

Tucker County, West Virginia Flood Audio Recordings

Cleta and Norman Long Oral History

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Interviewer: CK – Carrie Kline

Transcriber: NCC

Cleta Long: At night I made it out there [laughter].

Norman Long: She was just about 10 feet ahead of me all the way [laughter].

Carrie Kline: How did that night start?

NL: Nicely.

CL: He did that. Both of those. This is Mr. Clemenson.

Michael Kline: So, you are just holding on.

NL: I just went to feed the hogs and the horse and just came back to the house and started to eat supper. I heard a roar and then I ran out and the water was going over Cleta's car then.

CL: Just washing it right out of the driveway.

NL: Just washing it right out of the driveway.

CK: So, what time did you go out to feed the hogs?

NL: Oh, I'd say about 6:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. along there. It wasn't over fifteen minutes until the water went to pouring through there, and there wasn't any coming through whenever I left the barn.

CL: It just sounded like something roaring. It just came down all at once.

NL: All out on the porch and looked down and it just had her car covered. It was going over the top of it. I ran up there and cut the fence. I thought I would get my horse out, but I couldn't get into him. By the time I got back to the house, it was washing him down through the front of the house or down through the bottoms. That's the only time I shed tears for a long time since I came back from overseas [laughter].

CK: You could call to him but he couldn't come to you?

NL: He couldn't make it out. The water was too swift. It was just taking him down.

CL: Anyway, he got a rope and tried to tie the car and the truck fast to the pine trees so that they wouldn't wash away. By that time, it was coming up onto the front porch that quickly. So, I told him, I said, "If that starts coming through behind the house, we've got to get out of here." He said, "Oh, it isn't behind the house yet." But I told him he'd better go see. He took the light and went out to see and it was coming down through behind the house by this time too [laughter]. We just grabbed our coats on and a blanket and a package of cookies. That's all I could think of was something to keep us warm [laughter] and something to eat.

NL: All night long, I ran off without any chewing tobacco. All night long, she was cramming

them over cigarettes in my mouth and chocolate cookies [laughter].

CL: Every time he'd start shivering, I'd get him a chocolate cookie. I thought it might warm him up a little [laughter].

CK: Because what happened? You left the house with your cookies and then what?

CL: When we went off the back porch, the water was coming up on the back porch by then. Out through the garden, it was waist deep. We went over to a little calf barn and went in there after he loosened the dog. The dog was swimming right at the end of his chain [laughter]. So, we got in this calf barn, ran the calves out, and got in there. We were only in there like ten minutes until it was coming in there. So, we had to just head for the hills [laughter]. Of course, the calves were up against there so they didn't drown. The dogs followed us too. I left this dog, the small one, in the house. I figured she would die in the cold or I'd drop her somewhere [laughter] as she couldn't have walked. So, I just left her in the house and I guess she fared all right. She was upstairs the next day. But we came out around the hill then trying to get to Edith's house. When we got to Reservoir Hollow, which is normally a little stream that goes through a small culvert, it was really wide. I couldn't jump it, but Norman did. So, I had to step into it and thinking it was probably knee deep. But I knew it was swift, so I told him, "Hold on to me, because it might knock me down." But I had no idea. I went in almost up under my arms and it was just like a battering ram. It just knocked my legs right out from under me.

NL: She was heavy, all right, but she weighed 500 pounds in water [laughter].

CL: [laughter] So, I was wet immediately up to my neck because I just went right down then. If he hadn't have had a hold of me, I'd have been in there drinking in about seconds flat because it was really swift. Just a little tiny string.

CK: You just bush whacked over the hill in the pouring rain and the pitch black to the point?

CL: Yes. Well, we had the flashlight and of course, he knows the way really well because we have a farm on out on the hill where he plants corn. We came out through there and all the way to this hollow over behind this house. It's called Rebel Run. But it's usually, oh, 2, 3 foot wide at the most. That night it was about 12 or 15 feet wide. So, we knew we couldn't get across that. The dog got in it and he's a big Airedale and he just went rolling down through them. We thought, oh, now he's drowned. But he got out of it. But we knew when he couldn't get across it, that we couldn't. So, well, Norman probably could have, but I couldn't [laughter]. So, we didn't know what to do. We were in sight to this house. We could see the barn and the lights over here and everything, but we couldn't get across that one little old creek. So, we turned around and went back out to the cornfield because there was no place else to shelter. He had left a couple shocks of fodder out there. He hadn't got it hauled in yet. So, I sat down on the side of the tree. By this time, we were both soaking wet; he from the rain and me from falling in and the rain. He put a pole up and then piled the fodder up around us. We sat there all night just listening to those horrible noises, houses tearing up over Hendricks. It was really bad. We prayed for daylight and everything else [laughter]. It was a terrible night.

NL: It wasn't too bad if she'd have had a little more Indian in her. But you see, my grandmother was Indian [laughter]. She didn't know how to make it through there.

CK: She did make it through it.

CL: I made it [laughter].

NL: She could have stood it. I could have struck her with some good camp rocks back there where Mr. Simeon lived a long time. I know she couldn't make it up to that.

CL: That's a longway. I bet it's halfway up the top of the mountain.

NL: We moved in the mountain there.

CK: In a cave?

NL: No, it's my camper rocks back there.

CL: It's like a ledge.

NL: It's just about like this room.

CK: A ledge.

NL: This is dry.

CK: Did you keep wood in?

NL: Yes. I pile that full of – I burn out some, I cut some, put in. It was right back at the top of the mountain in there. All of us used that. We always did.

CL: That was probably because to a mile and half straight up [laughter].

NL: My granddad showed me just a little. We've stayed there a lot of nights. At least I've stayed there for weeks at a time.

CK: What mountain is that that they're at?

NL: McGowan Mountain.

CK: McGowan.

NL: There used to be a fire tower around on top of us here. Then camp rocks were right under below that.

CL: But it's a longways to up there.

NL: Yes. She could have never made it up there.

MK: What did the river sound like when you were sitting under the –

NL: I never heard anything like it before.

CL: It was just unbelievable. Just like half a dozen freight trains or I don't know. It was, well, probably even more than that. It just roared all night until you nearly had to yell so that we could hear each other. It was just really loud. Plus, all those things breaking up. Once we heard a really loud explosion and we imagined that it was our gas tank, the heating gas. I had about probably 350 gallons of gas in the tank. We thought that it might have been that, but I don't know. It may have been a gas line over in Hendricks or somewhere that blew up. But you could just hear things just crashing all night long. So, we were sure Hendricks was totally gone. We were right, most of it was [laughter]. But the next morning as soon as it got daylight, we crawled out of there and went back to the house. We kept seeing this green roof and I said, "My goodness, the house is torn apart." Norman said, "No, the house is still all there." I said, "Well, what is that green roof? Did your barn have a green roof on it?" He said, "No." When we got a little closer, we could see it was the old, big house that we used just to store things. Had totally passed our house and turned completely around and was down on the neighbor's property.

NL: It was not on my place. So, I mean, tear it down as quick as I can. [laughter]

CK: [laughter]

CL: [laughter] It was unbelievable that it stayed all together and washed all the way down there, that big, old house, until it was below.

NL: Yes. They have two boards broke down.

CL: It was above our house and now it's below our house. It passed right by.

CK: Did you build your house?

CL: No, honey. It's been there for about seventy-five or eighty years.

NL: Dad's eighty-six years old. He said that house stood there for a long time. He said that's the first he ever saw water up to it. He was raised up here at the mouth of Otter Creek.

CK: Is your dad still alive? Your dad is still alive? Is he?

NL: Well, he is in better shape than I am in [laughter].

CL: He still walks off Fork Mountain.

NL: He lives on top of that mountain. He tells me to move up out of this sand and I'll live a long

time. That's what he told me the other day.

CL: He walks 3 miles into Parsons and carries stuff up in a sac on his back.

NL: He'll pick his sack of flour and ride up there with it.

CK: What's his name?

NL: Ry Long.

CK: Ry?

CL: Riley.

NL: Yes. He's older than Joe was. He's brother to Joe. But he's older than Joe. He's the oldest one.

CK: Well, Joe must have kept him from me [laughter].

CL: You never met Riley Long?

CK: No, I never met him.

NL: You're going to have to go up and meet him.

CK: I will have to meet him. I hadn't heard his name. I've heard a lot about your grandmother. That's who I've heard the most about.

NL: My grandmother, Indiana?

CK: That's right.

NL: I wish I had my album down here. I'd show you her picture. You can see why I can make us a good den [laughter].

CL: They lived in a house all the way on top of Fork Mountain. They don't have electricity. Just in the past year they've had water in the house and just the past year they've had a bathroom. But he's eighty-six and she's eighty-seven.

CK: Your mom is still young.

CL: Basically, they're healthy.

NL: They do their farming with an old, white horse shit. The Lord only knows how old that horse is. I tried to get him to trade him off and get him a young one. He says, "Which one will last long as my old bell?" So, he still got him.

CL: It was raining so hard while we were out there in that fodder shock. We had matches, but you couldn't get a fire started at all. Norman even pulled some stuff out from under rocks and so forth, that were dry and cut shavings. But it was raining so hard that it would put the fire out. You just couldn't get one started.

NL: Anyway, the next morning I was worried about my stuff. I've got stuff up there that I wouldn't take anything for, but I thought it took nothing for it that night. I mentioned this one machine I have. I've had it for years. She said, "I hope you never find that thing again." That was the first thing I found when I went in the barn. It was just sitting up there with the lid on, just as pretty [laughter].

CL: But don't mention what it was [laughter].

NL: It was more comparable. [laughter]

CK: [laughter]

CL: [laughter] But he hasn't used it [laughter].

NL: I took it and I put it back there where I know it's safe keeping it now, the water won't get it.

CK: Were you thinking about people or things as you walked back to your house?

NL: I was just thinking of everything.

CK: Everything.

NL: I just couldn't imagine.

CL: All night long he kept thinking maybe the horse would walk out and come to us or something.

NL: I hardly thought of anything else.

CL: Once we heard something making a noise, it must have been one of the dogs. The one got in the fodder shock with us rode in my [inaudible]. He licked himself dry and then he tried to lick me dry [laughter]. That we heard something making a noise once and he crawled out to see. He was sure it was a horse out there, but it wasn't. I don't know what was making the noise. Probably just the wind. The wind started blowing really hard too in addition to all that rain.

NL: I've got a big bear trap that I wouldn't take anything for it blowing to my granddad. Never did use it or nothing, but I just keep it for a keepsake. I was worried about that. I looked for three days for it. Joy over here was walking up through one of those big sandbars. There was just the ring on top of the sand and he pulled that up out of there. That tickled me more than anything else. I took that and put it with my steel [laughter].

CL: [laughter]

NL: I got them both hid back there. No one knows where it's at except me and dad.

CL: They're both illegal [laughter].

CK: The bear trap's illegal?

CL: It's illegal to use.

NL: See, all that stuff been going down to the family.

[talking simultaneously]

NL: I have made him a lot of drink in that machine [laughter].

CL: Just like the steel, they're illegal to use. They'd be wrong and dangerous.

NL: They got him a new one and he gave me that.

MK: What did you see in the morning when you looked across the river at Hendricks?

CL: We really couldn't tell that it was even Hendricks. We thought for a minute that we've gone somewhere where we're not supposed to be or something because it didn't look like across the river at Hendricks normally.

NL: Well, tell them what I argued with about there.

CL: When we came down the road that comes out close to the Denison property up there, I thought that we were coming into the main road. Norman said, "That isn't the road. The road there." He said, "That's those fields." I said, it couldn't be because it just looked like it had washed sand up on the roadbed. But really, we were where there had been great piles of old brush and stuff where they had cut timber and left all these. All that was gone and it was just like a sandy bottom like we were coming out into the road. But it was unbelievable. Hendricks, it just looked like another place. It really didn't look like it would.

NL: We got to look at the houses over here. Buzzy Turner, he's a good friend of ours, and I got to argue with her. She said, "That's Buzzy's house laying in there, tilted up here on the side." I said, "No, it's not." I said, Buzzy's house was white." But it was. Buzzy had his house painted last summer and I didn't notice it.

CL: It was just different. You couldn't recognize.

NL: Then a few nights after, I was back here coon hunting again in the mountain. I looked across there and it's just the little streak of lights through Hendricks and Hamilton. They're not

half as big as they used to be.

CK: But you were coon hunting a couple of days later.

NL: Oh, yes. That's my life.

CL: Yes [laughter].

NL: Sooner coon hunting and anything.

CL: Luckily, the coon dogs didn't drown [laughter].

NL: I'll be right in after the dog gets here that night [laughter].

CL: If he hadn't have gotten out [laughter].

NL: But the good part is she can swim good and I can't swim a licking. I had to take her out of the water [laughter].

CK: Your grandma didn't teach you that, huh?

NL: She couldn't swim either.

CK: But you lived on the river all your life and didn't swim at all.

NL: I did. But see, she lived back on top of the mountain there all her life.

CL: He can wade up to his chin because he can't swim a lick.

NL: On above Uncle Paul's in there around top of the mountain. That's where her home was. That's where she raised her family. She was 105 when she died. She's buried up there.

MK: Was that Indiana?

NL: Huh?

MK: Indiana?

NL: Right. I've got a picture up at the house there, a picture of her.

CK: Up at what house? Your house?

NL: Yes, upstairs.

CK: You still had stuff in the house?

NL: I've got what I had upstairs. I had it upstairs.

CK: Aren't you lucky?

NL: I go up every once in a while and look things over. I'm figuring someday really soon I'd like to build back up there. I like it there so well I can't leave it.

CL: We still have one bedroom suit upstairs and I had a little electric organ up there and a rollaway bed. That was it [laughter].

NL: Downstairs, the muck and mud was just about that deep. I just took a shovel and went in there and started and shoveled it out there.

CL: The mud was even in –

NL: Floors were just all buckled up with that. If I ever do fix it up, I'm going to have to put floors in it. But hopefully, I can build a new house.

CL: The mud was even in the freezer on my refrigerator and there was mud even in that. It would be impossible to get everything cleaned up, I think. I don't see how those people downtown are getting those houses cleaned out.

NL: Deep freeze it was all then [inaudible].

CK: Well, I'll tell you downtown is a lot more accessible than your place was.

CL: Well, probably.

CK: Volunteers come in, they can get to Main Street and they don't think about the house up Elk Lick.

CL: They might have some high-pressure cleaning things too that they could do something with. But I really don't see how you could possibly get that mud cleaned out of things. We've washed and washed. Some of the stuff they hosed it down and it still has just like a muddy film on it that I don't know how you would get off. I guess you –

MK: Yes, everybody says that.

NL: I don't think it can be cleaned up.

CL: I don't think it can be. I thought maybe I had a lot of things made of wood and I thought that they would be all right. But the legs are splitting and they're coming apart. Even the old antique things, I thought that they would hold together [laughter] but they're not. They're just falling apart. Both of our porches are gone. It washed the foundation from under two corners and then washed through under the house. So, evidently something must be gone in the middle. The floor is kind of sagged like this. Then we got a letter from FEMA saying that we were

eligible for \$1,200 in minimal repair [laughter] so that we could get back in our house. The fellow came when we weren't even here. Joe went up with him. He drove a rental car as far as he could go. Then he walked on in. He really paid close attention to the house because he thought that we had a pump and a well rather than the spring and reservoir. Because on the paper it tells you that this money must be spent for these specific purposes. We don't even have a pump or a well.

NL: We got a reservoir in the mountain. They're about 400 feet above the hollow there.

CL: I don't how they determine those things so I called them then.

CK: \$1,200, would that pay for a new floor?

CL: [laughter]

NL: That won't put a floor around it.

CK: That hardly would.

CL: I doubt it.

NL: \$1,200 we'd rather buy the material with price of stuff now.

MK: So, this guy came up to appraise the damage? What type of –

CL: Supposedly. We weren't here.

MK: Did he leave a paper for you?

CL: No, he took Edith's grandson up with him and he just looked around the outside and left.

MK: Why did he mention a pump and a well?

CL: I have no idea.

NL: I don't believe he was at our place. I believe it was some other place and looked at it.

CL: But Joe took him up. Joe said he just looked around a little bit and said, "It's pretty bad, isn't it," and turned around and left. We didn't know how they determined that. So, I called and she said, "Well, he was there. He walked in. It says there's no roads or a very narrow path and no electric poles or anything. So, she said he must have been there." I said, "Well, he certainly wasn't in the house because the house was locked up." Norman fastened the doors back and put the window back in that was broken out and locked it out because we've had so many people going up there just to look.

NL: Well, there was a path into it because I took a D6 in there those two days before and plowed

the road in.

CL: There still isn't any road, only what he did.

NL: He was sent out and got the wrong place wrote down [laughter].

CK: So, what do you think? You have this little road and you're really thinking about going back and building a house, even though.

CL: Well, we hope that they will put a road back up there come spring anyway.

NL: Oh, I'm going to build back there. There isn't no doubt about it. I was just born just the next farm up there and all. I'll always be there.

CL: There's a little flat.

CK: Is there still the little flat?

NL: Oh, yes.

CL: The little flat up against the hill, yes. Our garden is still there. It didn't wash the topsoil off of it.

NL: I pushed a 6 foot. I measured the sand that was on that. It was just 6 foot of sand down in the lower side of the chair. I got a D4 dozer the other day and worked up there all day and I didn't get it all pushed off.

CL: Off the garden.

NL: I was always kind of fast with one of them. I built all the roads back through here on the Forest Service and everything. I couldn't get all that sand moved. It was just like pushing water. You get a blade full and it just slides off of the ends. I'd never pushed sand before in my life [laughter].

CL: It's really deep.

CK: You wonder where it all came from, all that sand.

NL: Oh, the river is a hundred feet deeper than it used to be. It cleaned that river out until it's just way deeper than it used to be.

CL: Our meadow just looks like the riverbed. Up above our house it looks like a bomb's been dropped. It's devastating.

NL: But if you go up there and look, there's a rock pushed out of the river on top of the sod. It can be cleaned off and pushed back in.

CL: But it'll take a lot of topsoil with it when they do.

NL: Oh, yes, it's going to take a lot of it.

CL: Then a lot of places the topsoil is just gone.

NL: I was just getting them bottoms build up until it could raise something on them.

MK: Did you have any kind of a premonition about this flood? Any sense that it was going to happen?

CL: No. People would say to us, "Why don't you get out of that place?" Because the water came over the road down at Elk Lick three, four times a year and would wash out the bridge. If we saw the river coming up, we would hurry into town and buy groceries, whatever we needed and go back. Because as long as we were at home, we were fine. We would rather be caught in than caught out because at least if we were in, we knew the water wasn't going to come in our house. It never had before.

NL: We had done that, that day. We had gone out and got a little grocery and brought it back in.

CL: I had washed clothes and then we hurried back in because we knew it was going to come over the road. But that didn't concern us because as long as we were in, we were all right. Even in 1954, the water only – and there was a major flood that covered all these bottoms down below. Of course, it didn't wash anything away except little chicken houses or hog pens or something like that. But even in [19]54, it didn't come above the pine trees that stood in front of our house. So, when we saw it coming up on the porch, it was just something really unbelievable that it could come up there. Then to break through behind the house and come down behind the house yet and to do the things that it did, because our house was on a raise. It was probably what? How many feet were we from the river?

NL: Oh, goodness. It was about 300 feet from the river.

CK: Over but not up.

CL: We were probably 30 feet above the river level. Yes. At least 30, maybe 40 feet above the river level.

NL: Yes.

CL: Because there was a nice, little level.

NL: I guess on the way at the end of the back over there about 20 feet on the other side of the house.

CL: That little calf barn is probably another 300 feet, isn't it –

NL: Yes.

CL: – from the house. Plus, up against the hill a little bit.

NL: It went just about 20 feet up against the hill on the other side.

CL: It didn't wash the little calf barn away that it was up in it.

NL: Then it pushed the floor out. It must have raised it up and took the floor.

CL: In our house – this was really strange – we had these big, old pine trees beside the house. All these years we've been worried that they might blow out and fall down on the house. So, we were going to have them cut down. They were the only thing that saved the house. All the other outbuildings and the other buildings washed away. The barn and the garage and all of the meat house and the corn crib and everything just washed away. But those trees caught all that debris and broke the water from the house. That's the only reason that we even had the house left there.

NL: When I built that barn, I didn't think water could ever move it. I set poles and a nail to them. The poles were the frame.

CL: Set them in concrete.

NL: I cemented them in. It was pretty near a solid cement floor.

CL: They were great locusts. They weren't poles. They were locust logs [laughter] being carried in on his back and put up there too.

NL: Oh, I skidded them in there.

CL: Well, but I mean you'd put them up.

NL: The three of them, Robin, and his boys, had to help me set.

CL: You put them up.

NL: I didn't think water could ever move that. Oh, I dug holes down there about 8 feet and had them down in the ground and cement poured around.

CL: Now there's just a big hole there.

NL: There are big holes where every one of those post pulled out. I know a big dozer wouldn't upset that.

CL: Someone said that they clocked the river at one point when they could get down to it going 40 miles an hour. I believe it because it was really going fast.

MK: How could they clock it?

CL: I guess with some sort of instruments that they have at the timber and watershed lab, they can – I don't know what they measure it.

NL: They just guess the same as I do. I spent thirty some years [laughter].

CL: Well, no. The timber and watershed, they have something that they can measure the speed of the water when they could get to it. But after they, of course, started coming up in the bottom. But now that's what someone said that they had the velocity of it.

NL: I bet you a lot because you're doing 30 mile an hour and he went through the bottom. So, he was just a fighting or trying to come out.

CL: [laughter] Oh God.

NL: He couldn't make her though. He couldn't get turned around in it. He'd try to turn around and he'd turn him back around. I don't figure he went very further if something hit him.

CL: We've never heard or saw anything of him or the barn or none of the hay or anything. We've never even found a scrap that looked like the barn.

NL: I had a set of hornets in there I'd give \$185 for, and I can't find them even. I had them special made out here at Oakland.

CL: He was so big. He weighed more than 1,700 pounds. You'd have thought that he would have been strong enough to have come out of it. But he must have gone right in the mainstream of the river.

NL: He was one of the strongest horses I ever seen. I drove a team for a long time in the woods, but I never had a team that could move the load he could. I hope I can replace him this week, but I know I can [laughter].

CK: Will you bring it here?

NL: No, I'm going to bring him here until I get me a barn build up down the hill.

CL: Never put another one in that bottom again [laughter].

NL: I never passed another horse in that bottom. I'll be afraid of that as long as I live now.

MK: Do you think it could flood that bad again?

NL: Yes, I believe it could the way the river's filled up, up there. The river is filled up right on the upper end of the bottom there to this current level.

CL: It probably will if they don't reach ten in the –

NL: A winter night or two whenever the winter rain and everything, there's water that come back down through the bottom there. I was up there watching it. There's water that comes back down through there.

CL: It washed our road out again. Down below they had just put culverts in.

NL: I guess they don't turn the river out there. They place them with a nickel there.

CL: They had just put culverts in and gotten us a road. We'd only had a road for two days when it came up and washed it out again.

NL: I sat there and watched it come down through there again. Oh, it only got about that deep. But that was deep enough.

CL: It will as long as it's like it is because it just has a new course down through there. It doesn't even have to raise all that much now to come down through. There's nothing there to stop it. It's just straight through like this bottom down here.

NL: If you're here in the daylight, you could see what happened down there.

CK: We did see what happened.

NL: It just filled a mouth of Green Hole up there, the entrance where it goes out, and pushed it down through the bottom. I don't know whether they'll ever take that out or not.

CK: I was curious to thinking Scott and I about a week after the flood, and we had talked a lot to Joe when he was alive about when he logged when he was about sixteen, and they clear cut these woods when it was virgin timber. I'm wondering about what happened at that point when they had stripped all the big trees off.

NL: Well, the difference was they logged with horses some days. They didn't build all these roads like we have today. These roads are what's carrying the water off. I built hundreds of miles of those roads. When we first started the Fernow Forest up here, I skidded that with a team. We started out with horses there. They didn't have no dozer or nothing. As soon as they could afford to get a dozer, they started building these roads. I've noticed Elk Lick out here, it used to stay all just a normal stream. Now it looks raised and it goes clean and dry, then the water just runs off as fast as it comes.

CL: They have to clear so much more land now.

CK: To get the same amount.

CL: Yes, right, to get the same amount of timber off to make it big enough with a tractor.

NL: Now, I can take you back to Green Mountain there. That place has never been logged. I'll show you where they logged with horses. Dad and all of them worked in there. Those old, logged roads are there. You can walk them and follow them. But they're not roads like these where they're built with dozers. I always have been against that. But I made a lot of money, I don't [laughter]. That was my bread and butter back in those days and I had to do it or stay there.

CL: Tell them how long you worked for the Forest Service.

NL: I was with them thirty-two years.

CL: What did you do when you started?

NL: When I started, I started driving team and cutting.

CL: Then he cut timber for them.

NL: With the cross-cut saws, me and Daniel Hardy laying over here in Bretz. Now, he's dying with cancer. Me and him were to the heart at first. We cut the first tree on that job and skidded it with a team of horses. One of them was mine, one was my brother's.

CL: They made him a real nice book when he retired and put pictures of all the different things that they had done on the Fernow, the different experiments that they had tried. I wish we had it to show it to you all. Come up when we get back home [laughter] if we ever get back home.

NL: They come out there one time with upsetting the tree. It was leaning back this way. Just they wanted to fall it the other way and they came out with a hydraulic jack to do that [laughter]. Cut a notch in it up here and a notch down here and set the jack in. Naturally full of meanness, I couldn't pump it with a jack handle. I took a peavey and stuck in there. I said, "I believe I can lift her with this." Boy, I just made the fluid fly [laughter]. They went and got another jack and had done the same thing. They quit with me [laughter].

MK: Tell me about the Long people.

NL: Now what do you want to know about them? Been the onerous thing this ever was [laughter]. Cleta could tell you that better than I could. I was sort of ashamed of it [laughter].

MK: Ashamed of it.

NL: Yes. Could you talk about the Longs?

CL: About the Longs?

NL: She wrote a story on them.

CL: [laughter]

NL: Oh, no [laughter].

CL: No. This you don't need to put down.

MK: Well, just put down what you know.

CL: I just want you to know, don't do that. I'm not going to say it. I'm going to say that I don't have some – Mr. Grumble, he did say, he said it to be true, that he could do more work in a day than his wife could do in two. So, Mrs. Grumble, she did say, and she said it to be true, well, if you can do more work in a day than I can do in two, then you can do the housework and I'll follow the plow. So, she said, "Now, don't you forget to watch that speckled hen unless she goes astray. Don't you forget to have that spun of yarn that I spun yesterday. Don't forget to have the dinner right on time. Don't forget to churn the butter and get the milk out to the cooler or something," she said. Then he said he forgot to watch the speckled hen. She did go astray. He forgot to have the dinner right on time. He forgot the skin of the yarn that his wife spun yesterday. Then in the end of it, he said, "I swore by all the stars on earth and all the stars in heaven, my wife could do more work in a day than a man could do in seven.

[laughter]

That's the end of it. I used to know it all but I've forgotten a part of it. Might get it together if I get mad.

CK: Changed his mind after he walked in her shoes.

CL: Yes. There are too many things for him to do. "Envy me and the chance of sounding ungrateful, I must say my peace do or die. When I overheard folks talking envy, for the life of me I can't see why. The lady was saying, "These flood folk, they sure do have it made. They're getting free food, housing, clothing, and even not working as paid." Well, I had to walk on when I heard her not trusting my temper to keep. But when I laid down in a friend's house in bed, I found that I just couldn't sleep. So, I got up and wrote down my feelings, the one thing in this world that's free. Lady, if you read this story, I'm a flood victim, don't envy me." Then I went on to tell about what all I hadn't gotten that they promised [laughter].

CK: Go ahead.

CL: Well, no. It's [laughter] not quite up to par. But I started it [laughter].

MK: Can you do the one about the flood that you published?

CL: As soon as I find it.

MK: What'd you call it?

CL: I'll have to have my glasses here. She wrote the title. She put "Thankful for a Fodder

Shock." "It was just an ordinary evening when the river was running quite high. For so many times I've been flooded in. But my house there was snug, high, and dry. I'm safe, I said, it's been before to the trees that stood out from my door, but never in, not even when the storm of [19]54. Then just at dark, a strange new sound with a roar unreal like a train, we peered through the windows and wondered if could that be the sound of the rain. We grabbed our coats, ran out with the light, then stared in horror at the terrible site of water washing our car down the lane. Up to the porch, the rushing waves came. So helpless we watched as our beautiful horse admired by all folks passing by with strong muscle legs and his huge body weight drifting by like a leaf on the tide. We tied fast the car and the truck to the trees, grabbed the blanket and untied the dog. Then off to the hills lying back of the house through water now floating with logs. We sat in the calf barn, bare minutes passed by until water rose even to floor. Again, up the mountain we hurried away while rain like a spigot did pour. No shelter up here, so we must travel on to an aunt's house in old Brooklyn Heights. If my crippled old legs will last until then, we'll be safe from the storm in the night. But the rugged, old mountain seems steeper in dark. Rambles caught and I fell many times. My husband's strong arm pulled me back from the grasp of a stream that threatened great harm. We heard crash of houses and trees going down and the snap as the bridge cable gave. I thought how we worked to save the old span and my tears mingled in with the rain. We crossed over the mountain to old Rebel Run. Alas, there's no way we could cross. Though we searched up and down, the calm, little stream was a torrent both rushing and wide. Oh, where could we go from the wind and the rain that chilled us right down to our bones? Then we thought of a fodder shock left in the field way back on the mountain we'd come. So, we turned and went back and with fingers now numb, built a shelter, and quickly crept in. Not a dry thread remained. The dog shivered too as he crouched by my side from the rain. He licked off his fur and then licked at my coat. Though in vain, the poor dog did try. Our last spite of all for I knew if I didn't, I'd surely break down and cry. We prayed that the rain and the wind first would stop. Then we prayed for the light of the day, not knowing the path the destruction took while we waited the long night away. With day's first drill light, we stretched our stiff legs and hiked back to our house to see. But the site turned us cold for the water still ran. The rest you wouldn't believe. It looked not our farm. The meadows were gone and the house so curiously stayed. Three vehicles wrecked, barn and buildings all gone. Great holes marked the place of their grave. So, back around the mountain we trudged once again. By now, we could wait for every run. But when we saw Hendricks, no one could describe the whole town laying to ruin how thankful we are that we have folks who care. When we got to a house warm and dry, they gave us their clothes and they warmed us with food and their love brought tears to our eyes. We'll never forget that night on the hill in a fodder shock, shivering and wet. But how lucky we were that we had mountains near. When I read of what others have lost, we still have our lives, thank God for that, and how little the rest of the cost. I pray God will help those who suffered so great in the flood that November eve. May we not forget them in our prayers all this year in the winter so meager and bleak." It doesn't quite rhyme [laughter].

CK: It doesn't have to rhyme.

CL: Did you read the one I wrote about her husband, about Joe?

CK: Yes.

CL: You did.

CK: I was going to check that out.

CL: Oh, did you [laughter]?

Female Speaker: I'll tell you; they were both about frozen when they got there the next day to my house.

CL: We came to her house and she wasn't at home.

FS: We were looking for you. I didn't want to come. I was afraid you'd gotten into the water. I was trying to get to your place.

CL: But the door was unlocked and we went on in and shook up the fire. When she came, she got us some dry clothes and made us some coffee and we stayed over there for better than a week. I think I slept all afternoon recuperating [laughter].

CK: Do you have a copy of that poem about Joe in that book over by the bridge?

CL: No, I don't have it. I have it at home, but I don't up the house in my –

NL: She gave me a pair of Joe's pants. I had to roll about that much of them up.

FS: Joe is so tall.

CL: I was going to put it in the paper.

NL: I just want to change some of it.

CL: But it still sounds a little silly. But I finally wrote a book about Cheat Mountain. He calls it *The Mountain Speaks*. So, I wrote this one about "The Bridge Speaks." It's kind of sad too [laughter]. Maureen said, "Oh, don't put that in the paper. It makes me cry." "I am an old, old swinging bridge built back in [19]17. For many years, I stood so strong. But now, I sway and lean. Once children ran across my span and lovers strolled and tarried, there was no thought of breaking down. My peers were firmly buried. But years took toll. I lost one pier. My cables rusted then. The tower posts that held me tall began to sag and bend. Then on a sad November eve in 1985, a mighty wall of water caught me with a grave surprise. High water splashed upon my floor. At this I only laughed. I'll hold on tight, I told myself, this torrent too shall pass. But soon my laugh became a groan. As waters higher rose above my floor and then some more, the mighty onrush closed. I shook in fear as trees passed by. Oh, will I fall this night? I must hold on. So, many folks depend upon my fight. The Woman's Club has worked so hard to try and keep me here. If I fall down, a few will cry. But many folks won't care. I feel my eye pins giving now as huge trees beat my span. Rocks batter at my cement piers. Oh Lord, I cannot stand. One cable gives, my timbers crack as house roofs scrape me by. I'm going now. All hope is lost. All hope is gone. I tremble with a sigh. The many friends who walked each day across

my mighty brow will have to travel many miles to get to Hendricks now. When deafening snap and history's gone along with all the rest, my cables lie on either side, although I did my best. Oh, will they build me up again like good friends did before? Or will they leave me lying here and close another door on all that stood for what was free to travelers passing by with steady feet across my span? Or am I doomed to die? A week goes by and now it's two. I hear a rumor spoke, we will rebuild the swinging bridge, say many friendly folks. The mayor of Hendricks sees my need. He knows of those who care. The DNR comes down to look if I can be repaired. If you'd help by writing them to let them know you care, soon I will stand again so strong and beautiful and rare. If you like my photograph and if you like my story and if you can, please help me stand again in all my glory." I was going to put a photograph and this in the paper to see it. But from what I hear, the Army Corps of Engineers has supposedly appropriated something like \$30,000 to rebuild our swinging bridge. So, if that's true, I won't have to [laughter].

MK: Was when was the original bridge built?

CL: In 1917. Then it broke down again in the flood of [19]54 and was rebuilt.

MK: Who rebuilt it then?

CL: Bob White and Joe Long and –

FS: Pastor Jordan. Did you help that?

CL: No. Baxter and Willis built it originally.

FS: Oh, what was it?

CL: Willis Spencer and Baxter Jordan built it in 1917. Then in [19]54 when it broke down, Joe and Brian Sponagle, and Bob White and Norman and Jim Sponagle, I believe, rebuilt it. Then in 1958, a big tree fell across it and broke it down again. The same bunch helped to –

FS: Our Old Bridge just threw them off.

CL: The same bunch helped to rebuild it. But see, they've used the same materials. Every time they've used the same cables. Those are original cables and they've just put smaller ones on to reinforce it.

FS: It's a wonder they didn't spread pieces though in all that water. But they just strung down on the side.

CL: Those cables are still lying down this side. They're still there, yes.

FS: But they're on the other side.

NL: There's a cable on that bridge that me and Joe put together. After we let the weight of the bridge on, you couldn't tell where it went together at. That's where I first learned to splice cable.

They showed me right there how to do it. But you couldn't tell where that cable was together, I hardly could.

CK: Did you see the swinging bridge up at our creek after the army fixed it up?

NL: No, I never went up to see it.

FS: I did.

CK: Because we went up there and it seemed like it was going to be really heavy if the snow would fall.

FS: That's what I thought too.

CK: [laughter]

FS: There was no way for the snow to get down.

NL: Now, the little bridge over there across Otter Creek. Boy, I tell you the biggest sassafras and that bottom was worn out on me one morning over that.

FS: [laughter]

CK: What do you mean?

NL: There's where I started to school at. I was a little smart ELIC and grandma would go down there and she'd put wood ashes on that so as we could cross it. Now, it wasn't a bridge then. They called it a what? A foot log. I just went down there and grandma was hollering at me and on across that aisle went just to skate. Then boy, she got me stopped to her and she walked me back across there. She wore the biggest switch out she could find in that bottom [laughter].

CK: [laughter]

FS: You were supposed to wait until she put the ashes on [laughter].

NL: She made me walk across that, as she said, like a gentleman [laughter].

FS: [laughter] You remembered that.

NL: I remember that as well as if it happened yesterday. Boy, she did give me a [inaudible] [laughter].

CK: Which house did you live in at up there?

NL: It was all around this way up from where her cabin is, around here on the hill. Right straight across from (Store Jordan's?), isn't it?

FS: Yes.

NL: Right up on that hill in there.

FS: You know why they're called the Bill Long place over from where the cabin is and then it's along beyond that.

NL: That's where I was born. I was nine years old when we left there and went to the top of the Fork Mountain. Left up there about 5:00 p.m. one evening, we could end up at home there about 2:00 a.m. the next morning.

FS: But the people came in here.

NL: Pop cut trees down that big to get the wagon turned. Couldn't even get into the house. That was mom's home place and all of them had left there years before and moved in there. There's where they still live.

FS: Strange how you remember things when you were –

NL: He had a little mule and a bay mare when he moved in there. Had to cut his way in. There were no roads. Everybody over there calls him the wire mesh because he went in there like that.

CK: [laughter] Was that whole track your family's?

NL: Huh?

CK: That whole track of land up there, your family's at that time?

NL: That belongs to my two brothers now. Yes, they made it. John and Rob.

CK: John said there was an old coal mine on top of that mountain he came across one time, like a little hand dug.

FS: Oh, it's on this other mountain.

NL: Fork Mountain, it's got no coal mine.

FS: This is up on the mountain where Mandy Teeter used to live up on there. Yes, up there.

NL: Yes, on that mountain.

FS: There's where boy went up there and died, wasn't it? They had to bring them off from wars [inaudible].

NL: Yes. I don't know where there's three mines in Turkey Run. I don't know where those two

mines on Otter Creek where they got coal off the log trains. There are three mines in Otter Creek. I don't know where's that. They got coal off the log trains in there. I know where every log camp was from the mouth up here, clinging to the alpine. I've been to every one of them.

FS: They were numbered.

CL: We went up there one time to – we went camping, is what he calls it.

FS: Were they numbered?

NL: They were numbered.

FS: I thought they were numbered. That's what I heard Joe say, they were numbered. Joe said those camps were numbered.

NL: Starts here at Camp One and goes clean through. Camp Eleven was the last one.

CK: How old were you when they were doing that?

NL: Me?

CK: Yes.

NL: I wasn't thought of then [laughter].

CK: Just a boy? You were not even a boy?

NL: Pop was just a young boy, I believe.

FS: He wasn't even thought of then.

MK: He was still a twinkle in his daddy's eye.

[laughter]

NL: Pop was just a young boy at that time. Mighty young.

CK: But he took you up to show you where they were?

NL: Oh, he showed me a lot of times through there and made us live in the woods back in there.

CK: Your dad made you live in the woods?

NL: Well, yes. He'd take us and go for weeks at a time. We wouldn't go home.

FS: Well, I could thrive in the woods.

NL: Just stay in the woods sang and hunt.

CL: Norman said whenever they started to play, that he would find him something to do. He wouldn't allow him to play that night.

NL: No, we weren't allowed to play around.

CL: He said he'd work him six days of the week on one side of the mountain and on the seventh day, he'd take him over on the other side so they couldn't hear the church bells ring [laughter].

[laughter]

NL: That's right. One time he ran out of work back in there in the Elk Lick side, got over there on the other side of East Parsons. Those church bells went to ringing and he reared up. He looked at us boys, he said, "Boy, it must be a quarter going on downtown [laughter]."

FS: Your pops didn't know the difference, huh?

NL: That's the truth [laughter].

FS: He didn't know the difference.

NL: I don't want to repair it and tell out on him, boy, he'd get mad at you [laughter].

FS: Well, I'll tell you what, my grandmother and grandfather raised me. But we worked too. We worked all week, but when Sunday came, we all went to church. Don't you think we didn't.

NL: Oh, we didn't know when Sunday came.

FS: I took my shoes off and walked down and I could see the church. Many a time when we get outside, we took them off and went barefooted home too. I only got one pair a year [laughter].

CL: Did you know that Edith was born in the cellar?

FS: No, I was born in the barn.

CL: Born in the barn.

FS: Yes, on the second day of January.

CL: Didn't she take you to the cellar then?

FS: Yes, I was hid [laughter].

CL: Her mother took her to the cellar and hid her. She didn't get in the house until you were,

what, nine days older?

FS: Well, it was something like that? I don't remember [laughter]. I think it was quite a –

CL: Oh, you know what they did.

FS: Well, I do know that my mother told me that she had me out of wedlock and she was afraid to take me in. Well, my grandmother was a very strict woman. Of course, she had to know that that girl had a baby. She had to know that, that's all. No mother could be around a girl and know she wasn't going to have a child and be with her all that time, I don't think.

NL: She probably ignored it [laughter].

FS: So, she went out to the barn. When she went out there, she was sick and she had me out in the barn. She didn't have no clothes. She didn't have no blanket. So, she took off her underskirt. She had to cut the underskirt halfway one and wrapped me up in that and laid me down in the manger. Well, now my aunt said she knew something was wrong. Her name was Stephine. My mother's name was Aldell. That was her sister, said she knew there's something going on. She went out there and said she heard something grunting down in there and it scared her and she left. But then she went back later and mama took me to the cellar. But she kept the key around her neck and if they wanted anything out of the cellar, she went and got it. She didn't let nobody go in. One of the rats had eaten me up, isn't it [laughter]? Then finally, on Sunday they went to church. As I say, they always went to church. Mom was sick. She stayed home, took me to the house, and found some of her little sister's clothes and that was my first bath and the first clothes I had on. That must have been about a week or nine days, I suppose, after I was born. But I thrived. I'm still here [laughter].

CL: She's seventy-five years old now.

FS: It was in 1909 when I was born.

CK: Where was that?

CL: At Gladesville.

FS: At Gladesville.

MK: Who were your people?

FS: Teeter. My mother was a Teeter. Yes, she was Andrew Teeter's daughter. He was my grandfather. I have his picture and I have her picture too at the house.

NL: I have his picture and Clark's picture. Here's Arthur. Brian recognized them down here.

CL: All of them except two, I believe.

NL: There's four of them, Jacksons, and Clarks and what's that other one's name? Patterson's.

CL: Two of the girls too.

NL: Yes, and two of the girls. But now, Brian wasn't sure about the girls.

FS: It was Alley and Corey and Liz and –

CL: Virginia.

FS: Yes, Virginia.

NL: You never forgot them.

CL: Boini was one of the grandfathers.

FS: You should make me go "Uh-huh."

CL: You have to go "Uh-huh."

FS: We did that for the seniors.

CL: Well, now when I sing two stanzas, you go uh-huh.

FS: Now you do it.

CL: Now, I'm not going to say "Uh-huh." You can say "Uh-huh."

CK: [laughter] Kick me when I'm supposed to.

CL: I'm tickled now. I can't sing when I'm tickled [laughter].

MK: No, it's all right. Just turn it off. Froggy went-a courting and he did ride, a sword, and a pistol by his side. He rode up to Miss Mousy's door where he had often been before. He knocked at the door of the Mousy's door, said, "Hey, Pretty Miss, are you within?" Oh, Mr. Frog got card and spin to slip the latch and walk right in. Well, the frog took the mouse up on his knees, said, "Hey, Pretty Miss, will you marry me?" "I cannot answer that until I have seen my Uncle Rat." Uncle Rat came riding home who's been here since I've been gone. Fine gentleman has been here, asked for me to be his dear. Uncle Rat just split his sides, thinking of a mouse being a bride. Uncle Rat rode off to town to buy his niece a wedding gown. Where will the wedding supper be? Way down under in a hollow tree. What will the wedding supper be? Piece of bread and butter and black-eyed peas. Who will be our wedding guests? All our friends that we love best. First to come, this little moth, she spread on the tablecloth. Next to come is a big black bug on his back with a whiskey jug. Next to come was a big, black snake. He brought in the pound cake. Next to come is a bumblebee when his corn stock fiddle up on his knee. Next to come is Missy Tick, she ate so much that it made her sick. Then they called in Dr. Fly, said,

"Hey, Ms. Tick, you'll surely die." Well, put the frog and the mouse to bed without any pillow under their head. Cat came slipping around the house into the bed and after the mouse. Frog was left without anything. He swore he'd never marry again. Frog went swimming down the lake, he was swallowed by a snake. Snake went swimming down the brook, that's the last of my old songbook. The old songbook was on the shelf, you want anymore, mister, you can sing it yourself."

[laughter]

NL: I was out there working in the corn field in other days over Hendricks that day. I was out there cutting corn, yes. I told (Cribby?) about it.

[music playing]

MK: Nice.

CL: Valley Gray, is that what they want?

FS: No.

NL: I think I'm going to go to fix these photos.

[music playing]

NL: That's (Norry-Norry Gray?).

MK: That's nice.

CK: What was the –

[end of transcript]