talked to their brother, and he stood there and was in contact with them probably for over an hour before the truck finally washed out from under

them and couldn't get to them or nothing. Wasn't no way. Well, it was long enough ,they done got divers in from Elkins. The divers were there ready to go after them when the truck washed out from under them. It's a miracle. There just wasn't a whole lot more of us there on that.

MK: Thank you.

[end of transcript]