

Michael Nobel Kline: Okay. Today's the 28th of... .in the town offices here. Could you say, "My name is?"

Tim Potter: My name is Tim Potter. I'm with the town of Grundy in Grundy, Virginia. I'm the--

MNK: Say it again. (005)

TP: My name is Tim Potter with the town of Grundy in Grundy, Virginia. And I'm personnel director here. Basically we have a very great opportunity that's been given to us dealing with the flood project with the Corps of Engineers. We have the opportunity to take care of, or possibly get rid of these older buildings that's been here for fifty, sixty years. They're falling down. They're in a tremendous, a very bad state. Most people that try to found a business or open a business here in the town have no place to really go to open up a business. Our housing is really--We don't have the housing here to even have any people move in here. We do have the law school now that has opened up.

(018)

And we're having to work--The first year it's only, we'll only have like sixty- eight people that are attending school at the time. And we have had a hard time during this time to get housing for them. And the--We have an opportunity to have a brand new town. Relocate in a protected area. The best thing that I really see is to protect the town from the flood and actually open up the doors with the Virginia Department of Transportation of bringing a four lane through here. It's more than they need right now because traffic is so bad with what economy we do have here. It seems like everybody has a car anymore. And the traffic has really gotten bad. One of the reasons I feel the protection of the town is because of the river. The river here is very unpredictable. At any given time it could raise. It could drop. The way that all the creeks and the secondary, I'd say, runoff water and everything from this area, it's really unpredictable how fast and how it can come up or how slow it is to go back down once it does get up.

MNK: Does the river remind you of someone you know?Does it have an identifiable sort of character? Is it--

(043)

TP: Well, not really. It does have its--I mean it has its own character. It does its own thing. We have no control over it. If it decides to rain six, seven inches, we're in trouble. Get ready. Katie bar the doors and head for higher grounds because the water's coming. I was really young in '77 when the '77 flood--I was only about ten or eleven years old. I have very vivid memories of the flood. That morning I was just getting up like a normal day. It'd been raining for a couple days before that, but I was just getting ready, normal day, go to school. And we--My mom, she worked at the school then as an aide. And as I got up, and I got--After I got out of the shower mom said, "We don't have any school today." I said, "What? You're kidding me. There ain't no way." And she goes, "Yeah, we don't have any school. They said the water is raising up really fast." And I went out, and I looked. And at that point I could look across the neighbor's house across--

MNK:... where?

(056)

TP: Mouth of Looney's Creek. And I could look across the road at the neighbor's house. They had a garden that's really close to the river. And at that point the river had already, was up level with their garden. It's a lot lower than what the normal road was. But as that happened and it started getting up into their garden, we realized it was getting ready to come up on us. Didn't realize how bad it was going to get at that time. We went across the road and were helping, well, what I could help. And all my parents and our neighbors on our side of the road, which was higher ground, they went over, and they were trying to help my aunt and my uncles and everybody, and trying to get stuff moved up out of their basements. They figured, well, it's going to flood. It, you know, will probably get in their basement. Because in the '57 flood they said that it did get in the basements there at the homes on that side. So there really wasn't--We were thinking maybe along that lines.

(071)

So we started getting things out of the basements of people's houses and stuff. But the water kept on coming. By noon--I would say around about noon that day it was actually coming up into the higher up homes that were up closer to the road level at that time And we realized that we could be in trouble. So we started getting things out of my aunt's house and bringing it over to our house. And just trying to get it up on higher, everything on higher ground. They were trying to move stuff out of, or out of their bottom floor of their home and trying to get it up into the upstairs. And just trying to get everything out of the water way. Just about that time--Looney's Creek itself was really high at that time. And it seemed like the river wasn't going to go down, and the creek was already cresting out on its level with the road. And the next thing you know, here comes a lot of debris down the road, and it blocked off that culvert. And it just like instantaneously--

(087)

Within fifteen, twenty minutes we went from no water, to six inches of water, to two foot of water coming over the road. Because it had gotten blocked off. The river itself had backed up through that culvert, and it was just coming--It had come up really fast because the creek had no place to go. I remember seeing people, you know, they pretty much had the stuff that they could get out of the houses and get up into upper parts of their homes. And they all come over to our house or our next-door neighbor's house, which was the Gillespies.

MNK: You were up...

(097)

TP: Yeah, we were up--We were--The bottom floor of our home was road level, but then we had our second level of our home, which was higher up on the-- And we had room for people to pull their cars. And when it got to that point, I mean it just basically--We had--We just sat there, and we watched. And I remember vividly of people were making comments that this can't be happening. This can't be happening. This is like a dream. We're like in a dream, a

really bad dream. We just couldn't believe that it was doing what it was doing. There was a mobile home park right there at the mouth of Looney's Creek as the water was coming up. And it was picking these trailers up causing them to float like a houseboat. And as they were going--There was two buildings that my cousins owned, both of them were apartments. And the bottom part was apartments, the one on the right side. And the other building was a garage at the bottom with apartments on top.

(112)

And their father, which lived in a double-wide trailer which was between those two buildings, I watched that double wide literally lift up off of where it was placed on its foundation go over the main channel of the river. And once it hit the main channel, it just disappeared. It was gone. I mean instantaneously. A building of that size just lifted up, floated over, and gone. Just as quick as the eye could blink. As the river kept on coming up, like I was saying, it caused those mobile homes--I guess they weren't really permanently mounted. They were just more or less there for display or for sale. They started lifting up like big riverboats going, floating out right in front of our house, going down the river and going between those two buildings. Because that's where the creek was finding its, Looney's Creek was finding its easiest flow, was between those two buildings.

(126)

And some of them went straight out, some of them went out sideways. And I remember there was a family, two good friends of mine, and their mother and father were still in those apartments. And they couldn't get out because the water had come up. I guess they figured it would be okay where they were at, but we really didn't know. We knew that if any one of those big trailers decided to go through that garage, that building's coming down and they're coming down with it. So my uncle had a boat that lived up in Looney's Creek, way up in Looney's Creek, farther up enough in there where it wasn't being affected by the flood. And they brought it down to the, where the water was backed up in Looney's Creek. And went over there, and picked them up by boat, and brought them back. The--One of the scariest things, I can remember them standing up in the top window there. The whole family was like huddled together. And they were looking at us, and we're looking at them. And those big trailers were going through there. When they go through sideways they were scraping both sides of both buildings.

(144)

I mean you could see sparks from the metal meeting the concrete buildings. And they were scraping through there. And we thought for sure that that building was going to come down. If one of them hit it wrong, it would come down. We really knew that. So that's why they went over there and got them out.

(148)

MNK: What did that feel like to you? You were how old?

TP: I was eleven.

MNK: And what did that feel like to you, watching that?

(149)

TP: I really didn't know what to think. I mean everything was--I felt like I was like in a daze at that point, more or less maybe shock or--You know, I've never seen anything like this. And--

MNK: So it really does mess with your mind.

(153)

TP: Yes, it does, most definitely. I mean it really puts a lot of stress on you. Even at my age. Usually a kid that age doesn't, you know--Hey, we're, you know, just go lucky, and I'm just a kid. But now that I think back on it, I remember seeing my mom and dad and seeing them upset. That really bothered me, to see them and my aunts. And I mean they're just praying that their house would still be there once the flood come down. Still have some pretty vivid memories of the '77 flood. It was pretty bad. I remember when we thought we would try to keep our basement dry.

(163)

We took cloth and everything else and tried to jam it into the door, the doorway, to keep it from leaking. And it--We were doing pretty good. We only had like, maybe about maybe four or five inches of water in the basement. We just brand new, remodeled the house, the basement floor. We used to just live in the upper half of it, and we had an apartment downstairs. And we had just got through remodeling that house, or the bottom part. And I mean it wasn't two weeks before that we had brand new carpet put down on the floor. And also I heard a big crash. And I looked out of one of the windows in the top floor, and there was a washing machine. It just went through our window front, or our front window.

(176)

And at that point it was all over. It just instantaneous. The water went boosh. It was full. And it just come up. Like one second we had six inches of water, the next thing we had three and a half foot of water. And--

MNK: ... So the window--

(180)

TP: When the window broke, that let the water come in. I really think that one of the things that helped keep the water away from us more was those big trailers that were floating down the front of our home. There was one of them down, I mean it was just only just feet away. If the water would have kept coming up, it would have shoved it into our home, into our house. I mean everybody, we were all sitting around and talking and watching, watching the water and hoping and praying that it was going to go down. And--

MNK: Who all was in the house at that point?

(188)

TP: Well, let's see. I had one of my cousins and his wife. I had my aunt and my uncle. Let's see, my dad, my mom, my sister. I'm trying to think. I think occasionally a lady that had baby-sitted me when I was real little. I've known her for years. She's still there. Still in the same home that she was in even during that time.

MNK: What about the people you took out of the apartment across the—

(197)

TP: Well, they--What it was is when they went and picked them up, my uncle come out of Looney's Creek. They went over there and picked them up. And they took them back up Looney's Creek. They didn't come over to where we were at. So they went back up in Looney's Creek there with their boat and dodging everything floating down the river. I mean I remember seeing fifty-five gallon drums, what was left of trailers and homes and--I mean everything. You could see people's stuff floating down the river. I've never seen cars lifting up and floating out over the main channel. And the next thing you know they're gone.

(206)

When it got over where the main stream of the water, or the flow of the water was, there wasn't, there was no hope for it, it was gone. I mean I watched people's homes--There was a trailer park beside my cousin's garage, and I watched all those trailers just lift right up, and float over the main channel, and go. People lost everything that they had. I mean they had no home. They had nothing. Everything--What little bit they could save, you know, people would help them try to save. I mean what used to be wasn't there anymore. I mean it was--It's just like you reached down and picked up a little toy or something, and you just crushed it and threw it away. I mean it's amazing to see something, or objects that size just pick up and go. I mean they were gone in a blink of an eye.

MNK: Those are seventy-, eighty-foot trailers, I guess.

(221)

TP: Roughly. Sixty-, seventy-foot trailers. Like that double wide of my uncle's. His was gone. I mean as soon as we saw it float up, within thirty seconds, we're talking a double wide, maybe twenty-four, thirty foot wide by seventy foot long. Gone. Instantaneously gone. Anything that they could get out, they got out. As a matter of fact, one of my other uncles, now that I'm thinking about it, he was, him and his wife was there at home too. I mean we just all--He was not in very good health at the time. As a matter of fact, about a year later he passed away. And I think it was in '78 when he passed away. And a lot of stress. I mean I saw people crying. A lot of people out of those apartments of the other building or the other apartments of my cousin's, they were there too.

(239)

I remember them. I remember vividly seeing them. I mean the men try. You know, you can see—I can remember the men, they were upset, but, you know, they were trying to be strong for their wives. Just everybody just trying to be, try to pull together and survive it. And finally later on that evening, I'd say around about 5:00 or 5:30, the water was going down, and we saw what was left. The other thing I remember too, my father just had had our front yard--He had just redone it too. And he did it with the sod grass where they just roll it out, and just roll it out like carpet. And it was real nice, but after that flood we had nothing but a big mess of mud, and sand, and everything else.

(253)

The very next day, first thing in the morning, my dad, he had his high-lift, and he went out and tried to break or go through the road and get it cleared up to where traffic--You could see the traffic. It was--The people were starting to come through. People that had been trapped and gotten caught away from their homes and stuff. I'd heard tales of people walking through the mountains four to five hours just to get home so they wouldn't be worried or the rest of their families wouldn't be worried. People just trying to get back to where they, back to home to see if they had anything left. Because they realized that it had, they may have something left, they may not. They just really didn't know. And, I mean that's really when it really set in on people.

(268)

And people were really upset because they'd lost what they owned, things that they had. People that still had stuff left. I mean it really, very stressful, very depressing, that very first day. But the thing about our community in this, in the mountains here in this area, people pull together. If anything--Actually everybody had a common spot, I mean a common time or era to think back, or everybody shared. I mean everybody helped everybody. I remember going over and helping my aunt and uncle try to cleanup. Cleaned out mud out of their basement. Their basement was nothing but, it was totally filled to the top with sand. And I mean that took days to dig it out. Luckily he had--He was a carpenter, and he had equipment, small generators, water pumps. My father, he, his boss--

(286)

At the time he was a foreman for a coal company. And I mean the coal companies here in the area, it was unreal. There's no way the State could have gotten these roads opened up as quick as they did. The coal companies, they come in. United Coal Company, they come in. Their main goal at that point was to get these roads open and help people here in the community.

MNK: Well, their trucks had to run on the roads too.

(294)

TP: Yeah. Their trucks did. But at that time nobody was working. Everybody was shoveling mud and--But I mean the area coal companies and people that had equipment and stuff, I mean they were out there. I mean the State--If we left it up to the State to try to clear up roads and stuff, forget it. It would have taken forever. Because I mean a lot of those people that would normally work for the State, they had no home. Well, they're trying to dig themselves

out. I mean--And so at that time everybody—I mean everybody was pulling for everybody.

(305)

People were bringing in food and stuff, because we had none or we had what was, what we had left. Our power was out. As a matter of fact, I remember losing a whole--We tried to fix up what we could of it, but I mean we had a whole freezer full. Had a side of beef in it. And I mean there was no way that you can eat that much within a couple of days. I mean we know we have coolers or whatever ice we had. Try to keep it cold. But I mean we--That was-- We lost it. All of our perishable foods in the refrigerators, we lost it. We just-- Just everything.

(317)

You know our can goods--Luckily my dad, he had built some shelves out in the, in our garage. Or not in our garage, but in our laundry room where we could-- We had a lot of can goods and stuff, and we lived off that and stuff that my mom had canned. We lived off that. And I remember every day everybody was working. And we would all gather around and eat at the same time. I mean just like one, big happy family. We weren't really happy, but I mean it was-- Because of the work and everything. But I mean it did. It brought everybody closer.

(329)

Because we--Like I said, we hit that one point in time that we had all, everybody had something in common. Had a lot of people coming through just to look and see. Traffic was unreal. But--I remember the cleanup. I don't think I had a bath or a shower in about two weeks. You know, a little bit of washing off the face and maybe try to brush my teeth, because nobody had any good water. What water we had was what we, was brought to us or whatever. Because at that time everybody here had wells. I mean--And people's wells got flooded, and we were afraid that they

were contaminated.

(343)

As a matter of fact, my father had to redrill a well, because our well was contaminated. Couldn't use it anymore. And that was a big issue too, was because of, I think it was typhoid fever. I think that's linked with, because of unsanitary--Because I mean people's homes, and sewage, and everything else was washed--I mean it was everywhere. Very distinct odor after a flood. Everything is damp and musty. I've even heard my aunt talk, she still gets--I mean if they do any work--They've done work on their home recently, and they still find flood mud in between the walls. Still there from, it's been twenty years ago.

(358)

I remember we didn't get back to school until at least a month after that. After about two weeks, three weeks my mom sent myself and my sister up to Richmond, Virginia. They wanted to make sure that we had our shots and stuff because where we're at. And we went up there and spent a week, and then we come back home. It was better for them because at the time, like I said, we were young at the time and we couldn't, probably be more in the way than any help we were doing. But very stressing time, very. Everybody was really upset over it. But like I said, it did, it pulled the community together. Everybody pulled together. That's how we overcome it, everybody pulled together.

MNK: What was it like that night when the power was out?

(375)

TP: It was cold. Well, it was--You know, it was tolerable. We all had--We were all sitting around the candlelight, sitting around and talking. Go and check the water. I would go down in our basement. I'd walk down our stairs and look down in the basement and see how the water was doing in the basement. I mean we all just sat around and talked and whatever. I don't think anybody wanted to sleep. Everybody was just--Because of the day, everything that had been going on. I finally--I was outside. I had an old lantern, an old camp lantern. Just--I remember sitting outside there for a while. And I got a little comfortable and kind of dosed off a little bit because all the hustle and bustle and everything that was going on during that day.

MNK: Do you remember what you were thinking about?

(393)

TP: I really--No, I really can't remember or recall anything in particular, just everything about the water being up and everything, nothing in particular. Nothing like that. I saw--It was a while before we even come up here in to town, because we lived about three miles west of Grundy. But all the stores, they were cleared out. I mean everything. Mud everywhere. And I remember the people talking having help from--You know, everybody did--Even in this area, everybody helped shovel the mud out and get a, try to get everybody back in the swing of everything. I do remember the Mennonites coming in and helping a lot of people.

(410)

As a matter of fact, the Mennonites had to rebuild the front of the lady that used to baby-sit me when I was little. They had to rebuild the front of her house because it had damaged it. I mean it was months after that people just trying to put their lives back together. I remember assistance coming in and people were--HUD and trying to get people into places to stay while their homes were being worked on, or rebuild, or whatever. And it--

MNK: Did you have quite a crowd staying at your house?

(423)

TP: Yeah. I would say there was eight or ten. I remember like a couple days after, or a day or so after the water went down, my aunt... went back over and they were staying in their upper part of their home. My cousins, they lived in an apartment over a garage across the road, and they went on back to their home. I remember Mae Compton (?sp.), which was the lady that used to baby- sit me, she stayed with the Gillespies at that time until assistance and stuff come in to try to find them places to stay while their homes were being repaired.

(438)

Most of the people that were there, they live in those apartments across the road from us, so they were able to pretty much get back to their homes and stay. But a lot of people left after that. A lot of people left. One lady in particular, her and her husband, they used to, or she used to help clean house for my mom. They moved away. And I think they moved back on their old home place back up in... Creek. And they got away from the flood area, got away from the river. That's what I heard from a lot of people at the time, said, "I'm getting away from this river. I'm going. I'm leaving, and I'm not going to come back here," just because of that. And some people that had nothing left, they had the opportunity to go and leave, and they never come back. It really did, it really struck a lot of people, really hurt a lot of people. And they just decided they weren't going to live next to the river. They moved up to higher ground.

(465)

You really can't blame them. I mean we only got three and a half feet in the basement, but some people didn't even have any homes left. I mean totally gone. All they come back to was a sandbar where their house used to sit. And that's horrible. That's one of the reasons why I like this plan. Because the-- With the Corps of Engineers, they working with the Virginia Department of Transportation, the whole project in itself will help prevent this from happening again. It will--Where people or where business won't be afraid to come back. I mean they'll have a safe place to come and put in a business, and make a fair living at it, and have a, I mean a place that they don't have to worry about that river. If that river comes up, they'll be safe. They'll be up high enough out of the way. Or their buildings will be protected. Homes here in the town will be raised above the floodplain where they're out of the water. They won't have to go through that. A lot of people forget in time. A lot of people do.

(491)

A lot of people don't realize how it was, because they've moved into this area. They didn't really know how the flood or how to shovel mud day in and day out was, and trying to dry your home out, or whatever. I feel that the people that are opposed to the project really didn't have any idea how it was. They shovel mud for about two or three weeks, they won't want to do it again. Heard too many comments from people making those. They do it once, they won't have to do it again. And I mean it's a great opportunity to get these people that... that are in that floodplain, get them above. The transportation, if it was to flood, won't be totally wiped out. We'll still be able to get around. Get up above the floodplain. It won't be wiped out. Actually have a place for, a new place for businesses to come in. Boost the economy. I can remember when I was a kid, young, young, kid, you couldn't walk down these streets without running into somebody, or bumping into them, or, you know. But nowadays you can. Businesses are not here.

(518)

A lot of people packed up and left right after the flood hit. Said, "I'm not dealing with this anymore. I'm not taking that chance anymore." It's--And I can understand why. But the project itself, this community has been here a long time. This is the county seat. It's going to be here. But we need something here for people to stay, a reason for them to stay. New people will come in. This is a very big opportunity that we have. And--

(532)

MNK: Is it going to create a lot of employment ... building?

TP: Yes. I feel that it will. People will have a place to go and put in a business, and if a business goes in, you have to hire people to help run a business.

MNK: I mean the actual construction of the new.

(537)

TP: Oh, actual construction. Yeah, the actual construction's really going to bring a lot in here. I mean it's already starting to attract things now, such as the new hotel that we just broke ground on just a couple of days ago. I mean they see that in the future that there's going to be something here. And I mean it's already starting to attract it now. We have the law school. It's going to be here. And that's going to be bringing people from all over the country. As a matter of fact, I know where they already have applications from people as far west as California. I mean it's going to bring a lot of people in here, a lot ... from here.

(553)

And they're going to see what the old, the way that people are in this area. People have a, really they can't believe how this area is and how protected it has been in the past. Because the train and stuff. It's really going--I feel it's really going to boost the economy, because people really want to come in. They feel that they can produce jobs. The town's really working hard on that with industrial sites and working with everybody trying to, Corps of Engineers. This opportunity, it just gives us a future.

(569)

MNK: How--A lot of these projects go to contractors from out of state that bring in their own crews. Very often local people end up not getting the jobs. And this is, I think, one of the fears that communities have. Is this going to be different this time, will jobs go to local people, or will it be the same old business as usual?

(577)

TP: Well, I'm sure there's going to be some from out of the area here. But you can't get everybody from outside. You know, I mean--It is going to bring jobs for the local area, because I remember when they just were doing this destruction up here on the four lane. I knew a lot of the people that worked up there. I mean that produced jobs, just the actual, just the construction of it. And I feel that that's even going to bring even more people into the community. The more people in the community, the more business that's going to be here. It just builds on itself.

(591)

In the past, I mean one of the things like in industry, is because they have really no really good means of transporting goods or--If they were produce something here, such as a factory or whatever, they really didn't have any means of getting their product to market out of here. But with this project, which is included with the Virginia Department of Transportation, it's going to open those roads up where you can. You'll be able to get your trucks in here and get them out and not having to, the more faster, more efficient way. It's going to--

MNK: But there won't be a screaming four-lane interstate right through the center of town?

(611)

TP: Oh, no. It is--It's not going to be like that. I'm sure it's going to be within probably what the four lane--The fastest speed we have on the four lane here in town now is forty-five. But it's going to make it easier to get back and forth, and get in, and get out, and really open up, actually opens up the door. It opens--Basically it opens up the door for companies and stuff to advance to this area. The land's here. I mean we've--It's been stripped, and I know a lot of it's been reclaimed, but there's still areas here that can be used for industry. Well, I mean we have it. And it just really basically it just opens up a door. Has some place for somebody to go instead of having to travel out of state to go and, just go shopping. Just for that. Or go get just the necessities or goods that people need. It will be here, and it will build upon itself overall.

(637)

MNK: Currently--Well, let me see, one more question about the road itself. You say it will be up out of the floodplain. Is it going to be built on top of the high wall? Is that the idea?

(642)

TP: Yeah. It's--Basically the four lane actually itself is going to be acting as a part of the wall

to protect part of the town from the river itself. There will be a wall, actual physical wall, built over around the courthouse on the Slate Creek side of the river. And the road itself will act. as part of the wall towards the front of the courthouse area and help protect that area of town. The other part, it will be--Well, the four lane does come through, that will take out a lot of these older buildings. As a matter of fact, it's probably going to take them all.

(661)

But they will already have a place to go to. Most of the businesses here in the town, they rent. Very few owners of the property operate a business out of it. And it will give them a better place to go to, more room, more parking. That in itself is a big thing. I myself, I hear it all the time, no place to park. No place to park. park. How can you go shop downtown in Grundy if you have no place to And there's certain times of the month, well, especially with court and everything, that the town is flooded, and we have no place to put anybody. Because I mean we do have a parking building.

MNK: You mean the town is flooded with automobiles?

(681)

TP: Yes, flooded with automobiles. Yeah. It's just there's no place to park and get out and go shop or whatever. With this plan and this project, it's really going to have that place or that area for people to be able to park and within just a short walking distance go into a business. That in itself--I mean even with local businesses here in the town, it's a constant battle. "We have people parking in our spots over here. Can you come and get them moved?" Because there's no place to park. So that's--That in itself is--

(Side Two)

TP: --keep people here instead of having to go out of state. Spend their money here. If you spend money here, it's going to help the economy. More jobs.

MNK: Then do I understand that the new town over on the depot land—

TP: On the depot.

MNK: --will be built before the old town is tom down?

(005)

TP: Yeah. They'll--That's part of the phase. The first phase will be to come in and actually rebuild the town, or rebuild the site for the town at the depot area. That's going to open up for the businesses that are here now. They will be able to do over a weekend or during a few days, move their stuff into the places over there. Once all that is moved over and everybody, they're already in the town. It's not going to stop, maybe just, maybe a few days to get their inventory moved over and get it set up. And then once that point hits, once everybody is moved out of the

old town, that's when the Virginia Department of Transportation will come in and start theirs.

It's not going to--I'm sure anytime you have a big construction of this magnitude or this size will cause some hindrance maybe.

MNK: Inconvenience.

(020)

TP: Or inconvenience, yes. But it's not going to slow down that much. And then also you're still going to have room for people to actually go in and flood proof the area to where they can go in and actually put in a business and to have to worry about the river ever coming up on them.

MNK: Will they have an opportunity to buy those places, or who's going to own all this real estate?

(026)

TP: As of right now, the IDA owns the property which the town's going to be going to, but they have the option to buy, they have the option to rent, just whatever they--

MNK: Rent from the IDA... will be the landlord?

(028)

TP: As far as I know. I'm don't really know those specifics yet. Those really haven't--Those will be getting worked out later.

MNK: It would be great if a huge community land trust could be set up and then guarantee affordable space for \people.

(032)

TP: Exactly. That's another big problem here in the town. They don't have the--The rent is so high for the buildings that we have. I mean it's--There's very few people that really own the property. One instance, one business here in the town went to the landlord and said, "Hey, your roof's leaking." He said, "Well, if it's leaking, why don't you fix it?" They don't have--They have no interest in doing work even to their own buildings. All they're worried about is getting their rent once a month, and that's it. They have no desire whatever to rebuild, or upgrade, or whatever.

MNK: Well, they're in the floodplain anyway.

(040)

TP: That's right. And that's another thing that really holds it back too. Because you can only do fifty percent of what the property value's worth. And if you got a building that's absolutely just inhabitable at this time, you're not really going, you don't have anything. That's a big problem.

But with this project, we'll have new buildings for people to go into. New businesses can start. The same businesses that are here can stay. And we keep on as business as usual.

(047)

A lot of people have a lot of fear of this. They feel that once you tear it down it's gone, people going to take their money and run. I don't feel everybody's going to--They're on--There might be some people that do that. But I feel it's an opportunity to bring even more business in. And any business we bring in, it's always going to help our economy. I mean there's a lot of people or people that are opposed to it, or afraid of it. But I think, in the long run, the pros and the cons, the pros are always going to outdo the cons in this project. And anytime you have a project of this magnitude, this size, there's always going to be one person or somebody that are opposed, because everybody has, are entitled to their opinions. And that's the way that goes.

(059)

MNK: Is anybody--Does any one individual or any couple of individuals stand to profit enormously from this new plan? Is there that resentment?

TP: Not really. The Grundy IDA owns the property.

MNK: The IDA is?

(063)

TP: Is the Industrial Development Authority. It was set up to handle these types of things, these projects for the community. No one single person owns it. It's actually the community owns it. I mean it's--It was the--That's who owns it.

MNK: This was given by a former mayor?

(068)

TP: Yes. The property itself was given by a, the late Miller Richardson that owned the property and deeded the property to the town.

MNK: His name?

(071)

TP: Miller Richardson. He loved this town. He put his heart in this town. To what this town looks like right now is one of the reasons it looks the way it does, the brick sidewalks and stuff. He was in office. He was the one that generated things to make it look like they are, or they are today. And he felt enough of the town to--He donated a big portion of the properties that he owned to the town, the IDA, and, like I said, he put--And there were several times he himself put his own money out of his own pocket into the town to see projects done.

(081)

And I remember being at his funeral. Remember one of the speakers said there was no denial that he was called Mr. Grundy, because he loved this town. And I really feel that legacy needs to be carried on. I mean his visions of this town. And we need to put it to use for the whole community, not for one person. Like right now the property's owned by two or three families, and they have positive control over it. It needs to be put back to the community and, where everybody can have use of it instead of one person. Greed can hinder a lot of progress, but I mean no one person seems, or is to benefit out of this. The community is. The one body, the community, stands to profit from this, not one person like it is now. So that's one of the bigger things that I feel that why this plan is so good, is that the community stands to profit instead of a single person.

(101)

MNK: So it gives the town back to the people.

TP: Exactly. The town belongs to the people. It belongs to the community. And we really have a golden opportunity. Grab a hold of it, and let's go. Let's do it tomorrow. Let's start today and finish tomorrow. Go look into the future. Always have to look in the future.

Bigger and better things.

MNK: Now recreation and open spaces, that sort of thing are going to be emphasized in this plan?

TP: Yes. Parks, bike trails, places that people can--

MNK: Can you start at the beginning and tell me about that?

(110)

TP: Okay. The part of the area here where the town is sitting now will be turned into a park where people can come and walk. There's a lot of people here in the town that walk now. But it will really open up the, make it a better place. A lot of our sidewalks and stuff here now are in pretty bad shape. Some of them aren't. Some of them are okay. It will really open up that for the community to come in and be able just to go out and be able to see a nice green park, and trees, and... these eyesore buildings that we have now today has been here fifty and sixty years. I mean age does take its toll after awhile. But fountains and green ways. That's the one thing that makes me so excited. I just want to see it. I hope--

MNK: You like a good fountain, do you?

(124)

TP: Oh, exactly. I do. I love--There's nothing like a big, beautiful fountain sitting right in the, you know, to bring everything together. I'm totally--It does. It just tickles me pink....say. To see something like that. Never would have dreamed it'd ever be in Grundy. But we have an opportunity to do it now. Let's do it. Because I mean this in itself--This project of this

magnitude and the way it's going--The way it's laid out, it in itself is going to make people come here, just want to see it.

MNK: What do you mean?

(133)

TP: Because of--I mean from what I've seen of the plans, the way it's laid out and the green parks, or the park and the fountain itself, I mean it's going to-- People come to see things that are, I mean are unique and stand out. There's nothing like this in southwest Virginia. Nothing that I know of. I haven't see yet. People will come to see the town of Grundy.

MNK: There's going to be a big shopping mall in the center...

(142)

TP: Yeah, there'll be a big retail area. There'll be new retail where people can go and shop. And in the environment that's going to be around them is, with the new sidewalks and new, the fountains and--It's just going to be a lot more easier on the eyes than what it is now. New facilities. One of the biggest things that I feel--Everything's bigger than that, everything else, but something that here in the town is dealing with, ADA or the American Disability Act. To my knowledge, there's very few, if not any, facilities here in the town that are, that meet the requirements of ADA. All those buildings will be accessible to everybody.

(155)

Not only just people that are, I mean don't have any disabilities or whatever. It will also open the doors for those people that have had troubles in the past. They'll be able to come in, and get to second floors, and be able to go and take care of business at town office, or post office or--And all these facilities will be there. We don't have that now. One of the very few buildings here in the area or in the town here that really meet those requirements would be the courthouse itself. The rest of these buildings don't. And--

(163)

MNK: So total accessibility.

TP: Exactly.

MNK: Is there going to be a horseshoe pit?

TP: A what?

MNK: A place to pitch horseshoes.

TP: Oh, a place to pitch horseshoes. I don't know.

(166)

MNK: You know I went to Wayne, West Virginia, years ago, and went into, by the courthouse. Right in the center of town was a couple of benches old boys sitting around, whittling, and talking. And there was a horseshoe pit right beside the courthouse. And I went back years later, and they'd remodeled the courthouse, and the horseshoe pit was gone.

And the old boys who'd been sitting on the benches were gone too. I just wondered if you figured on having a horseshoe--

(172)

TP: Oh, I don't know! Never have thought about that. That's something I hadn't thought of. There's a lot of people around here who pitch horseshoes.

MNK: You better put a horseshoe pit...

(174)

TP: I'm telling you, there's a lot of people around here who pitch horseshoes. My wife's grandfather, he is, or his sight's not that well, but he can drop a horseshoe on a peg any day of the week. Absolutely. Been doing it long enough. He's eighty-eight, or eighty-seven or eighty-eight years old. And--

(177)

MNK: Let him design the horseshoe pit up for the new--There needs to be one right in the center of ...

TP: Oh, that would be great!

(179)

MNK: A couple of shade trees, and some benches, and a horseshoe pit.

TP: Yeah, where you can go and--

MNK:... You'd better have it.

TP: Better!

MNK: That's great. Let's pause a minute here.