

Tucker County, West Virginia Flood Audio Recordings  
Elmer and Edith Nestor Oral History  
Date of Interview: May 14, 1986  
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Interviewer: MK – Michael Kline  
Transcriber: NCC

Edith Nestor: Yes, that was a funny thing about that flood. Usually, in our basement here or in our little cellar, the water comes up in about that deep.

Elmer Nestor: There wasn't a drop of water in there.

EN: That night, Elmer, he went down to the cellar – or next morning, I wanted a lamp. I saw our electricity was off. I said, "Elmer, you go down and get the lamp." I figured the water would be up in there. When he come back, he said, "You know, there isn't a drop of water in our basement this time. [laughter] The whole them peoples stayed there. I guess the Lord just wash over us and kept that water out of there. We never did have it up so big as this time. Now, truth, the barn, it came up to the back of the barn and it never was up that big before.

Michael Kline: So, how'd that day go for you, that November 4th?

EN: Well, I had them people there that night. I stayed up all night. I didn't go to bed. Elmer, he went to bed, but I didn't. I stayed up and I made them hamburgers, a lot of hamburgers. I had some frozen. I got them out and I had a bunch of buns there. I made them hamburgers and I gave them all the cookies I had. We made them coffee and tea and kept them going until morning. Then there's one family, they couldn't get home, so they stayed the next night. When that night came, my feet were swollen so bad. I just couldn't do no more. That woman, she had to get supper. I tell you, I couldn't get supper. My feet were swollen. I'd been on them all day and all night. So, all we made out, the people were so nice to us afterwards. They brought me a big bunch of flowers. Barbara, she brought me coaster set. Another family brought me a pair of pearl cases. Some sent me \$5, and one sent me \$10, wasn't it, Elmer?

EN: Yes.

EN: Let's see. Were there any others? Oh, I got cards and stuff from people. Then they called and thanked me and stuff. So, it was nice. I really liked helping the people out.

MK: How was it that everybody stopped at your house?

EN: I don't know. We don't know that. It just seemed like the Lord told them to stop here or something, you know what I mean? Because they know that they'd have a place to stay. The president of the bank down here of Citizen National Bank, he came and he had his feet wet. We had built for him to dry his shoes up and get him warmed up. I'm telling you, it was a terrible time. I pitied everybody, but there wasn't anything that I could do to help him anymore than I did. I was just glad that I was able to help him. Barbara, she had her children here and she left the next morning. My sister and her husband were here. I got all their names out there if you wanted to write them down.

MK: But they stopped here because they couldn't go any further. Was that the reason?

EN: Well, they could go to that house down there just around that turn, and they couldn't get through back toward Elkins, that round barn. You know where the round barn is.

MK: Yes.

EN: They couldn't get through there. So, they had to stay someplace. I don't know. They just picked my place, I guess. I guess some of them knew us. Some stayed in their cars, I think, out there because they said it was so crowded in there with everybody. So, we took care of them the best we could [laughter].

MK: How many did you have all together?

EN: I think there were about nineteen stayed all night. Some of them walked around the hill though. Maybe one or two of them didn't.

EN: That's what stayed on in the house.

EN: I think I counted them up in about nineteen. That was a bunch of them. So, we did the best we could do. Yes, we live here on our little farm. We enjoy living here. It's nice. You can have your milk and your eggs and your butter and stuff like that. It's nice.

MK: How long have you been here?

EN: How many years we lived here, Elmer?

EN: Twenty-five.

EN: Twenty-five. We lived over on Pifer Mountain for seventeen, I think it was. We moved up here because it was so far for him to go to work. He couldn't get out of the snow. He'd get up over the fences and he'd have to walk. So, he just moved up here. We bought this place off of Willard Shaffer. All of our kids have grown up and gone now. We've only just got me and him. Of course, our boy lives up in the field and the others all live away. One girl lives in Ohio. Then I lost to one boy that lived down at Kasson. One boy that lives at Bridgeport, and Lonnie, you know him where he lives [laughter]. He's a pretty good boy. They come and help us though when we need help. We got pretty good kids, haven't we, Elmer?

EN: Yes.

EN: That's one thing I'm going to say. We've got good children. Those people, they said down there, turned their lights out and went to bed that night. I don't know whether they did or not, but they said they did. Well, they used the phone too now until it went out. Everybody, I think, got to call home to tell them where they were. They told them they were in my place, see. So, they didn't worry that much about them because they knew where they were at.

EN: They didn't have no phone down there.

EN: Yes, Ron's does, but they'd all shut their lights off I guess, and they stopped here. The people above there, they won't let nobody use their phone, I don't think. A lot of times, people come by here, stop and use my phone. I don't use it because it helps people. If you can help

somebody, I believe in helping them. That's what the Lord put us here for; to help one another.

EN: That's right.

EN: So, that's what we do. We try to help everybody. Anybody comes along here in need, why, they're always welcome. So, that's about all I know about the flood. Only I know that the water was running out behind this barn, running down through that field, and down that bottom there. They've taken a dozer and did all that work, put it back for us and sewed grass seed on it. But it was off. That house down, water was getting up pretty close to it. The one girl, she had her leg broke. She had a cast and they had to bring her up to the house. She's the one who stayed two nights. Her and her mother and an old man. Bob Cummings is up on the mountain. I don't know if you know him or not. Oh, let's see. What was that other woman's name? You remember what her name was, Elmer. I got it wrote down, but I can't just remember it offhand. I know her name was Maxine, but her last name – Conrad. I believe it was Conrad or something like that. They stayed two nights. She tried to get home the first day and she – so, it was pretty moving to think of such a tragedy. When the people were telling what happened in Parsons and some of them getting up here later and telling us. I don't know.

EN: Get back a little bit, Elmer. Now, stand close to the door.

MK: He's a handsome man.

EN: [laughter] Yes. He's a pretty good man.

MK: Where'd you meet him?

EN: He lived over on Pifer Mountain. Yes. He's been a good husband and I couldn't have no kick of saying about him. One thing about it, I know where he is at all the time. He's usually home and helps me whenever he can. He takes care of that cow for me. I take care of the other one. Oh, there's a lot of hard work on the farm.

MK: Is that her down in the field there?

EN: Yes, that's the one's got the calf. She gives a two gallon and a half bucket full of milk. I milk her at night and in the morning and then I feed the baby calf. It takes about a half of the milk. Then the neighbors, I let them have milk. My children, I give them a gallon when they come.

MK: Can you live off this place?

EN: No. [laughter] Not now with the way things are. When we lived over on Pifer Mountain, we didn't have much to go on. Only the farm. We had a little farm over there. But now, you couldn't live off of a farm, could you, Elmer?

EN: No.

EN: You couldn't.

EN: So, we're retired. I get a food security check.

EN: We couldn't live off of it now because the telephone bills are so blamed high. They are outrageous, and electric bills and everything. You couldn't live just on a farm. You'd have to have some income. We're going to keep that calf. We don't go sell it. When you do sell them, you don't get much for them.

MK: Well, it's nice out here.

EN: Yes, it's pretty. Got a nice yard there. Some Turkey feet.

EN: Yes.

MK: Let's just walk around here so he can take a few more pictures maybe before we go in.

EN: The boys kill them. They kill them, cut their feet off, and hang them up there. I don't know how many there are there. They must be a dozen or more.

EN: They got them down in –

EN: Over the years, several years there.

MK: Was your dad a good turkey caller?

EN: Oh, yes. My dad was a good hunter, boy. He said he killed twenty-seven wild turkeys one season, and 167 grouse. He sold them. Sold them. That's when he was first married. That was around 1901 or 1902.

MK: How did he call turkeys?

EN: He had a bone out of their wing. He used it. Boy, he could call them too now.

EN: Well, Ron, he was a good turkey caller.

EN: One of the first pump guns that come out, the Winchester ninety-seven model. Had a hammer on them. Maybe you've seen them.

MK: Yes.

EN: He bought it new in, I believe he said 1900. The first season he had that gun, he said he killed twenty-seven wild turkeys and 167 grouse and killed about all of them flying.

EN: Well, that's years ago though.

EN: Yes. He was a good turkey hunter.

MK: What other stuff did he hunt? Did he hunt bear?

EN: No. He hunted all kind of fur bearing animals. Raccoons, foxes, and all kind of stuff like that.

MK: So, he trapped out along on Pifer Mountain there?

EN: Yes, on Pifer Mountain, where he lived. He lived over there. I lived over there until 1961. Well, I was in Baltimore for two years during the Second World War. Outside of that, I've been in Tucker County ever since, all my life.

MK: Never had no desire to live somewhere else after being in Baltimore?

EN: I didn't want no more Baltimore.

EN: [laughter]

EN: But I got enough of that. All you saw there were brick walls and curvy streets. I worked seven days a week while I was there. I was glad to get out of there. I liked to be out where you get out in the woods and chase around, hunt and ginseng and do stuff like that.

EN: Did you ever see ginseng?

MK: Yes.

EN: Did you ever see it grow?

MK: Yes.

EN: We've got a little planted up there over the house. It's up now. I saw it the other day, it started to come out.

MK: You still dig a lot of it?

EN: No, I don't. I'm not able to anymore. No. I haven't sung any for about four or five years. I like to hunt. I squirrel hunt a little bit. I was out two- or three-times last year, squirrel hunting.

MK: How come you leave over Pifer Mountain?

EN: Oh, the winter is so bad over there. You see, I was working in the wool mill down here at Parsons. I'd walk three miles to get to my car in order to get out from over there in the wintertime. So, I found this place here. We sold that place over there and bought this.

MK: How'd you feel about leaving over there?

EN: I liked it during the summertime. It was beautiful. But boy, I was glad to get away from there [laughter] on the count of wading that snow and stuff. I couldn't take it any longer. I got up at 3:00 a.m. and walked three miles. She gets to my car and have to go through the woods and through fields and everything else on the count of snow was drifted in the road so you couldn't get through. Then I'd just get into Parsons up there at 7:00 a.m. in time to do the work.

MK: So, you worked at the wool mill?

EN: Yes.

MK: What was that like?

EN: Well, it was a textile plant. Made cloth, warm cloth.

EN: They had that before they moved the shoe plant in there.

EN: Yes. They moved out of there in [19]71.

MK: Was it pretty nice work?

EN: The work was all right, but we didn't get paid nothing. We only made a dollar and something an hour. That wasn't very much.

MK: How long did you work there?

EN: I worked seventeen years.

MK: You raised a bunch of kids.

EN: Yes. We had five.

EN: Fourteen grandchildren. It's quite a few of them when they all get in here on Sundays [laughter]. Of course, there's a girl, she doesn't come in very often. It's been a long time. So, she only gets in once in a great while.

EN: We enjoy them coming over. Enjoy our grandkids.

EN: They like to come about every Sunday for dinner. [laughter] We have for them dinner quite a lot, don't we, Elmer?

EN: Yes. Every Sunday about, unless we go to see them. Sometimes, we go to see them.

MK: Well, I bet it was tough raising the family like that.

EN: It was rough. We had a rough year, boy. I know our kids went to school and they didn't

have no money on their lunch money to spend. We didn't have no allowance for them. When I moved up here, I had seven of them in school – or there were seven of us and I had five of them in school.

EN: Kids nowadays don't know what it is like to live back in the days that whenever I was little. That was back during the depression days. I didn't even have shoes to wear. Now, that's true.

EN: That's true.

EN: My dad left my mother and there were seven of us children. I'll tell you, we were really hard up. We didn't hardly have any clothes to wear. People don't know what it's like until they have to live like I did when I was a kid.

MK: Tell me more about that.

EN: You mean when I was a child?

MK: Yes.

EN: Well, my daddy, he'd left my mother and some of us were pretty good size. We'd have to go out and cut the corn and get the stuff in for winter, the best we could. Go have meal ground to have something to eat. We had an awful time of it. So, we all grew up and got married and got out of there and went to Baltimore and got a job. We made out all right. But we had a tough time of it.

MK: There were seven of you kids?

EN: Yes.

MK: What were all their names?

EN: Well, my sister, now, she was married. She'd moved out. My brother went with my dad and the rest of us were there. That left five of us there with my mother.

MK: Who were those?

EN: The children?

MK: Yes.

EN: Oh, I'd just rather not say their names [laughter] because maybe they wouldn't want me to tell their names and stuff.

MK: Oh, okay.

EN: But it was rough on us, I'll tell you. Because put it in a book or something and they'd read it



or something. They would think, well, maybe I shouldn't have told them about it. I'd rather not.

MK: I understand that.

EN: But we did. It's the truth though, I'll tell you. We never seen an awful time.

MK: How'd your mother manage?

EN: She got a little check for \$6 a month from the welfare [laughter]. That's what she got. We lived on it.

MK: She must have grown a powerful garden.

EN: Oh, we had some things from the – put away a few things, but not very many. We had some corn. We had that ground for bread. We had to go cut it though. My dad, he'd left, and we had to go cut the corn, shuck it up, dry it and take it to mill. There was a mill down the road from us. We didn't have no cars then. We had to walk and carry what in we got. It's the truth. I'm not joking. It's the truth.

MK: I know. People now just don't –

EN: They don't know what it's like to – they just lived through it once. My mother, she's gone now. She died. My dad, he died too.

MK: Who was your mother's people?

EN: Oh, they were all dead.

MK: Were they?

EN: Yes.

MK: They were all from over there on the mountains?

EN: Yes, they lived over there.

MK: It was a real change to move out on the road then, wasn't it?

EN: Yes.

EN: Yes. Well, I always lived on the road whenever I was at home. I didn't have to. But when I got married, we lived in Baltimore for two years. Then when we moved over on Pifer Mountain, we were back in the hills, weren't we, Elmer?

[laughter]

The kids, see, we had Betty at Baltimore. The rest of them, we had over at Pifer. All of them were born over there. There are some kind of [inaudible] around here. I think the other cows are coming up down there now. Yes. You could have seen me milk, or if you'd have been here, you could've seen that big bucket of milk [laughter].

MK: Well, I've seen that.

EN: Yes. It was really something to see that little cow give that much milk. She's just a little cow. You wouldn't think that she could give two gallons and a half buckets full of milk. You know one of them big buckets? To see her, she's really something.

MK: So, what did everybody do all evening when they were sitting around?

EN: They went to bed. [laughter] Some of them went to bed and all the beds were full. The rest of them had to sit up. The davenport, some of them stayed on the davenport. Well, there's some older people there, and I put them in the easy chairs as I could. Because they are old now and I pity them more. Two of them just taking –

EN: Well, they even took your bed. You stayed up and they took her bed.

EN: Oh, yes. I gave them my bed. I stayed up and –

EN: I stayed up about 2:00. Then I went in and laid down, and you couldn't sleep. My goodness, a lot of them, it's the way they just hollering, going on and yelling and arguing –

EN: That's fine. You fix them something to eat as best you could.

EN: – this and that and the other. Just well stayed up.

MK: Hollering going on?

EN: No. Just talking.

EN: Oh, no. Just arguing, telling about this and that and the other.

EN: Good stories told?

EN: Yes, I guess it was, and telling about everything, I think.

EN: I know I was awful tired. My feet were swollen up. She had to fix supper, didn't she, Elmer?

EN: Yes.

EN: I just had to put my feet up. I couldn't take it any longer. Night and a day being on your feet and never sitting down hardly. There wasn't any place to sit down unless you sat on the

floor. Yes, all the chairs and everything were taken. Some of them were hunching down on the floor I think for a while. Oh, we can get the names of those people who stayed here if you want them.

MK: Yes. Sure.

EN: I'll go and get them for you.

EN: Boy, that week, yes [laughter]. But I got it, so I never paid a bit. I never knew when it ever passed. But I reckon they're going to sell these right of ways out. A seller here the other day wanted to know if I wanted to buy my right of way over here between my lines. They wanted to know if I wanted to buy that. So, to make my own land together.

EN: Now, I think there's one or two of these here that didn't stay.

MK: Would they sell it reasonable?

EN: I don't know. I never have – didn't want [inaudible].

MK: I hope you get it.

EN: Well, I want to get it because it'll make my land all one track, you know?

MK: Yes, sure.

EN: I got some good timber over there on both tracks.

EN: I think that one left. They stayed here until about midnight and the rest of them went home.

EN: Don't scratch them all out [laughter].

EN: No, just two. These two went home. The rest of them stayed, I'm sure.

MK: Electric went out that night?

EN: Yes.

EN: Yes.

MK: So, you had candles?

EN: Yes, we had candles and an oil lamp.

EN: We didn't have the oil lamp. It was down in the cellar.

EN: No, but we had it.

EN: Yes, but we had candles.

MK: Must have been kind of eerie somehow.

EN: No, we had flashlights.

EN: I know a few of them.

EN: You do? That was mine and Elmer's there. We stayed here, you see? That's what I mean. It was you and me. I never counted them. I can't count them. Two, I've got Joyce over there and (Sheryl?) Gray, they went home. They went up around that hill somebody coming to –

EN: You got acquaint with Barbara, did you?

MK: Oh, yes. We're old friends.

EN: [laughter]

MK: Yes, I've known her for a long time.

EN: She's not [inaudible].

MK: Oh, yes.

EN: Yes. I guess she's up in New York or going up to New York this weekend.

MK: Yes. I think they're going up there for a visit with her people maybe. Yes, sir.

EN: There were about twenty of us here that night then with me and Elmer.

EN: She could write you a good story there.

EN: Who's that?

EN: Well, if you moved up there in that log cabin and cleaned out the place and lived practically off the land [laughter].

MK: What'd you think about them doing that?

EN: I would have never thought that anybody had ever done that. I mean, that bad as that old house is in and stuff, the backyard, they got her fixed up.

EN: I think it was nineteen.

EN: He got three cute kids there too. That little boy, he's up in New York. She called on the

phone the other night. He's talking to her, and, boy, she said that this got me. She said, "I'm going after him."

[laughter]

She was up here the other evening.

EN: I tell you there wasn't much room for a bed [laughter]. Barbara, she just went to bed with her cats. This girl with a broken leg, but she went to bed.

EN: I had four lamps, I believe it was. One may bring her [inaudible] calf up here and keep it until they went out there. I couldn't do that because I can't take too good with that and get out on the boat. Taking a cow and putting it in a strange place like this, it'll try to tear it out and go home. Well, I would get killed. I told her I wouldn't do that at all.

EN: [inaudible] she went to bed too and [inaudible]. The others, they spent the night in the chairs and [inaudible].

MK: Got to hear (Monnie?) play the fiddle the other day.

EN: You did?

MK: Yes.

EN: Oh, boy, we had some good music here Sunday now. You ought to have been here.

MK: He said he learned his music from you.

EN: Well, he plays a good many pieces that I can't. But I guess that I was the cause of him – being that I played, he took music up. He's pretty good on that banjo. I just bought that banjo here last winter. I told him I'd buy one if he'd learned to play it. He's doing pretty good. He's doing pretty good on that banjo.

EN: Now, Elmer, he plays the fiddle too.

EN: Yes.

MK: Yes?

EN: I'd have a little tune too.

MK: Let's have a little tune anyway.

EN: We haven't got nothing to second. No second. That other one isn't in there, is it?

MK: Well, I'd like to hear you play the fiddle.

EN: He took the guitars and he sold that other one this year.

MK: Wish I'd brought mine today. I usually have it.

Male Speaker: First, I've seen you without it.

MK: Yes. You don't see me very often without it.

EN: [laughter] Then he could have had that little tune.

EN: What's your name?

MK: Klein. Michael Klein.

EN: I think I've heard Lonnie talk about you.

MK: I'm sure he already has.

EN: Ruby Klein. See, there's someone – Ruby Klein.

EN: Pop that little guitar to you.

EN: He sold it.

EN: Who'd you sell it to?

EN: Don.

EN: Oh, did he?

EN: No, he sold them to Don.

EN: I believe he did.

MK: Scratch this off a little tune. I'd like to hear you play. I don't know where that other old guitar in there, you tune it up or not.

[music playing]

MK: Nice. What do you call that?

EN: That was "The Little Old Cabin in the Lane."

MK: Very nice.

[music playing].

MK: Very nice.

EN: I think we've got to get a guitar for you.

EN: There is one of my children.

[music playing]

MK: Great timing.

EN: Yes [laughter].

[music playing]

MK: I like the fiddle playing.

EN: I saw the one there and [inaudible].

MK: That was Red Wing you played.

EN: Yes. Yes.

[music playing]

Soldier's Joy?

MK: Yes.

[music playing]

EN: You were good on that guitar if you had a guitar to play [laughter]. That thing sounded like a gourd [laughter].

MK: Did you ever hear of a gourd fiddle?

EN: No. I don't believe I ever did. I heard it was a gourd mandolin or a tater bug. I got a couple trophies over there from playing. They were there on that television.

MK: You won those in fiddle contest? Where at?

EN: At the Hick Fair?

[music playing]

MK: Pretty. Pretty. Did your dad play?

EN: Oh, no. I just picked it up myself. I don't know no music. He didn't know a lot of music.

[music playing]

EN: Johnny's "Breakdown". I haven't heard that for a long time.

EN: I know a lot of them, but I can't think of it. Probably "My Little Home in West Virginia." You've heard [inaudible].

[music playing]

MK: Good fiddler.

[music playing]

EN: I know lots of them buddy, just thinking.

MK: Who did you hear play the fiddle when you were a kid?

EN: Oh, this first one, then the other, you know.

MS: Can you remember any of the old ones?

EN: Yes. I went to school with teachers that could play and he learned me some.

MK: Who was that?

EN: Jay (Oval?). A fellow by the name of Jay Oval.

EN: What is that Christian song that you played up there at the Hick Fair? What's the name of it? I need no answers?

EN: Oh, I need no answers? That's a slow one.

EN: Yes. That's pretty.

[music playing]

MK: What was that C tune you started to play? The Tennessee Wagoner?

EN: No, that was Birdie.

EN: Maple Sugar?



MK: Birdie, yes, do that.

EN: That's the C.

[music playing]

EN: I mess up. I haven't been playing that for a long time.

MK: Pretty old tune out there.

EN: What about Maple Sugar? Do you know that?

EN: Yes.

EN: That's a pretty one.

EN: That's an A and D.

[music playing]

EN: Play the record on nine and seven.

[music playing].

MK: That's good.

EN: I am kind of [inaudible] up.

EN: Try Camarena.

[music playing]

EN: Only problem with that, and you just got to keep playing the same thing over. There's no course to it.

EN: No.

EN: Got a little bit of that [inaudible].

EN: When did you play it?

EN: Yes.

[music playing]

EN: Good. Mighty good. Boy, I haven't heard these tunes for a long time.

EN: [laughter]

EN: How do you get them to [inaudible]?

EN: You ever hear "Silver Bells"?

[music playing]

EN: Well, you haven't played the "Mississippi Sawyer" yet.

EN: [laughter].

[music playing]

EN: I got off of that.

MK: That's good. That's good.

EN: I know lots of them, but just thinking that – you ever hear us playing Two Step?

MS: That's a good one. Wonder if I could play it.

EN: It's indeed.

EN: That's an old one.

[music playing]

EN: Problem with me, I don't play nothing in pieces to keep up on. Maybe the boys will come up here maybe once a month. Now, if Don doesn't come up here from Bridgeport, Lonnie will hardly bring his instruments down here.

EN: You ever –

MK: Play that piece again a couple times. I haven't got it quite right to get the – a couple chords I haven't gotten.

EN: It's at the [inaudible]. Maybe I can it play a little better. I was missing a little bit there.

MK: However you want. Right on.

[music playing]

EN: You are hitting it all right. Hey, you are hitting it all right.

[music playing]

EN: Do you know Woody Simmons over there?

MK: Yes.

EN: He played a piece up there at the Hick Fair last fall. I don't know if I'm getting it right or not, but that was where I played it a while ago. But I'm trying to learn it a little better. If he comes up there this fall and I get to see him, I'm going to try to learn and learn really the way he plays it. I like it. It's the one I played there a while ago. I don't know the name of it.

[music playing]

EN: That's the way he plays it. But I'm not sure I'm getting it all right. I know Woody Simmons is a good player, boy.

MK: Yes. He's a good player.

EN: All right. Here's one I'm going to play and I see if you remember. I doubt if you do. You're too young to remember, but it's a pretty piece.

[music playing]

EN: You know what the –

MK: No. What was it?

EN: Letter Edged in Black. Did you ever hear that piece?

MK: No.

EN: That's an old piece by Vernon Dalhart. Sung that back when I was just a little boy on a phonograph record, and I learned that piece. That's a pretty piece, boy. (Postin?) wrote a letter and its edges were in black.

MK: Sing a little letter while you play.

EN: No, I don't think I can remember the words of it. Anyhow, it said, "I was standing by my window yesterday morning without a thought of worry or of care. When I saw the postman coming up the pathway, with such a happy face says, Jack, hi. He rang the bell and whistled as he waited. Then he said, 'Good morning to you, Jack.' But he little knew the sorrow that he brought me as he handed me a letter edged in black." Then went on to say, "With trembling hands, I took this letter from him. Broke the seal and this is what it said, 'Come home my boy, your dear old father wants you. Come on my boy, your dear old mother's dead.'" Then went on to say, "Those angry words, I wish I have never spoke to them. You know I did not mean them, don't you, Jack? May the angels bear me witness. I am asking your forgiveness in this letter

edged in black." I don't remember the last verse.

MK: That's good singing.

EN: That was a pretty song.

MK: I like that old-time singing.

EN: I do too. I do too. There used to be another, "When the Works all done this Fall." I don't know whether you ever heard that or not.

MK: Sort of a cowboy song?

EN: Yes. About that boy getting killed. He's supposed to go home to see his mother. The cattle stampeded and a pony fell on him and killed him. He said, "I'd like to go see my mother when the works all done this fall." Boy, that's a pretty one. I can play a little of it.

[music playing]

EN: I will tell you, the old pieces that they played back then, if they had the music to them like they've got now – of course, they didn't. You know back there when Jimmy Rogers and them sang, all they had was this guitar. If they had the music to them that they've got now, they would be beautiful songs. We got a lot of Jimmy Rogers and Carter family and stuff here. They didn't have much company with those. Just maybe a guitar and – if they'd had the –

MK: Like, a little pedal steel with it?

EN: – electric guitar or something backing them up, boy, now listen, that would've been something. That would've been something.

MK: A little pedal steel in there.

EN: I got me a tape recorder. I taped –

EN: Yes, you want to bring a good guitar over here and we'll play something.

MK: All right.

EN: You got your set player too, don't you?

MK: Yes.

[music playing]

EN: Yes. A lot of people come and play with him here sometimes.

[music playing]

EN: [laughter].

EN: Yes. I told him we want to see some of the pictures. I can see how some of them look like [inaudible].

EN: Yes, pick out a couple of good ones.

MS: I'll get some nice ones. You'll see them.

EN: Yes. You bring a lot for us to look at.

MS: I don't know about the ones of the cow. I think it might have been a little too dark in there. But maybe I'd come back another time and get that.

MK: The calf too?

EN: That calf, I believe he got it pretty good.

MS: Well, I hope so.

EN: Well, it's a cute one, isn't it?

MS: Yes.

EN: [laughter]

EN: Oh, yes. We'll return it out later on in our field. But we could keep it in our [inaudible] for about a month or two. Then we'll turn it out in a lot.

EN: Traveled all over the ways.

MS: Okay.

[music playing]

EN: About a year old then. About sixty-eight years ago.

EN: I think maybe I expect [inaudible]. No, not plenty. No. These are the ones I took of Ronnie's kids I was telling you about. Some of them, I don't get too good.

MK: Tell me that again, about when you were eight years old. I want to hear you tell that [laughter].

EN: Yes. There was woman coming from Grafton down there, her and two or three people; her

husband and her. She come up there and put a tent up. They would go to stay and hunt, squirrel hunt, and she invited us up. She said, "If you come up this evening, we'll play you some string music." I was just a kid. Just a little kid. I was seven or eight years old. So, we went up after supper. They got their instruments out and she got to play the fiddle. Of course, it's been so long ago that I can't remember the pieces she played. But boy, I thought that was the prettiest music I ever heard in my life. I kept getting after dad to get me a fiddle. So, he made out an order one time. He ordered a fiddle from (Susan Roebuck?). Costed either \$5.98 or \$6.98. I forget which it was at that time. When it came, I thought I could just play her just like that woman, and I couldn't play it. He didn't know how to tune it or anything, but he put the strings on it and everything and got it all straightened up. Tied a string around it and hung it up against the wall. Every evening, he'd come in and take that old fiddle down and he'd song and song. He never did learn to play nothing. He never did learn to play a thing [laughter]. I expect I was about eleven or twelve years old before I could play anything on it. I eventually got people to come around and tune it up for me. Then I got working some chords out. They showed me where to hold G and D and stuff like that. I got to play a few tunes on it. By the time I was thirteen or fourteen years old, I could play good. When I was seventeen, we played down there at Paramount on WMMN Station for three or four months, me and another fellow and two singers.

MK: Who were the other people?

EN: All the boys. One I told you that taught in school, and his two nephews.

MK: From out by St. George there?

EN: Yes. Over on Brushy Fork, over on 38. We had him for a teacher one winter and I learned a good bit off of him. I was maybe fourteen years old. He learned me good bit and he never taught anymore. So, I just kept picking it up here and there and there, every piece I could hear, or I tried to learn everything I could on it.

MK: Now, you went to school with him?

EN: Yes. He would teach.

MK: That was back on the mountain then?

EN: Yes. That was in 1929 or 1930. [19]30, I believe it was.

MK: Did he board in with you?

EN: No, he went back home. See, he just lived down on the other side of the mountain. He had no [inaudible].

MK: [laughter] Must have been some days he couldn't travel on there, though.

EN: Oh, yes. He'd walk. He'd walk alone about four miles and a half down there. He'd get up in the morning and walk if he couldn't get a car. He had a fiddle and I had a fiddle, see. We

played together and he showed me a lot of stuff on it.

MK: Did going to the service kind of bust up your music then?

EN: I didn't go to the service. That was a funny part of it.

MK: Oh, I thought I understood you decided to –

EN: No. I was in Baltimore during the Second World War.

MK: That's what you said. Yes.

EN: There wasn't a thing wrong with me that ever I knew there. Now, that was the funniest thing that I ever had that happened to me in my life. It's a good thing it did happen maybe. They called me up for the Army and I was supposed to go right straight on if I passed from Clarksburg. I wasn't supposed to come back home. I was supposed to go right straight on to wherever they were going to send me. When it came time for me to take my examination, I went down with a whole bunch of – well, the whole busload of it. When it came my turn for my examination, he called me back three times on the X-ray. He said, "You'll not be going with them." I said, "Well, why?" He said, "Well, we'll let you know later." He said, "You won't be going with them." He said, "You'll be going home." I come home, and it must have been a week or ten days before I heard anything. When I got the statement back from the doctor down there that examined me, said I was in [inaudible] that I had a spot on my lung as big as a fifty-cent piece. He said that for me to do something about it because it is serious. I fooled around there for a while. So, I decided to go to Hopemont. They had a TV place out there at Hopemont. After about a month, I didn't go for about a month. There wasn't a thing wrong with me. I didn't cough. Wasn't a thing in the world that I could see wrong with me anyway. So, I decided that I'd go out there. So, I went to Hopemont. That man in there took and ran a light down in my lungs or down through my esophagus in there someplace and my lungs and examined. He said, "There isn't a thing in the world. There isn't a scar on your lung." He said, "You've got a perfect set of lungs as anybody I ever examined in my life."

EN: Is that so? The Lord must have had a hand in it.

EN: He said, "You haven't got a thing in the world wrong with you."

EN: The Lord can do anything.

EN: Well, I said, "I didn't think there was anything wrong with me." I said, "I didn't cough or didn't complain in any other way." I said, "I couldn't figure that out." I said, "They turned me down in the Army." Well, he said, "Just don't report this." He said, "Say nothing about it to nobody," and I didn't. I was supposed to [inaudible] I never went. I went right straight to Baltimore then and stayed down there until the war was just about over.

MK: Why did you do that?

EN: So, I could work. Work in Shipyard. There wasn't no work back here. I went down there. We were married in Baltimore, me and her. I wasn't married when I went down there and she wasn't either. So, we worked down there and made a little money. Then we got married and rented us an apartment. That's where we started off at.

MK: You went to work in the shipyard too?

EN: No. No, I didn't. I worked at the American Hammered Piston Rings for a while. Then we wanted to come back to West Virginia. They wouldn't let me off and they wouldn't change my shift or anything. So, I just quit. Then I went to work at Crown Cork & Seal for a while after I went back. Then after I got pregnant with my daughter, I clear quit going to work at all. I just stayed home.

EN: We worked down there and saved enough to buy that farm over on the mountain and stayed over –

EN: Yes. It takes saving whenever you work. I took care of the money and he did the work.

EN: We stayed over there seventeen years. It got so we couldn't get out of there in the wintertime. So, we bought this.

EN: When [inaudible] to take care of when you get bigger.

MK: Why did you buy a farm way back over there?

EN: Well, my dad and mother lived there and I wanted to be close to them. They were getting old and I wanted to be there where I could help them.

EN: They didn't have anybody else there to help them.

EN: They had a farm there and –

EN: We stayed with them a little while after we came back until we could get some stuff to move into the house. We didn't have anything after we came back.

MK: Yes. We were there a couple weeks.

EN: We stayed there a few weeks with them and then we moved over there. Oh, I couldn't drive until I was about thirty-some. I couldn't go no place or anything. I stayed right home taking care of the kids. I never went no place. I decided, well, I'm going to learn to drive. Because if I'm to go to town and the kids are get big enough that they could ride. So, I just started driving an old truck. He had there an old model A he cut off and made a truck out of. So, I began driving it around on the place and put me up in a place and learned [laughter] how to back up. Then you kept getting that big steep hill. It was way straight up. If you went back down there, you had to learn to back. So, [laughter] I learned to back up and getting there to fix. So, I went and got my operators there and then I'd go over and take his cream to Parsons for him, the dad's and mother,



and their eggs and stuff that they had to sell. I'd take them to Parsons for them. Take the kids and we'd all go to Parsons. Then I'd pick him up in the evening when he got off work. Or rather, he'd drive back. I just drove up. So, I got my license. But, well, I don't know what I'd done do without them there. At least I can go to church when I want to go and stuff that was really –

MK: Parsons was a booming place back then, wasn't it?

EN: Yes.

EN: It wasn't just a –

EN: They had a tannery in there then and –

EN: They had the wool mill.

EN: – they had the wool mill, but they didn't pay much.

EN: They didn't have the charcoal plant then or anything like that.

MK: But they had a theater, didn't they?

EN: Yes. Victoria Theater.

EN: No, they didn't have it in [inaudible].

EN: Yes, they did. They had it left when we moved up here.

EN: Did they?

EN: Yes.

MK: The Victoria Theater. They showed films in there and played the piano.

EN: Yes, they had a big screen. I've been there lots of times.

EN: Well, I've been there, but not very many times, I don't think. [laughter] I knew the first time I ever went to the movies, my schoolteacher took me to the movies. I didn't get to go. I didn't even know anything about a movie. Our schoolteacher, he decided to take all of us children. There weren't very many of us went to school there, you see. That wasn't the one though. But there were only just a few of them. He said he could take us to the movies. So, he took us to a Shirley Temple show in Philippi. That's the first movie I ever seen.

MK: What'd you think of that?

EN: Oh, I really liked it. I really did. But I didn't know nothing about movies or anything until he took us. So, I really liked it. Then they had a little show. Some little girls would come out

dressed all up and did a dance on there or something, like a fore show or something. It was real nice. He paid for it too because I know I didn't [laughter]. I didn't have any money to pay for anything. Oh, I take back them days. It was terrible thing.

EN: Yes. So, the people that went through the days in the depression, I'll tell you one thing right now, knew the value of a dollar. They knew the value of a dollar.

EN: I've hoed corn all day for \$1. Of course, back then, I could buy me a pair of shoes for \$1. I could buy me a pair of sandals. I'd go buy me a pair of sandals out of a dollar. I wouldn't hoe corn all day for somebody.

MK: They said a dollar was as big as a wagon wheel back then.

EN: Yes.

EN: Yes, I guess, because I could buy me a pair of sandals out of it. But now, you couldn't. You couldn't buy you a pair for \$4. But I got me a pair of sandals with the money I'd go and work. My mom, she'd go –

EN: You worked ten hours a day too, you know?

EN: Yes. My mom, she'd go and hoe corn too.

EN: Ten cents an hour.

EN: My sister, she'd go, and sometime, others would go, and we'd hoe corn for \$1 a whole day. We'd work from morning until night. That's all they gave you too, just \$1. Then I went to work out there for my cousin. They had two women and they had babies, both of them. One of them had twins, but one of the twins had died. They got me to come there. I worked at that place for one week, and I had blisters in my hands. I had to take them and do all the washing, ironing their clothes, and all that stuff, and milk their cows and everything. I worked there for a week and then I went home. I said, "I [inaudible] because I had blisters in my hand.

EN: You had three dollars.

EN: Three dollars for a week. I just went home and they said, "Oh, go get your mom. She'll come and" – I said, "No." When I went home, I said, "Mom, you can't take it because I'm" – I was only about sixteen or seventeen years old. I said, "I can't stand it." I said, "You could never do it." Milk the cows separate and wash clothes on the board and take all – I don't know, just everything there. I just couldn't take it. I said, "I can't put up with this." So, I just went home. Of course, I worked at a lot of other places after that. I worked for (Creed Manier?) and I worked for Summerfield. I forget what his first name was. Old man down there that lived up – worked for him.

MK: What did you do for them?

EN: Took care of these two old people there. I took care of them. Well, Creed's, his wife wasn't very well and I just helped her with the work. Oh, I think I got \$3 a week there too. Then I went to Baltimore and I got me a job out there. I made pretty good money there. I bought me some clothes and stuff then.

MK: What'd you think of Baltimore?

EN: I got so I could get around okay. But I didn't care too much for it. I liked back in West Virginia best. I like Parsons. It's such a nice – I mean, there's no colored people or anything around. It's just different. I don't have nothing against colored people. I think they're nice. I like colored people. But still, down in Baltimore, I didn't care for them. Because you used to go along the street, if you'd happen to walk along in the night, you see them as standing down those little holes along the street. I was always afraid. I always kept away from them as far as I could because they could just grab me [laughter]. I know if I missed a bus or something, my streetcar where I had to catch, I was scared to death. I just go find a cop. If I see one of them, I'd have him to help me get to wherever I was going when I first went there because I was afraid. I'll tell you, that is no good place to be in Baltimore. You walk down the street, people try to pick you up. Just pull over the curb and they ask you if you want to ride with them. When you tell them no, you could hardly get rid of them. I tell you, it isn't a very safe place, I don't think. I don't want to raise no kids down there.

MK: Did people do you that way where you worked too?

EN: No. No, just along the street there or one place there. One night, I was going along the street. Somebody stopped and said, "You want to a ride?" I said, "No. I don't need no ride." They just kept on and kept on pulling up and stopping. There was an old lady who lived up there and she came along. She said, "Tell them to go you know where." [laughter] They pulled on after she came along. See, it was kind of a dark like street that I had walked down to catch a – I was going to catch a taxi to go to work.

EN: Well, they did catch people down there. There was one man over here on Route 38, (Worthy Nester?), they mugged him and stole all of his money and his watch and everything and beat him up pretty good.

EN: Well, I didn't like Baltimore and [inaudible]. I'd rather be away from there. Of course, I don't know whether they were niggers or who they were in the car. With the dark, you can't see. But anyway –

EN: Well, the white people just about bad down there as the niggers.

EN: They're bad every place now. Nowadays, it's getting worse because there's much of that marijuana and dope and stuff that they're using. It really isn't safe for people. That's the truth. I'll just tell you. I just don't think it's just safe for people hardly to live. That's what's causing so much trouble. People need some money to buy them some dope and they'll just go and rob somebody or something to get it. I am sure glad I never got on no dope, and I don't want nothing to do with it. I think that's what's a lot of the problems right today. That's why so many people

are killing themselves and stuff. They can't get no money to get that stuff with, and I really believe it. Another thing I think, you just listen to the news and see how much stuff's happening. You read your Bible and you go with the Bible and go according to what the Bible says. Then back to the news, and the end of time, I think, isn't too far away.

EN: Well, it's being fulfilled.

EN: It's fulfilling the Bible every day, I think. Because you can just see so many things in that Bible that says it's going to happen and they're happening. It's just happening every day. You can just hear it. The preachers in the churches are preaching too, that they think the end is not long. So, we don't own nothing here. We're just using it because when we're gone, it's gone. It doesn't amount to anything. I guess a person's just so well off if he didn't have anything.

MK: Probably in the Lord's eye.

EN: Yes. Well, that's all that counts. The Lord is the most important thing of all things, I think.

MK: You said we're just sort of passing through. We're not –

EN: That's right, we're just passing through. The main thing is, if we don't make it up there, that's all we'd have. That's all we got to live for. Just to make it up there. Well, that's the way I see it.

MK: You think Tucker County is a pretty good place to be passing through?

EN: Yes. It's just about as good as there is. I mean, there isn't any real bad – well, there's some bad things that happen in Tucker County too sometimes. We know that boy killed that old lady up there that time and all that stuff.

EN: Oh, he killed, and Roberts.

EN: Well, I was on that trial jury about that boy had killed and the Roberts boy up there.

EN: Debbie.

EN: Yes. So, there's some, but well, I kind of think that might have been on the count of the, him breaking in the – he said he'd broken the VFW and he didn't want the Roberts boy to tell it on him. He said the Roberts boy see that he wrote a letter and he said, "Well, I'll do whatever my dad tells me to do." So, stuff like that, you know why, I don't know. Some things happen bad and some good, I guess. But you take it all the way around, Tucker County is just about as good as any other. I mean, to live, raise your family, and stuff.

MK: What about since this flood? How do you feel about Tucker County since the flood?

EN: Well, I still like Tucker County, even though it did flood. Because I think the people are getting back about as good as they were – some of them. I think if they'd trust the Lord, he'd

help them to put it back. People around just charge so much for their stuff and everything. It looks like it was some kind of judgment sent onto them. I don't know. Maybe not. But I'll tell you, Parsons is pretty bad to buy anything in, or at least I thought so. I always had to go to the Elkins to get me a pair of shoes. I wasn't going to pay a fortune for them. Now, that's the truth. Because they had their stuff down there pretty high.

MK: You mean since the flood or before?

EN: No, before. I've been down there and looked for shoes and I could go to Elkins and get them a lot cheaper.

MK: What was the condition of Tucker County before the flood economically?

EN: Well, I'd say it was on the down go, I'll tell you the truth. Because you see as much wool mill went out down there and then the tanner went out and – in fact, they never built anything new in Parsons that I know of for years.

EN: Yes, they did. They built that new city building.

EN: Yes, but I mean –

MK: Industry.

EN: Yes, industries hire people. That's what I mean. I don't know the thing that – of course, the shoe plant took over down there and they're just as bad off as the wool mill. They don't pay nothing much.

EN: Well, one boy told you here that he couldn't even pay for his truck. He had to let it go back. He couldn't make enough working at the shoe plant to make his payments. I don't know whether it was sore or not, but –

EN: That's what he told us. So, I think it was pretty slow before the flood, but I don't know what will happen now. They're talking about putting in some kind of a big shopping mall down there or something. That's what they say.

EN: A lot of people are saying, "Well, you can buy in your own town." Well, if you could buy in your own town, I believe it's right too. But if you can't afford to pay for the stuff that they've got, why not –

EN: Well, [inaudible] nothing. If anything, you want, if you break a piece of your tractor or need a set of plows or points or something for your plow, there is no place down there to buy it. You've got to go to Elkins over there or some of them places to get it. They don't keep nothing down there.

EN: I know my sister said she looked all over Parsons to find a spool of thread that was navy blue [laughter]. She couldn't find a spool of thread in Parsons of the navy blue.

MK: So, even before the flood then, you think it wasn't real good?

EN: No, it wasn't. There wasn't much going on down there to tell you the truth now. There wasn't. Now, the only employment that was in Parsons was a – well, it wasn't right in Parsons, but the charcoal plant down here and the shoe plant, not that – well, the Board of Education hired a few. The state road up there, they hired a few. But there wasn't industrial much in Parsons even before the flood.

EN: Well, when we first moved up here, there were only just very few cars that went along this road, wasn't there?

EN: I know there wasn't.

EN: There weren't very many cars went along here at all. But Anmoore, they just constantly, you can see, going cars.

EN: In the evenings especially.

EN: Yes. When they got off work or something, they all come some places out of [inaudible]. They'd go pretty regularly when we first moved up here, there wasn't anything. The roads are in an awful shape, I think. Elmer bought me a new car and I just hate to take it over the roads. They're letting tear up and tear the cars up so they can sell some more. I guess get some more taxes off them.

[laughter]

That's the way I see it.

MK: What about since the flood? What's been the – has the economy of the county gone down lower do you think since the flood?

EN: Now and since the flood?

MK: Yes.

EN: Well, yes, it naturally would. But you see they haven't had time to build it back the way it should be yet. Just like I said, if they put that mall in down there, well, that might attract a lot of people to the town here to deal and stuff like that. But I don't know whether it will or not. That's what they said. This Arch Moore said on television the other night that he is wanting to put a mall in down there. But I don't know whether he will or not.

[end of transcript]