Mike Ross

Interviewer: Michael and Carrie Kline
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Mike Ross: **00:00:00** —all the old families are all gone. They're growing up Colton, about 90% Italian, 90% Catholic.

Michael Kline: Wommelsdorff.

MR: Wommelsdorff.

MK: Wommelsdorff.

MR: Wommelsdorff. That was too hard to spell, so they changed to Colton. I mean, who could spell Wommelsdorff? (laughs) But that was the—it came from the mining engineer that come down to help develop the coal in the area. He came down from Pennsylvania. And then West Virginia coal and coke bottomed out years ago, and that's who—back then they had agents, the coal companies—go to Italy and get me some of the coal miners, go to Poland and get me some of their coal miners. And they were recruiters, just like they do today. They call them headhunters today, but anyway.

MK: Can we just start out, say, if you would—well, first of all my name is Michael Kline and I have Carrie Kline with me here today. And we've got a little dusting of snow outside. We're at your office here in Buckhannon. And could you say, my name is—?

MR: My name is Mike Ross and I'm—

MK: And your date of birth?

MR: My date of birth is 11-8-37.

MK: Okay. Start out, if you would, just tell us about your people and where you were raised.

MR: Well, my dad came over from Italy years ago, and I don't know the exact date, but he was 1 of 5 brothers coming over and was recruited over here by the—by the coal company back years ago. And they brought him in to Davis, West Virginia, and then they migrated down in the Weaver/Colton area. And then he met my mother who was an Angelini from Elkins. She was—her mom and dad, my grandparents, were born in Italy and they came over. And they got married

of course, and—and there's 14 children in our family, 9 boys, 5 girls. Nine of which are still living. And we learned at an early age what competition was. (laughs)

MK: **00:02:23** What do you mean?

MR: Well, you compete for everything. We had one way to go, and that was up. (laughs)

MK: With that many?

MR: Yeah, well, 14 kids. My dad was a coal miner. He didn't own the mine. He just worked it. And of course, my mother was busy at home with all the kids. We lived in a company house, raised a company garden, and if we—someone didn't farm their place, why, we were generally raising theirs, too, and then—in order to raise enough food to have something to eat in the winter time. But, quite an education growing up in Colton, West Virginia. Probably equal to a master's degree at most universities. (laughs) The competition and you see the—you know, different nationalities living in—a lot of the older coal miners were bachelors, just lived by themselves, in little shanties, one room. Some were furnished by the coal companies and some by individuals. They had a little sawmill there.

MK: Different nationalities?

MR: Different nationalities. There were some Polish people and German people and Lithuanians and Austrians, but the biggest—largest population was Italians there for a long time. Of course you had a little high school and very proud of the sports teams there. And finally got a new building in 1955. I was the first graduating class, 1955. And getting back to our family, out of the 14 kids, most of us started working at an early age around the mines, driving a truck, something like that, but 12 of us attended college or finished college with no money. And 14 kids and no smokers in the family. My dad not only worked in the mine, but he ran a beer joint there at Colton, and you'd met him before. But—

MK: Tell me his name again.

MR: Jessie but—Cesidio was his name, but they called him Jessie, but his nickname was Hoover. He talked so much about the great depression and blamed it all on President Hoover that I actually nicknamed him Hoover, and then the first thing you know, even the kids would run in—Hoover, give me a pop. (laughs) And it was sort of comical, but he ran a little entertainment center there. They used to have pool tables and they had poker games. You couldn't smoke cigars in that beer joint, but you played poker about 7 days a week if you wanted to. Or order a setback game and a lot of the old-timers would stop there from time to time, and after the work at the mines, and they'd drink a beer or they played a lot of setback. They'd play setback for a quarter. And they'd sit down there and just talk—a lot of conversation, you know, and keep up on local news. A lot of people came in from out of state. A lot of people left Colton to seek employment in Ohio back in the—in the '50s. Jobs were tight in the '50s around there. And they'd come back for deer season. Well, they'd come in to Hoover's place and play setback or play poker. They didn't do much deer hunting. (laughs) But it was a place you come back to,

catch up on things. And it was—again, it was educational. There used to be 2 beer joints in town. We had—my dad had one and Sam Girard had one.

MK: **00:06:41** Dryer?

MR: Girard. G-I-R-A-R-D. And he had a local grocery store, too. Then in the summertime, the coal mines paid—I think they paid twice a month back then. And we used to, us kids, we'd hand around the beer joints and watch around because invariably there was always a fight break out. So we used to say, no TV, but a fight every Saturday night. (laughs)

MK: Guaranteed.

MR: Guaranteed. Yeah. Ringside seat. (laughs) Always proud of the baseball team. They had—always had a men's league that played baseball, and we had a lot of sports around there and it kept the kids busy. And then we had the big company barn, where they had the coal mines there and they kept a lot of horses. They pulled the coal out of the mines with horses. So we would—in the summertime, we'd go ride the horses over to the creek to water them. And we'd get a stranger come to town, and they had this one certain horse, his name was Joe. And you'd put the stranger on that horse Joe because he'd run to the creek as hard as he could run and when he got to the creek he stopped. And generally that fellow went right over the top into the creek. (laughs)

MK: Welcome to Colton.

MR: Welcome to Colton. (laughs) You get to ride Joe. (laughs)

MK: It was a company barn?

MR: Oh, yeah. Coal company barn and they—

MK: Which was the company?

MR: Well, that was Sylvester Brothers, yeah. They took over—when the big companies were leaving, they would sell off the remaining coal to smaller ones or contract out to smaller companies. We didn't understand it all then, but I do now. And they would mine some of the coal that was left. I mean, the big companies—it wasn't profitable for big companies to work on a lot of it. But they did and they employed the local people. But that was some of our entertainment, too, as kids growing up, we'd go over to the coal mines and push a coal car uphill, and then you get in the coal car and ride to the bottom and push it back up. We'd do the same thing at the sawmill. We had a sawmill there owned by Bill Jackson, and they used to refer to it as the "thick and thin lumbar company." (laughs) They didn't saw quite as straight back then. But it was an old steam mill. And they had a fellow that fired the boiler. And they'd blow a whistle every day at noon, 5 days a week. You didn't need a watch back then, you'd just listen for the sawmill to blow the whistle, and you knew it was noon. (laughs) But in growing up, our family, we delivered newspapers. All the boys. I mean, we'd just pass it on, from the top to the bottom, and we did the Clarksburgs and the Elkins and even sometime got in to the *Grit*, you

know, out of Pennsylvania, there was a paper called the *Grit*. The called it the lying *Grit*. I mean, they had all kinds of stories, and you didn't know whether they was right or wrong. (laughs)

MK: **00:10:01** Something to read.

MR: They were read. Then of course, going to school in the spring, you'd—you was always selling the seeds or Cloverine Salve. (laughs) Good for anything. Cure anything. And of course you had contests, who could sell the most, and stuff like that, but that was a part of growing up in Colton. I still have the—right where I live, I built a shop building on the site of the old grade school was right beside my home—and I still have the sidewalk that I went in to the first grade on. And I remember playing hopscotch on that sidewalk with a lot of the girls back then. And that's a game that's not so common today. (laughs) Then we had—in the spring, you'd see the boys run around and everybody had dirty knuckles because they were playing marbles in the street.

MK: Dirty knuckles?

MR: Well, you laid your hand down in the dirt, and you ended up—you always had dirt in your knuckles here because your hand was down and someone hollered "knuckle down, bony tight." You had to have your hand on the ground when you shot the marble. Sometimes you'd get someone that raised his hand in the air, and it was a little more accurate maybe than if you laid your hand on the ground. And you played 2 different kind of marble games, square ring and round ring. (laughs)

MK: Square ring. (laughs)

MR: Yeah, but it was—that was the spring pastime. It generally started in March, you know, it was still cold. But, oh, they had different things—you had to provide a lot of your own entertainment back then, I mean, there wasn't very many vehicles, you didn't get out of town much, and it was—and there used to be a lot of hitchhiking. Sometimes we'd go for entertainment, we'd just hitchhike one way for a while and then turn around and hitchhike back. And somebody would pick you up. But back then, people would pick you up. Today very seldom—it's not very safe today to do that.

MK: Was there a trolley?

MR: No, there was a—at one time, we had public transportation come in to Colton. I can barely remember when the Greyhound Bus ran through the old road, and then they changed the Highway Route 33, they changed it probably in the '40s, and where Pumpkintown is now. It used to come down to Colton and come on through there, and the Greyhound Bus, I think, it stopped at the top of the hill, just as you drop in to Colton. That's where you caught the bus. But later on, we had the Reynolds Bus Line that operated out of Buckhannon, Elkins, and it came right down in to Colton, and that's where we got our newspaper. They'd bring the newspapers in. And of course they had contract mail carriers back then. There used to be a man named Eddie Turner, he delivered it. In the summertime, he brought chocolate milk and orange juice and sold it, 2 cents—something like 2 cents a bottle for orange juice or something, orange flavored drink,

I don't think it was orange juice. (laughs) But I can remember the second World War, right towards the end of it. I was delivering newspapers, and candy bars were rationed. You know, candy was rationed then, and of course I remember the old stamps when gasoline was rationed and automobile tires and everything else. But I can remember somebody paying me for a newspaper, and you got in line at Sam Girard's store to get a candy bar. And I'd get up there and get 2 Milky Ways at one time for a dime. That was a treat. (laughs)

00:14:08 We raised big gardens. We had to go to the woods and you cut bean poles and tomato poles to stake your garden with, your beans and your tomatoes. When you had limited space to raise a garden, we'd raise 3 crops down one line. I mean, we'd put a row in—you'd plant your tomatoes and you'd stake them, and then my dad always brought these Roman beans, a big brown bean, really a good bean, and they referred to them as Roman beans. And you put your tomatoes in and we'd get these big long poles and we put them up like a teepee. And then you put a stake through the middle. But you tied them at the top and when your tomatoes were growing, you'd tie your tomatoes up. Then you'd plant Roman beans beside those tomatoes and those bean vines would go up that pole, too. And then you'd plant cucumbers. So you raised tomatoes, beans, and cucumbers all in the same row. And we'd go to the old sawdust piles and get the—we referred to it as rotten sawdust, you know, it aged. And you'd haul that sawdust in there and put in between your tomato rows and everything, and you kept the weeds down and it retained moisture. And we always had the best gardens around. I mean, there's no doubt about that. We sold a lot of plants we raised. My dad would make what we called "hot beds," and that's little boxes and then you covered them with windows. And when we'd go into frost, we'd be down playing ball or something, and someone would holler, "We got to go home and cover up the plants." You'd have to interrupt the ballgame while we went home and covered up plants. And we'd recruit other boys to go with us and help us if they wanted us to play on their team. Most of our family was pretty good ballplayers. We were fortunate in that respect. (laughs) So, but, I don't know how many plants we sold at 10 cents a dozen—and you look at the cost of plants today—and raised a lot of—kept a lot of their own seed. My dad always kept the seed and same for the beans. You'd let those beans dry and he'd put beans, just dried beans, in a half gallon jar and seal them. Those beans seed would keep forever, until you opened them and planted them. But they were really good. But those are some of the things that went on, and then in the fall—

MK: What about fruit? What did you do—?

MR: Well, we'd—he'd graft a lot of apple trees. You can still see apple trees down Main Street of Colton today that—he'd get an old wild tree, but he'd cut some branches off a good tree, and he would graft those good apples to the wild tree. And you look at some of the trees today, and some—last year, some of those trees were just hanging so thick with good apples. And he just put them on Main Street there and people—well, the deer eat a lot of them today—but people would go along and get them some apples, and no problem. But he enjoyed doing that.

MK: And grapes?

MR: Grapes. We had a lot of grapes. Didn't make too much wine, but they—I had an uncle that made the wine, and they used to get their grapes in out of Thomas. They were—the DiBacco

family had a beer distributorship up there, and then they'd get grapes. They'd import grapes from other states there in the fall, and they'd bring truckloads of grapes down there to make wine. And it was pretty common around there with—most of the old Italian families, you know, they always had wine, and if you went to visit them, you had drink wine, whether you wanted to or not. Drink and eat. If you didn't do that, they didn't—you weren't too welcome. (laughs) But that was—that was common, and nobody got out of hand. Overall it was a great experience in growing up that way. I went to college a little while, couple years, then I went to work.

MK: **00:18:37** Where'd you go?

MR: D&E. But I wanted to be a heavy equipment operator, so I got out of high school, and although I was valedictorian of the school, a class of 13 (laughs). We started out at about 40-something as freshmen, and only 13 of us finished. But I had a little scholarship to D&E and then—but I wanted to be a heavy equipment operator. So I got enough money to go to heavy equipment school down in Charlotte, North Carolina—and 30 days, you get down there in a big field and get on a bulldozer and push mud one way today and tomorrow get over there and push it back. (laughs) And came back and got a job, and I was earning $3.00 an hour on a bulldozer. And I quit that job and took a job in the gas business for $1.25 an hour. And a lot of people around Colton said, "You're making a big mistake." But they gave me a new truck, and we liked to deer hunt, so that was—

MK: The gas company gave you a new truck?

MR: Yeah. A company truck, to drive, and it was 4-wheel drive with—this was 1959, everybody didn't have SUVs like they have today or 4-wheel drive trucks. So we could put chains on that truck, and we could go deeper in the woods than most people and get a deer. But the kids enjoyed it, and I did, too. But—

00:20:14 After working with a company out of Pennsylvania, Waverly Oil Works, was an old company. And we just started drilling in West Virginia. I didn't know—I didn't know much about a gas well, but they sent me to a few schools and allowed me to learn about gas wells. And I worked for them for a good while and then started branching out with other partners and everything and started buying into properties and—Natalie, hold the calls, please. Tell him I'll call him back.

MK: Did you—I forgot what I was going to ask you.

MR: Well, we started drilling in—down in Braxton County, West Virginia.

MK: Oh, I was going to ask you, did you have to learn geology in these schools? What did you —?

MR: Well, I had a geological books, West Virginia geological books, and I used—I loved to read them. And I've got a whole series of them. And we had to learn somewhat geology, but I did a lot of reading myself and then I had a—I had a good friend there in Colton. He was a well-read

person. His name was Frank Okernick. Now, he was Austrian. You probably knew his sister, Polly Okernick in Elkins. Did you ever know Polly?

MK: **00:21:46** No.

MR: She ran a little personal finance company up there.

Carrie Kline: Spell?

MR: Okernick. O-K-E-R-N-I-C-K. And he was the—he was never married. He just liked to live by himself. And the house is still there in Colton. It's unoccupied now, but he enjoyed being around the wells. So I'd pick him up and we'd go out and go around the well and everything, and between the 2 of us, I mean, we'd just back and forth all the time, talking about different formations and studying well records all over the state. These books go back to—they were state books, but they go back in the '20s by some well-known geologists. I. C. White and some of them, I have several copies, you can hardly find them now. But it's amazing how accurate they were on their predictions, but you have to live 50 years later to see what really did happen. (laughs)

MK: How accurate they were.

MR: Yeah.

CK: What do you mean?

MR: They were predicting zone areas of gas production or—and they studied the coal, and they studied all the natural resources. The different limestones, sandstones. And it was just a lot of good information. And most people never read them.

MK: But you did.

MR: I did. I did. I read a lot of them. And as I got—I grew up fast. And I ran with older people, associated with older people, more than kids my age. And I think I acquired a lot of knowledge from those older people at an early age, and then after spending a good bit of time in the gas business and everything, I started selling that knowledge. I got—people would hire me to supervise a project, or to supervise wells for them. And of course it took a lot of hours and I slept in a lot of pickup trucks and ate a lot of sardines and a lot of pepperoni and salami and longhorn cheese. (laughs) But it's paid off. And it's been good. And I still enjoy it, out in the field and everything, and today, why, I do a lot of—I'm big on brush-hogging now. I'm into—I buy old rundown farms and everything and clean them up a lot and cut a lot of brush and raise a lot of grass. It makes it better for the deer and the wildlife. I don't run any cattle or anything like that, but I let a lot of farmers cut my hay and everything, and I just—I have a lot of timberland. I like to raise timber. And we do—I'm very particular on the cutting, very selective cut, and like the natural resource business and take care of it. Let people hunt free, fish fee, walk free, whatever they want to do, but it's been good. The kids are all doing well and the grandchildren, and we have this Colton Days, you know, every year, this is the 20th year coming up, and we've had

Leslie Nielsen in town 3 different times. Of course we bring Bob Huggins in. We get—he's the basketball coach for the university. And we've had different—well, we get the governor, a lot of politicians come to town, but we've had a lot of federal judges and other judges, and just a lot of good people. And we have this celebration every year, and we don't send written invitations. Everybody gets the same invitation—"we're going to have Colton Days, you find a better party, invite me, and I'll go with you." (laughs)

MK: **00:26:23** No better party than that.

MR: Yeah, so, but we have a lot of good Italian food. We cook as much as—last year we did 475 pounds of Italian sausage cooked with tomatoes, peppers, and onions. We bring up 20 bushel tomatoes out of Florida, and we make a tomato, pepper, and onion salad. Then we bring in—we cook 200 pounds of spaghetti with meatballs, and we do over 1,000 pieces of chicken, and 1,000 hotdogs, and then we pop about 50 pounds of popcorn. And we have a free carnival for the kids. And then we have a parade. And Colton's unique in that it's a mile-long straight there at Colton. I mean, you're right through the main part of Colton, that's 1 mile long. You can stay in the middle there and see the parade all at one time. But we get a lot of—we probably feed 2,000 people at our Colton Days event. And we have entertainment there. We have accordion players, and we have bluegrass players, and last year we had the jazz band out of WVU, 5 or 6 boys, and they were really good.

MK: I'll bet.

MR: Yeah, we had the bluegrass out of—oh, he was a bluegrass instructor at Glenville College, Mack Samples. Yeah, he was—he had a good group there. This year we got Johnny Cochran coming and the Orange Blossom Special. But those are some of the things that we've done in Colton over the years.

MK: Fascinating, fascinating.

MR: And I'll tell you one thing I'm most proud of in Colton. I was President of the PTA back in the '70s. And Colton didn't have a baseball team at the high school. So I helped bring the baseball back to Colton High School. In 1985 we won the state championship, class A baseball, for the state. And the sign is still up at Colton—Class A champs. And I told people in Charleston, I said, it's very seldom you see a road sign that stands that long without being shot full of bullet holes in West Virginia, but that one is still there, from 1985. And there it's almost 40 years it's been up. And my youngest son was shortstop and pitcher on there. And my nephew, who's an engineer now with the Highway Division, he hit the homerun that won the game over at Bishop Donahue and defeated them 3 to 2 in the state championship.

MK: Wow.

MR: And that was—

MK: Something to dream about.

MR: That's one of my highlights. I like baseball and I like to—I support baseball, still do it wholeheartedly, and it's good for kids and I think we—what's sad about all of our sports programs, we're seeing—in the small towns—they're diminishing. It used to be, every little small town, you'd go in there, you got a ball field. Today you don't. And you'd always see the—now the kids are going to computers and texting and they're getting away from sports—and that's not all bad—I mean, learning computers or texting, but when it takes the place of sports and we see these kids are—a lot of them get out of shape, get too heavy, they don't get the exercise—it was nothing for us—we went barefooted all summer. When I was growing up, everybody in town had a cow. And the cows ran loose in Colton. So you didn't have any—a lot of weeds in the grass—you didn't haven't to mow it, the cows did it. And they had different bells on them, and you could tell your cow by the sound of the bell, and I could tell my cow by the sound of the bell. And every evening you had to gather the cows up because you had to milk them. But that was before they had all this pasteurized milk. But that was something and you could go barefooted all summer, but today you wouldn't dare. I mean, you'd have trouble getting around with shoes on and you got to watch for snakes in a lot of places.

MK: **00:31:16** While we're in Colton and remembering your growing up days, give me the family line up. I just think it—I love big families.

MR: Well, there was 9 boys and 5 girls.

MK: Can you start with the oldest and go right through?

MR: Well, Patsy was the oldest. And then there was Julia, my sister, she's still alive. Patsy passed away. And then there was Lucy, she's still working as a nurse at Nella's Nursing Home. And people ask me, what's your sister Lucy doing? And I said, well, hell, she's up there helping take care of those old people, I said, she's only 85. (laughs) And Julia was just working. She's up in her—she's older than Lucy, so she's 87 or 88. Then there was my brother Joe, and he was a chemist. He passed away. And then I had another brother, next to him, was Tony. He was in the trucking business. He passed away at an early age. He was one of the early ones. He was the first one to die in our family. He was only 30-something years old. Died from an infection. He had stomach ulcers and at a little hospital in Akron, Ohio, and he died from an infection. Then my sister Joanne, she's a registered nurse, and she is—she retired from the military at 27 years of service. She's a retired colonel. She's living—well, she lives between Elkins, Charleston, and Florida. Then we—then it was my turn. I'm still going. None of us is in business with each other and we all get along. (laughs) And then I had a younger brother Vince. He was—when he was growing up, he'd fight you at the drop of a hat. I mean, it didn't make any difference to Vince. And he was liable to hit you with a stick of wood or anything, and he went on to Berea College. He and—what was his name there in Elkins, former superintendent of schools over there—they went to Berea together. It was back before—it wasn't Phares, the one before him—uh, Ruthie Nell Fisher country. Anyway, they went to Berea, and they worked their way through Berea College. He came back and his first job was teacher and coach at Pickens. And he taught some real good students up there. He taught Don Nestor who is one of our leading CPAs here in the state. But my brother Vince helped teach him. Vince went to Ohio and became a principal of a large school out of Springboro. And they were amazed at how—there was articles in the newspapers out there that said he could stand at the corner and these kids are going by, and he

practically called every kid by first name when they were getting on the bus or something like that. They thought so much of him up there. He passed away. He had a bad heart valve. He passed away, and they built a new building at Springboro High and it's got Vince Ross' name on it.

MK: **00:34:57** Oh.

MR: Yeah. And I'm pretty proud of him, but he was growing up, I'll tell you, he was—if you wanted to fight, he'd get with you on it. (laughs) Then, let's see, we got Jack who's a CPA in Charleston. He's recognized around the state as one of the top banking CPAs in the state. He's done a lot of bank auditing and things like that. Then we have, oh, let's see, another sister Mary. She's up in Pittsburgh. She's a CPA up there. And then there was, let's see, Mary's older than Jack. And then Sal, Salvador, was—he finished school, he was a chemical engineer. And he worked for Exxon a while and then he worked—he was #2 man in Kanawha Valley for carbide. And then he and his wife got into the picture framing business and fine woodwork, crown molding, and flooring and all this. And today they have quality hardwoods. And they do a lot of the bigger homes in West Virginia. They've done the—they do the woodwork there. And they've done some at the capitol building and restoring doors or you want an antique door or something built, why, he'll build it, and he really does fine woodwork, and Quality Woods is the name of his company. That's down in Eleanor, West Virginia, in Putnam County. And there was Jim. He's the mayor of Colton. He is a retired schoolteacher and coach, taught for years there in Randolph County. And then we have Dave, and he was—he retired from Dow Chemical. He was a computer programmer and did a lot of work with Dow and Carbide both. Let's see, did I miss any? (laughs) Hard to remember all 14 of them, I tell you what, but—(laughs)

CK: A lot of business.

MR: Yeah, yeah, and, again, I mean, and today, our kids and grandchildren—we've got—Sal's got 2 kids, they're both doctors. One's a surgeon down at CAMC and the other one's a dermatologist. And then we got Mary's daughter is a lawyer with Steptoe and Johnson. She's up in Minneapolis right now. And we've got some teachers. We've got engineers. We've got doctors. And I've got one boy in business with me. And I always gave my boys a choice: find a job or I have one for you, but we're going to work. (laughs) I never had to get any of them out of jail, and I think that's remarkable today. And none of them are into drugs. And none of them smoke. We don't smoke today, nobody.

MK: Amazing.

MR: And I don't allow it on my jobs, I don't allow it in the buildings or in my trucks. Come to my house, I make the rules. I come to your house, you make the rules. If we don't like them, we leave. And I think that's a fair trade. (laughs)

MK: Can you talk a little bit about the nature of drilling, oil drilling, when you first got started? When I think of it, I think of those big towers, you know, that you see in the old photographs.

MR: **00:39:04** Well, that was the old standard rigs. That's what they called standard rigs. And that was—when I got started in the '50s, those were going out of style. That was run by a steam engine or a big natural gas engine. And what they did, they had a big crank on them, about like a crankshaft, and they would pick the cable up and drop it. They had these tools that you had to screw together and keep them out to gauge, and they'd heat them and everything else, and you'd take a sledgehammer and batter it out to—you wanted a 6-inch hole—you had to keep it out there. You had to gauge them every so often because in this hard rock, they would wear down, they'd taper down, and the first thing you know, your hole was too small and they went to pipe in, and it wouldn't go. So, they had to keep them out to gauge. But then, they come on with the —when I first started—a refined version of that, they called them spudders—and they were—most of them were Bucyrus Erie, made up in Bucyrus, Ohio. And they were cable tool operations. You had a big long cable, and you had big heavy steel tools on the end of it, and they called them churn drills. And you would pick it up and drop it. But every time the tool went down, it would rotate slightly, and you'd cut a uniform hole. And they had a water course up the bit. You'd add a little water to put into the rock when you're drilling, and then every so often, you had to take a bailer, and you'd go down there and you'd bail out the cuttings. You'd just chip that rock away in real small little chips out of the rock. You get into some of the sandstone —we have what we call the Blue Monday sandstone—it's just really hard. And if you go in to Webster Springs, West Virginia, as you drop down into town, they've got a sign there that says, "Blue Monday Sandstone." It's not real deep in this country. Now, it contains gas in Webster County. There've been some little field developed in that, and down in Braxton County, Blue Monday. But I've seen days when they'd drill on that for 12 hours, and they made 1 foot in 12 hours. And they go back tomorrow and they make another foot—and some places, 30 foot thick, so it took a long time to drill through the Blue Monday. And then you get on down the Blue Monday, and then you had what they call the "big lime." The big lime is another name for the Greenbrier limestone that is what's being quarried over near Elkins by J. F. Allen Company. And same thing on over on—right above Childers Creek there on Shavers Mountain. That is a big lime formation, or Greenbrier limestone. You come here to Buckhannon, that same rock is 1,200 to 1,400 foot deep here, but what we're seeing, as you go east, you see the rocks come out of the ground where there's a big upheaval right along by the first lime quarry over there, Aggregates. And there's a big upheaval in there, and that's what—that's why that limestone came to the surface. Something shoved it up, and then there's been a lot of erosion over there. Take the Tygart Valley, for example. That's all been eroded off to where you don't have any big lime in there, it's gone, until you get up in the mountains above it, but it's washed out in the bottoms. And the Benson sand is back this way from—it's right near Crystal Springs and right before you get to the intersection of Crystal Springs—there used to be a road sign there "Benson Sand." And you could look at it there in the highway cut. That's where you see a lot of these formations, go to these highway cuts and you see a lot of the different rocks. You see the coal in there. But that Benson sand is 4,000 foot deep right here. It contains a lot of gas in this county here. Then you go less than 20 miles, and if there's any gas in it, it's already escaped over the years. It's already evaporated. As you go west, that all goes deeper. And you get producing formations over here, but you get over there, and you don't have the—you don't have the production, you don't have the shallow sands over there to produce. That's why there's—there's gas production in Randolph County, but it's only in the western part, right here along the Pumpkintown—where the big barn is, that's Barbour County, but you're right on that high ridge in there, and once you get east of that, you have very little production, until you get over to Glady, and then you had what they call

the Oriskany sandstone in the Glady field, it's 5,000 foot deep over there, and over here, it's 7,500 foot deep. But it drops that much.

00:44:22 And I think—I have no way of proving it, but I think that if you look at—at one time, the Tygart Valley River probably flowed towards Parsons, it probably went to the north. And somehow that big upheaval occurred there at Aggregates—that's what they call that there—where John Allen has a quarry. Something broke through and that water started coming this way. As you go out of here at Buckhannon, go out Brushy Fork, and the big flat bottoms out here, nice farm land. But there's a break through down there and the water went down towards Stonecoal, down towards Weston, where otherwise it would have all come down through here. But there's been a lot of erosion over the years taking place in this rock, and it's washed it off, and where there's gas over here, out of a formation here that's 2,000 or 3,000 foot deep, you go over there and you don't have it because the rock's exposed up along Rich Mountain. You get—that rock's a lot nearer and that gas would have migrated out of there, and that's why you don't have any today.

MK: **00:45:37** And that naturally migrated?

MR: Yeah, uh-hunh (affirmative). Yeah, it's just too close to the surface, not enough cover on it. You have to have a cap on it to seal it in there. And that's what we drill through here. The big lime is a big cap rock. It's recognized all over the western part of the state here as a cap over the big engine sand. And the big engine sand is right underneath the big lime. And it's been one of the leading producers in this state for 100 years. There's been an awful lot of gas and oil come out of the engine sand, big engine. And then you get into the Berea down below up in—the big storage field down there at Lost Creek is in a sand called Gantz sand, G-A-N-T-Z. It's one of the—it's the largest—largest storage field east of the Mississippi River is right here at Lost Creek, West Virginia. Several thousand acres down there. And they pump gas into in the summer, and then when they need gas, like these real cold days, when you have a big demand for gas, it's like having an extra tank on your water pump. You need water in a hurry, you got a reservoir there to supply it. If you try to take it out of wells, you couldn't get the gas out fast enough to meet the demand. That's why they have storage fields. So you get them close by and you get a big line out of there, and you got Philadelphia calling this morning, we got zero temperatures, and the hospitals, the schools, everything you know, the different factories, making the big demand on gas, you got to have a reservoir close by where that gas can get out of there fast and get to them. Just this winter here, we've been seeing—we've been seeing shortages, right here in Buckhannon. And Calvin County down here has got probably 3,000 wells in it, and they were experiencing shortages this winter. Yet, we had a surplus of gas in a lot of places. But it's a matter of getting it to the proper place at the right time. I can remember back in the '70s, we had—you couldn't get a gas tap here in Buckhannon, yet you got wells all over the county. And some of the experts were saying, we'll be out of gas by the year 2000. In 2000, we have a surplus. But, thanks to the shale gas that they're finding, the shale gas now, you know the Marcellus and even some of the Utica shale, which is—it's never really been tested here in West Virginia. They're planning on a well soon in Wood County, down there at Parkersburg, Cabot Corporation is supposed to drill Utica. It's been proven over in Kentucky—or Ohio, around Steubenville and on up that way, across the river from Wheeling, Belmont County. And they've hit some tremendous wells up there. The Utica is—up there it's 8,000 to 9,000 foot deep. Here

it's probably 10,000 to 11,000 foot deep here. And nobody has drilled it or really fractured it to test it.

00:48:59 Then the Marcellus, it's been drilled through several times, even the old rigs that you referred you to, the old standard rigs, years ago, it might take them a year and a half to drill the hole, but they drilled through it, 7,000 or 8,000 foot deep. And they knew it had a little gas in it, but nobody—fracturing was unknown. So they never did try anything. They were drilling for the sand underneath it, which was the Oriskany sandstone, and it's been a big producer in certain areas. Jackson County was big. Parts of Kanawha County were big. Glady field was shallow Oriskany, and Dolly Sods was Oriskany. Some of those on Middle Mountain were Oriskany. But it's not a widespread formation that has gas in it. It contains a lot of water. And you get a lot of —Preston County's had some pretty good Oriskany wells. Canaan Valley has had Oriskany wells. Yeah, there's wells up there that are 50 years old, or older, out of Oriskany. They're 8,000 foot deep. Garrett County, Maryland, in the Amish country up there, it's got Oriskany.

MK: We're talking about just—

MR: Vertical.

MK: Mostly vertical.

MR: Yeah, yeah. Horizontal drilling just came about here in the last less than 10 years. This Marcellus is so new in this state, we don't even have—you don't even have good production records on it because it's not old enough to really see how long it's going to last. There are projections, you know, but the thing about projections, you got to stick around and see how accurate they were. You know, come back in 20 years and tell me if you're right. (laughs)

MK: What's the Ross prediction?

MR: I think it's going to be—it's good—it's good for the area. I think it'll be long-term, but I—it's so expensive, it rules out—smaller operators can't do it. It's just so expensive, and if you don't do horizontal drilling, you can't make it profitable. Vertical drilling won't do it. And you can't—fracturing—you can't do enough fracturing to make it profitable at these gas prices we have today, and if you've got—you can't raise gas prices too high, or you can't sell it, I mean, you can't afford it. But it's really stimulated a lot of the counties that it's active in right now. You take the northern part of the state, northwestern part of the state, starting with Harrison County, Doddridge County, Wetzel County, Tyler County, Marshall County, parts of Marion, parts of Monongalia County, on up to Pennsylvania.

MK: Doddridge?

MR: Doddridge is good. And it's made the difference over there because so many of those counties don't have anything else to depend on for tax base or any jobs in the area, and it has created a lot of jobs. There are some problems with some of it, but the companies are bringing a lot of out-of-state money in there. And they're—they're doing a lot of good things, and they will do good things. They're spending a lot of money on roads. I know, they are hard on roads in the

wintertime, but it's amazing how much blacktop they're buying in the summer. It's amazing how much limestone they're putting on the roads.

MK: **00:52:45** Are there any companies that are outstanding in that regard?

MR: I think most of them are. I think that Antero is overall doing a good job. They've had some accidents, but they've been the leader in drilling. So they had more activity going. Chesapeake's done a good job. There's EQT, that's Equitable. And then there's XTO, which is a subsidiary of Exxon. And I think most of these companies want to do a good job. Now, I have 3 wells on—I have one of the better farms here in Upshur County—and I have 3 wells out here on my farm, and I have a better road. They've taken up about an acre and a half of my farmland. But it's just been good.

MK: Are these wells you drilled yourself?

MR: No, no, Chesapeake drilled on my property.

MK: Chesapeake?

MR: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

CK: Nobody lives on the land?

MR: No. No, but they're close by, close by, and they're horizontal wells. They fractured underneath the ground and everything. But they control the water. They take the water out. They get it treated. And we don't have any spillage or anything. And you can drive a car right up to them right now. And they just sit there. They don't—it's been good. And you take a lot of the farmers in some of these other counties that couldn't afford to buy a new tractor, and now they can. And they—Doddridge County especially. And Tyler County's good. Marshall County has had a lot of activity, and still a lot of activity. They do use—they use a lot of water on fracturing, but without fracturing, you wouldn't get 1 well out of 100. I mean, there's no—I don't know of any natural wells—what they call natural. You'd have to have a flow great enough to make it commercial to qualify as a natural. That's why they fracture. Fracturing doesn't create more gas. It creates permeability that allows the gas to come out of the rock faster to make it profitable. So you just—the gas is in the rock, it's in these pores, and if you looked at a core sample of the Marcellus shale, you'd never believe that there was any gas in that rock. They cut cores, and it's so tight that you just wouldn't believe that there'd be anything in that rock. But you can look at the big engine sand and it's basically the same way. Until you fracture it and open up the passageways—see, there are natural fractures in there, and what fracturing does is, it connects those. And you pump the water in there and you add a little bit of what they call Aquagel to it, which is ground up clay, and it makes a fluid like, and it carries these little uniform sand grains in there, and your sand grains become the propping agents, like putting a prop here in the ceiling, if your ceiling was sagging. So you're propping that up and that allows the gas to come back in to the pipe, and then you bring it back up through the pipe to the surface and put it in the pipelines. But that's—

MK: So how much water—you say it takes a lot of water?

MR: **00:56:23** Yeah. Yeah, they use—the jobs vary, and as they get into these longer holes, now they're using more water, but you're up in the millions of gallons.

MK: Millions of gallons?

MR: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

MK: Per site?

MR: Per site, yeah.

MK: So they mix clay—you say clay?

MR: They put—a lot of them use—yeah, it makes a thicker water. They thicken the water with a lot of clay—Aquagel.

MK: Aquagel.

MR: It's ground up clay, real fine clay.

MK: Aren't there other chemicals, though, that people talk about?

MR: They've got some—some of it, they put some different—I can't give you a specific name, but a lot of them are—I guess they reveal most of them now, but they—a lot of them are covered by trademarks or—but not so much—there are not many chemical additives to it at all. They don't even use acid anymore. They used to use hydrochloric acid in the older frack jobs to break the cement. When you cement the pipe in the ground, you have to cement it down so it holds in the ground, otherwise it would blow it out of the ground when you put pressure on it. So you—they put hydrochloric acid in it, 15%, and—but it's just small amounts and then you'd dilute that with water, real heavy, once you break the cement then you break the rock just with water. Just hydraulic pressure.

MK: Is that water that can—where does that water go then after—?

MR: Well, a lot of it goes back in the—they get most of it back, probably recover 3/4 of it, comes back and then it's treated. A lot of them are reusing it now. They're putting it back in the pits, treating it, take it to the next job. So we're going to see more of that I think.

MK: Recycling water?

MR: Recycling water right back and then just use it again. You let the sand settle—you get a lot of sand back. You pump sand in there, big quantities of sand, as a propping agent, but it doesn't all stay. Once you release the pressure, your rock has a tendency to come back together and it'll trap a lot of it, but it won't trap it all. So a lot of that comes back, and then you put that in a—put

in a pit there or put it in tanks and a lot of that is trucked off then to the landfills, regulated landfills, and it's so expensive to do all this. That's why it eliminates most of your small companies.

MK: **00:58:58** What's it like to—I'm sitting here as you're telling me all this, and I'm looking back on your career as a gas man in this country—what's it like as an independent, relatively small independent gas producer—what's it like to have these big companies coming in? Do you feel squeezed out at all?

MR: No. No, I've enjoyed working with them because—

MK: Okay.

MR: Because we have leases that we've had before that we worked with them and they're drilling our leases, and they reimburse us some for that. And we're still producing. I still drill a few wells, vertical wells, shallow wells. But I'm not—I'm not drilling any of the horizontal wells. But we've got enough leases around and everything, and you still provide some services for them, or sell them a lease, or—it's good if you're on the royalty end of it. That's the best part of the business. Own the royalty. (laughs) Some people experience that. I just—I just help defend small landowners on royalty. Some of the larger companies would love to have what they call forced pooling. That would force you into a lease whether you wanted to or not. Well, I don't like that. I can remember when I couldn't buy 10 acres. Now I've got more than 10 acres. But I've never forgotten when I couldn't buy 10 acres. And once I got it, I don't want the government telling me, "you got to do this," if you don't want to do it. I mean, if you don't want to lease your property, that's your property, you ought to do what you want to do with it.

MK: We're not talking about the government. We're talking about companies.

MR: Well, the companies—it would require government to do that.

MK: Oh, legislation—

MR: Yeah, legislation would authorize the government to set up a board, and they would determine what they paid you in order to get yours. You own 50 acres, well, that's not large enough to drill horizontal wells. So they want to put together units, and they—a pool—they would call that a—some of them want to go as high as 1,200 acres. They'd put you in a 1,200-acre pool around this table, or they'd go 640 acres, and you're sitting over here and you've got 50 acres, and you don't want to get in on it. That should be your privilege. But the government could—the pooling, they have it out west. And some of them—you know, a lot of our companies are western companies, that's where they come from. But it's a little different out west in that—we have a lot of small landowners in the state of West Virginia, primarily in the northern part of the state. They're having trouble locating all the heirs, where you've got—Marshall County, Wetzel County, Tyler County—you had drilling up there over 100 years ago. That was the big oil fields years ago, in the days of Mike Benedum, and before Mike Benedum even, the old Pennzoil Company, and over the years, those families up there didn't sell off their mineral rights. They passed them down to the kids and the grandchildren. Then you had 4 or 5

divorces in there, and you got stepchildren, and all the others. Well, they can't find them. You can't find the heirs today. Some of them are not on the tax records. So, the unknown heirs, they wanted to maybe just—if they could lease up 65%, then they want to force the other 35% into—well, the state will determine what they out to have. You put the money in escrow, and if they come in and claim it, fine. If they don't, it goes to the state eventually. So, but we have what they call partition suits, or the quiet title. If you go through the partition suit, you advertise the property, you'd advertise all the known heirs, and you put it up for sale. And everybody can bid. But if you own 50% of it, you go there and bid, and you'd bid 50-cent dollars against—if you come in as a stranger, you've got to bid the full dollar. So, it's still—that's been the method that's been utilized for several years, and I still think it's the best route to go because sometimes they might not look very hard for the heirs: Wait a minute, we can go to the government, and the government's going to set the price, and we'll simplify it some. But most people do settle up and they—we're not seeing too many partition suits. But you're only seeing that primarily in the older counties, the older counties that had the older drilling. You get in southern West Virginia, you don't have many small landowners because years ago the companies bought up big blocks of land down there, and you got to live on the land, but you never owned any part of the mineral. So that's taken care of down there. But up in the north here, we still have a lot of small, individual farms. And people love their land, and they should, they paid for it.

MK: **01:04:37** So, you're inclined to want to take the side of the small landowners?

MR: Oh, I do all the time. I do all the time. One of the first awards I got—when I went in the state senate, I served on the judiciary committee for 14 years down there. The first year we had the—they had a judiciary party at the end of the session, and they presented me with an award that was called the "Savior of the Little People." (laughs)

MK: Aww.

MR: They had a little comedy that went with it, but I still take the position. I'm one of the little people. And really it shouldn't be big people/little people, but little landowner, little owner, and I'd always take the—I'd start an argument, a lot of times in judiciary, just to bring out the other side. That's what makes good legislation. If everybody agrees, you only need one. (laughs) But I served on the bank board, and I do the same thing at the bank. Start an argument. And then, every now and then, I just start an argument for the hell of it, take the other side, and then they'd beat me, and I'd say, hell, that's what I wanted anyway. But you have to get there. But, no, I don't—you're paying taxes on your property and everything. Out west—the difference between our mineral system here and out west is that, out west you don't pay any taxes on minerals until you produce them. It makes a lot of sense. Here, we're being taxed all the time for minerals, and you don't know whether there's anything there or not. You got to drill a hole to find out. You don't know whether that coal is that thick or that thick. And it doesn't really have any real value until you sell it. (laughs) It's hard to sell in the ground. You don't get much out of it. But out west, they just don't tax you, but they have a railroad commission out there in Texas that sets up units and everything like that, but you pay taxes.

MK: You pay taxes on—you started to say—

MR: Yeah, you pay taxes out there when you're producing, when you're making money. Here, we pay taxes whether you're making any money or not.

MK: **01:07:23** Well, it sounds to me like that would enable you to sit on vast holdings of minerals as long as you wanted to, until you were ready, say, to start developing them.

MR: No. No, they got a system out there.

MK: They've got a system?

MR: They've got a system out there, if they keep it moving, yeah. Yeah, if you're in a known area—I mean, they're actively producing that area—then they will force you into pooling. But they'll pay you. And you start paying—and they take the taxes right up front. They don't give you the money and then start running you down, like they do here.

CK: Running you down?

MR: Well, get after you for your taxes. Out there, the first purchaser—and I tried to get that bill through here and got defeated—you don't have any delinquent taxpayers. You're the buyer of my gas. I put the gas into a big pipeline. You're paying me for my gas. You deduct my taxes, give it to the state, and you give me what's left. I'm never delinquent. The state's got their money. And here, we only have—we tried to pass this bill 3 or 4 years ago, and we got batted down. You only have 5 or 6 purchasers of gas. You got 500 little producers. And it's easier to chase 5 or 6 purchasers than it is 500 little producers. We could overhaul the tax system, but it's hard to change.

CK: What should go in the mind of a small landowner if somebody comes to him and wants to lease?

MR: Well, he's got bargaining power. They come to you and they offer you $100, and you don't want to lease it for $100, but you might take $1,000. But if you go the other route, where government says you have to get in, you don't have bargaining power anymore. It's in the hands of a commission that might say, well, we think they ought to pay you $300. Well, you might have the ability to get $1,000, or you might want a road—you might want the road changed over here. You might want a nice little pond dug to water your cattle or something like that. These are all bargaining chips that the landowner has. But if you just have a government agency saying, no, you can't have this, you got to do this, we're going to give you $300 or $500 or whatever it may be. But it puts the small individual at a disadvantage in that an awful lot of people are intimidated by dealing with government agencies.

CK: Government pieces?

MR: Yeah. Yeah. Not everybody—I mean, take West Virginia here, for example. You got to deal with people out of Charleston or somewhere like that. A lot of people can't pack up and go to Charleston to make a deal. And a lot of government agencies won't come to your house and sit down and deal with you. And a lot of people say, well, you can do this online. Well, there's a

whole lot of people in West Virginia don't have a computer and can't do it online. And that's the argument that I've put up with a lot of times of—wait a minute, they're fine for those who use them, but everybody can't afford them. Everybody doesn't have them. So, we got to make government convenient to people. Not operate it at the government's convenience. There's a difference. (laughs)

CK: **01:11:14** But a person who's offered a chance to lease should go ahead and do it, you feel?

MR: Well, if they're happy. I mean, if you're happy with it, it can mean some good—depending on the size of your leases and everything—it can be real good for you. Maybe you got children that want to go to college, and you don't have the money to send them. You could get enough money to send them. Or you may want to buy a new car, you may want to take a trip, all these things that are into, everybody's got different financial status and financial abilities, and it's not all about money all the time. I mean, money comes in handy, but it doesn't buy everything. (laughs)

MK: It doesn't buy happiness.

MR: No, sir. And if you're—you know, you're successful when you're satisfied, and that's up to each individual when they're satisfied. It's not how much money you make.

MK: Tell me about—we've talked about the water, the millions of gallons of water that it takes—tell me what's the relationship of natural gas to the air we breathe. What is released when you drill? Is it—I don't have any—

MR: Oh, very little is released when you're drilling. I mean, once you—

MK: I mean, do you get methane?

MR: Well, you do when you drill into it, but it—you don't have a whole lot of methane to start with. I mean, most wells, without fracturing, you don't have a lot that comes out in the atmosphere. Until you fracture, you don't have much gas in the hole. And you don't have anything coming out of there. You're adding water as you're drilling. And a lot of them anymore, once you seal off all the water, all the surface water and everything, you just—you're pumping air down there. You've got an air compressor. You're blowing air down there, and you're blowing rock out with the air. You're actually putting the air back down, and you may get a little dust, but the dust comes out in the flow pipe and you put water on that to water it down and then it all goes in the pit. But you don't—actual drilling of the well, and these horizontal wells are drilled with a fluid, with mud they all it, and it's mud and water mixed—you don't have anything going out in the air. I mean, it's all circulated. They recirculate it, bring it out, and they filter out the rock, and they use that same fluid, go right back and just keep drilling.

CK: And that's the same for processing the gas? Is there—

MR: You don't get any gas until you get to fracturing, and then they flow back—you see some of these wells burning a little bit, they're just flaring, but they just flare that gas temporarily, but

it doesn't last long and—I mean, they want to get it in the line. You don't get any money for that gas going in the air. The money, it comes in through the meter. That's your cash register. And they want to sell as much as they can, so they got what they call big separators, and as the water is bringing—coming back with the gas, your gas comes out the top of the separator and your water goes out the bottom, and then it's contained in tanks and everything and controlled, and your gas is controlled another way. But there's very little ever gets in the air. And once you burn the gas—gas is so efficient—I mean, there's very little goes in the atmosphere as a result of burning, you know, it's a lot different than coal, not so much, I mean, coal is still a great fuel, it's cheap, cheap on the BTUs, but it—and we got some coal that really burns clean. This Sewell coal over here we have is excellent coal for steel, and that's what they're mining over in Randolph now, up there in Randolph and Upshur.

MK: **01:15:23** Up toward Helvetia?

MR: Yeah, uh-hunh (affirmative). And it's—it doesn't put anything in the water. You got trout up there right beside the coal mines. It's a good clean coal. But we're seeing more and more wood. You'd be surprised. I just talked to people recently where the country of France is buying wood chips to generate electricity. They have nuclear and they've got shale gas over there, but they don't want you drilling. Germany's got shale gas and they don't want you drilling. But they'll buy wood. Of course they've got nuclear.

CK: Why won't they drill there?

MR: They don't want to drill.

CK: Why?

MR: I don't know. I've never been to France. (laughs) Or Germany. I think it's crazy. If I was over there, I'd be wanting to drill a well. (laughs)

MK: So, the environmental concerns that you hear these days from people about—these are not things that concern you, knowing—with an insider's view that you have—you're not concerned about the impact of drilling on either air or water?

MR: No, we've been doing that on a smaller scale—I've been in the business 50 years, and I started out with fracture.

MK: Did they call it fracking then?

MR: Yeah. Sure. Same process, on a smaller scale. At one time, they were fracturing with crude oil. They was ahead of me. I've got wells today that I bought from other companies that were fractured with crude oil, small amounts, but crude oil was so dangerous because it—you could ignite it, it would burn. This water is so much safer. You're dealing with high pressure. I mean, you're—these big trucks you see that got big pumps on them, the Halliburton trucks, the B. J. Hughes trucks, the U. S. Well Service trucks—

01:17:41 (end of audio 1)

00:00:00 (begin audio 2)

MR: They've got big hydraulic pumps on there that you're dealing—you're pumping up to 8,000 pounds per square inch. I mean, that's high pressure. If that line blows loose, you—you know, they've got connections on these lines that are going—if that line blows loose and you had crude oil in there, and you got a fire started. I mean, you're liable to burn up 50 people at one time, the men that are working out there. It's still dangerous with water, but that water's not going to burn. And the cost of crude oil today would prohibit using crude oil, but they changed from that years ago. Fracturing came into being, I think, it started out in Oklahoma back in the late '40s. And they've been doing it ever since, been fracturing on a lot smaller scale, but basically it's the same principle. They just went to bigger pumps, more volumes, and it's—they're still doing the things they used to do. And I know there's some concern here in the summertime about—as the streams get low, where do you get the water to do that? Well, I think we're right on the verge of seeing this underground mine water being utilized for fracturing. And we've got acres and acres of water underground in this state that most people don't even realize is there.

MK: It's mine water—mine waste water?

MR: Well, it's the water that went in and filled up the voids where the coal was taken out. But you get up in the Morgantown area, get up in the Clarksburg area, you've got acres and acres underground there that's full of water. And it's not bad water. We got mines right here at Adrian, West Virginia—we allow the city—we've got pumps in the mines—we allow the city to run these pumps and put water in the Buckhannon River to help supply Buckhannon. It's good water. And there's—I don't know how many acres is up there, but you take you out—you take out 6 foot of coal and you go for 1,000 acres, you've got a pretty big lake underground. And you get in the Morgantown area, you get the Pittsburgh coal where it's thicker than that. It's 8 foot high up there, or in some places 10 foot. We just take acres and acres. There's the—one of Consol's big mines there at Robinson Run, they worked for 30 years up there in that one mine, or 35 years. There been people that went to work there and retired there. It's unusual to see that. You normally don't work one place and retire in one coal mine. (laughs) But they have up there. You can imagine how many tons of coal they've taken out of there. Well, an awful lot of that is filled up with water now. So the water's there. Just take it out. It may need a little treatment in some places. Pennsylvania just—they just had a bill up there. I don't think it—I don't know that it passed, but they're encouraging the use of mine water in Pennsylvania to fracture wells with, and I think it's a great idea.

CK: What has taken so long with all these—?

MR: Well, it's easier to get. (laughs) It's easier to back up to the stream out here, especially when they're overflowing, you know—we either have not enough water or we have too much water. (laughs) And what we don't use here goes on down the Mississippi. (laughs) It goes to the Gulf of Mexico. But you take southern West Virginia—they generally—invariably have 1 or 2 floods a year in southern West Virginia. Generally a lot of damage is suffered down there. It just

—those steep hills down there, it runs off too fast. You can't hold it. And we've had rains, you know—it doesn't rain like it always did, we get downpours or nothing. (laughs)

CK: **00:04:16** Does it—so, the rain's different than it used to be?

MR: Well, I think it is. I think—I think I've experienced more wind, you know, like the derecho here, when was it? In June there, 2 years ago, we had a wind storm in June. Now, I've been here—I've never left West Virginia—and I never did see wind like that in West Virginia. (laughs) I had to—

MK: Like a microburst or a—whatever they call it?

MR: I don't know, but I own that farm right on top of the hill there, the big red barn on top of the hill—

MK: At—?

MR: At Barbour County, years ago, towards Elkins.

MK: Okay.

MR: You look up at the big barn. Well, it took one of my buildings up there and set it on top of the house. It just blew it off the foundation, it was bolted down, and, I mean, it picked this building up and put it on top of the house. It was June 29th two years ago. (laughs) And I had never seen wind like that. It broke pine trees, like this, it just snapped them off. But I don't think we can blame that on fracturing and we can't blame it on Marcellus. (laughs) It's—we have different wind currents. And it's—now, I've seen worse winters than this. I know this has been nasty, but if you were here in '77-'78, we had a much worse winter. We had 30 inches of snow, and we were below zero for 30 days I think. And the water lines, right here in Buckhannon, I remember they had Main Street dug up, the water lines were frozen right here at Main Street, and they were frozen in Weston, right down Main Street. And they're pretty deep. But we were working that winter. We were drilling. And we'd fill these water tanks up to fracture with. And you'd go back to fracture, you only had half a tank of water, the rest of it was ice. It just froze around the outside of the tank. (laughs) So, it was hard to work. You had to build fires under the valves to keep any water flowing. I don't want to do that again. (laughs)

MK: You are such a wealth of information. I feel like we could sit here for days and not even scratch the surface, but I think for today you've been awful generous, and I feel like we've taken a lot of your time.

MR: Well, I enjoyed it.

MK: This has been very, very—is there—?

CK: It's very entertaining, too.

MK: What should we have asked you that we didn't ask you? I don't—I try not to ask too much myself.

CK: What should we have asked? Anything?

MR: **00:07:05** Oh, some of the experiences maybe in legislature. (laughs)

MK: Well, that's a whole other—let's do another interview on that sometime.

MR: I just—we had this—I just got in the Business Hall of Fame up here at Morgantown recently. And the former Governor Caperton was there. So he had a written speech and had this—MIT graduate—he had a written speech. And this University of Southern Cal graduate, he had a written speech. And I got up and started just telling stories, and went on and went on, and the former governor came up to me later on, and he said, "Mike, did you know what you were going to say tonight?" And I said, "Hell, no, Governor." I said, "I had 2 glasses of wine, and if I'd had another one, I'd have talked all night." (laughter) But I told the story about it—they had this riverboat gambling up for—trying to get it passed down there, make it legal in the state of West Virginia—and every lobbyist in town was hired to push that one piece of legislation. Well, they were wearing us out, so the governor called a few of us in, and we go down and sit down in his office, and he said, "What are we going to do? You think we ought to run it or not?" And, "Oh, no, we can't run that," said, "hell, we'll get crucified." And I said, "Governor, I'll tell what we'll do." I said, "We own the Ohio River, clear over to the high water mark on the other side." I said, "We could rent the river and let Ohio run it, and we'll take 25% of the gross." He looked at me and said, "Hell, Mike, you can't rent a river." I said, "Governor, I never had one." Everybody started laughing. (laughs)

MK: Let Ohio run it and then—

MR: We'd take a cut.

MK: Take 25%.

MR: Yeah. We had this bill up one time down there—they had these video lotteries that was in these gasoline stations and little coffee shops and everything. Well, we had this donut shop right here. Richard, my buddy, was running it. He's paying $2,500 a month down here in rent. Well, it takes a lot of donuts to pay $2,500 a month. So, my good buddy, Senator Craigo, who owns Tudor's Biscuit World, he was on a crusade to get these to all the mom and pop stores, he called them. So, we're good friends, I mean, we get on the floor and we're debating and they pointed out something—if you have a Class A beer license, you could retain the video lottery. So I get up to ask a question: How do you qualify for a Class A beer license? You have to consume ¾ of the beer on the premise if you sell it. And I said, "Well, assuming I had a video lottery, I got a Class A beer license, I got 4 bottles of beer, and I sold 3 of them, and they had to drink them on the place, I'd qualify." He said, "I think you're right, Senator." I said, "I'm with you." We passed a bill out of there, I get hold of the ABC Commissioner, and I sent their inspector over to the donut shop, and I said, "You go over and help Richard fill out an application and tell him to buy 4 bottles of beer, put them in the back room or wherever, he can charge $10 a bottle if wants to,

and make sure they drink it on the place." He still has a video lottery. (laughs) And Fanny Siler used to write for the *Charleston Gazette*. She wrote us up and she said, "In Buckhannon, instead of Dunkin' Donuts, they've got drunken donuts." (laughter)

MK: Three-quarters anyway. (laughs)

MR: Yeah. (laughs)

MK: Well, thank you very much. This has been great. This has been great.

00:11:20 (end of audio 2)

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