

Stonewall Jackson Dam Removal
Aubrey West Oral History
Date of Interview: March 7, 1985
Location: Lewis County, West Virginia
Length of Interview: 01:35:06
Interviewer: MK – Michael Kline
Transcriber: NCC

Aubrey West: Long time. I don't guess the damn question changed what the road that had been over there. I don't reckon it was.

Michael Kline: Well, the difference now is that a lot of those homes that you would remember aren't there.

AW: Oh, yes. Up there that big Stonicker home?

MK: Is that the one with the four chimneys?

AW: I expect that's right. Big house that's off the right?

MK: Yes, beautiful house. Then on the left side of the road was a big meadow. Just a beautiful meadow.

AW: I figure that the Stonicker place, it's a shame. That was a fine home.

MK: Yes. You could tell it. The chimneys are still standing and then part of the interior of the bottom floor. That's all.

AW: That's awful. But that's the way she goes.

MK: Now, where was your home place?

AW: Right over there on that bank, right over there. She was living right here, right over up that road there. That little turn up to the right across that little bridge there by the other house. That's in our own place where the other house is there.

AW: Right up on the bank, the house, lightning struck it and burned it here. It's been five years, and it's at Carol's since it burned.

MK: Was anybody living there then?

AW: She was, her and her family. I just brought them over here, and they've been here ever since.

Female Speaker: We're like a bad pain. He can't get rid of us.

AW: [laughter] Well, my wife had died. Let's see. She died in [19]59.

FS: [19]79.

AW: Or no, [19]79, I mean. She was worried to death. I know now that she's better off. Now I know that. I was just thinking about that this morning. It's better been both of us. By God, Jack Linger, one of my closest friends, he was up at all cars at the funeral. Jack came to me and talked to me right more little bit. The next day, he went over all right, and I went into town to

Southern States and to get some feed. Peg, the girl – and I forget who she is, Peg somebody – she's been there for years. Said, "Bad about Eleanor, wasn't it?" I said, "Eleanor who?" Said, "Jack Linger's wife." I said, "What's the matter?" Said, "He found her dead in the bed this morning." It was just two days between Jack's wife and mine. She'd worried herself to death over it. My woman, she'd went off at time. She worried a hurdle; she was halfway off. Right over there that brother-in-law of mine, Ross Lemons, he went off. Of course, I'm no doctor, and I don't know. But he just worried to death. By God, he died. He went up to Akron, and he died deader than hell and just a little bit. Poor devil, he'd come over here. He was worried to death. His kids, I don't think they treated him right. I don't believe they did. They even didn't have no respect for him or his relatives. After he died, they had a sale right quick. So, my wife and Ross were brother and sister. We were brothers-in-law. Clark had died in the First World War. Damn, they didn't sell his Purple Heart, those two kids and that niece and nephew of mine or her man, well, nephew too, right there at that sale. I figured if my wife would have been living, there'd been someone's eyes that got scratched out. But no, I can just sit here and think. I can't remember it like I used to. But I can just name a lot of people that just died right off. Of course, as I say, I'm not a doctor. But I know there's worry to death. Got two more right down here working, (John Reiderborn?) and his sister. John, I saw him the other day, and my God, I hardly knew the man. She's crippled up. Were you ever down there?

FS: No.

AW: Well, she can't get around now hardly. John, he's just gone all the pieces. I told him the other day, I said, "John, if you don't do something or something happened, you're going to kick the bucket." He's trying to do that work himself and sell milk. I've been there. I know what selling milk is. Was trying to take care of his sister. He bought another farm over in Barbour County. He had a little piece of land right up here. He got another two over there right there close to our piece of land over there around North Run. But he got a nice little piece right up here at the Hard Road couldn't. Somebody had a trailer sitting there on his place, and they drilled a well. He's got a well there. Pretty nice house seat up there just on the bank just above the road. I don't know on the name of God he didn't get a trailer or build him a little house or something. But Regina wanted to keep everything together and take it all over there. So, that's what John was trying to do. They haven't got no children or nothing like that. I guess he did get a nice farm over there.

MK: Where is it?

AW: Over some place pretty close to Philippi. He wanted to take me over. I never went with him. I just never. Well, I haven't got no ambition to go any place, only where I have to. They came up here and told me that I had to get out. I said, "You're going to do me like you did Barbara Heavner and their boy, are you?" I said, "If you have to, well," I said, "You'll have a little more fun than you had there." It doesn't scare me a damn bit for them to tell me they're going to throw me out. I don't try to have trouble, but if it's forced on me, I'm not going to run from it either. They had two halves which that lawyer for them, he doesn't know whether Christ was screwed or fight or killed at the club. That's just the way he is. I would half shut the woman that goes around and locates you. All you'd have to do is look at her, and you'd know she ought to be at home. But you are in their hands if you let them get you a place.

MK: Did they offer to try to find you a place?

AW: Yes, they did. I found some places, but they're hiring the devil that you would have. But I'll never get no place like where I was born and raised. Anyway, you take it, we've got a piece of land down below there, 89 acres down here around North Run. Of course, it's airship land. They never asked me if I wanted to sign with the Corps. My relatives didn't hear. Hell, they signed the first chance they got.

MK: Was that on the Randolph run property?

AW: No, this year.

MK: This year?

AW: This year. This was divided up. There were three of us children. Phyllis got her part of course. Margaret, she's dead. She died three years before my woman, I believe it was. Then Royce had her part. Then whenever he died by these heirs, Betty and Lowell, her children well it fell to them. Hell, they signed up right now. Never asked me. Carol knows that's the truth. They never came and asked me if I wanted to sign it or a damn thing. I wouldn't have signed it anyhow. Because I knew that Archie and my brother-in-law were just running up there to the Corps. I'd leave that to him every time I'd meet him. He just wore himself out of going up there or carrying news to him. Before they broke down, Phyllis, my sister, has been pretty nice since that to me. But Aunt Betty, she never said a word to me, never been here. I don't want her to come. Because I spent all of my life – my dad died when I was fifteen years old, and we didn't have this place paid for. That was down at Hoggard, I'm telling you. He and a fellow named Ophie Spore bought it in partners. Ophie wanted to leave here. He went to Colorado, and my dad bought his half out. We owed for that or the biggest end of that and owed his funeral expenses too. I stayed here and helped my mother. That's how much thanks I got for it as far as that's concerned. When I got to milking cows, my mother didn't have no money. She'd worked hard all of her life and tried. When she got sick – and this is no lie, Phyllis will have to tell you that – I paid to have a nurse with her, one going and one coming. I paid for her nurses and her hospital or doctor bill and all that. I never even kept account of it because she was my mother. Nobody would. I never even thought about it because she'd have done that for me, and that's the thanks I got. That's what hurt me. Well, I got the chickens will come home to roost. If I don't go out right quick, they'll not get none of that. Mine, what I have. They'll not need to worry over that. I'd give it to the worst damn tramp that I know of if it'd keep it away from them. That's just me.

MK: Who was your mother?

AW: She was Ollie Glen. Oh, she was a hell of a fine woman if she wasn't my mother. She had high blood pressure and had a stroke. She laid there helpless. I knew about the way she'd give her – well, Margaret had her part anyhow because my dad had made his will before he died. He and my mother owned this place in cahoots. He willed his part to her lifetime. Then it went to us kids, equally. I can get that place if I want it down around North Run for the same price that

my dad gave for it. Because he had it in the will and said if I wanted that place, I was to have it at what he paid for it. If I had just a few more years on me, I'd take it. If I had to give it to someone, take it all, buy it all. I'd buy out two areas, and I'd give it.

MK: Is that outside the project area then of the Randolph run?

AW: No. The lower edge of it, they took an easement on a little bit of it right at the lower edge of it. But you can't build nothing on it or anything like that at easement plan. But they'll not cover none of it up or nothing like that. As far as that's concerned, they won't cover this up, hell. This will never be covered up. This will connect up with Stonecoal Lake over here and Summersville Lake and all those, Sutton Lake. This will be a – well, I wouldn't know what you'd want to call it, but it'll all be together.

MK: Conglomeration.

AW: Yes, sir.

MK: It's a shame, isn't it?

AW: Shame's right. Well, I know there'll never be no water here.

MK: You're up at the very head of the creek here, right?

AW: Huh?

MK: When you're up at the very head of the creek, your water won't –

AW: No, I'm not up at the head of the creek. Well, they've got an easement planned on land way up above here. You take it up as far – you're not acquainted either one of you up above here – on up above as far as the White Schoolhouse that's up here where Three Fox is. One straight ahead and one turns right and one left. There's land that they've got easement planned on clear up there.

MK: So, they're clearing the folks off?

AW: Well, no. There haven't been no folks cleared out up there. But now, Don Hardman, he bought a place up on Steel Run there. Well, some of it he inherited. By golly, they take a part of his land there right where the old Steel Run used to be. They went cleared it up to there. I don't know what to mean.

MK: I guess they want it for the recreation.

AW: I suppose, yes. Now here for a long while, this bottom right over there to the left, across the road over there of Aspinall, Billy told me that they wouldn't take that. That's Billy in Aspinall. But they clear up again in that bank there. They first told them that they wouldn't bother no houses and no barns on this side. Here all they get was a sheep shed over across the

creek here. They're cleaning that all out. Or that's what I hear. But they just as well, I reckon there was 425 acres there where Aspinall was bought off of J.R. Jones. There's over a hundred acres of its bottom land. In other words, I think this big Skin Creek here was some of the nicer land down through here as you could find any place.

MK: Oh, yes sir.

AW: Yes, sir. Stonecoal over here usually had some good land too up there and the West Penn bought that. This last hill that they took over there where you go up and going to Horner, that was supposed to go right around the hill right up there from that little store. Went right around the hill and joined in there and cut that hill out. Clark Smith let them in there. That was Jake Smith's boy. He wouldn't sell it to him if there hadn't been a promise to put the road down through there around the hill instead of going up over the top. He knew more about it than a lot of them. But anyhow, there wasn't a state man or a state inspector on it. The West Penn had their inspectors on it. I used to know somebody at Charleston who got some of that green stuff in his hands or there had been an inspector there too. That's what politics does. It turns a lot of them blind. It turns a deep ear to step. There wasn't a state inspector on that job. I'm a Democrat, and it was a Republican who told me that. So, I know by God if he wasn't there, then he'd own up to it. That made him sick too [laughter].

DK: [laughter]

AW: No, sir. Thorn Linger told me that was absolutely right [laughter].

DK: Well, is this dam going to keep Weston from flooding?

AW: Well, I don't know. I hope not [laughter]. By God, that's right. I do [laughter]. I doubt if it floods much because this Stonecoal Lake over here holds a lot of water back. Because a lot of this water comes out of Stonecoal over here where it flooded in Weston. There haven't been many high waters here. They holler about being hurt, but they never were hurt really bad. I know June 21st, 1936, I reckon it was, she came. I rang up here, that boy, and I let them know a cloud burst up here. My God, the water was every place here. I know we were working right down on this side of John Reiderborn there in the rock way up the holler. We were working right in a little old road that takes up there to that house and goes up in the holler. I said to the boys, "Let's get these tools in here and get on up the house." I said, "Jesus Christ, it's going to come an awful rain." We did. We just got up here, and next thing you know, the water has ever place here in that mill over there at Vernon's and up ready to go in the store over there.

FS: There are two more people. I don't know who they are.

AW: Well, maybe there's some of the Corps.

FS: I don't know.

AW: Maybe there might be something they want to hear [laughter].

MK: No. They're not in the Corps vehicle.

AW: That run coming down that way, they had a nice apple tree stand right there where you go up to the lane there towards that place on the hill. That flood came down through there, it looked like it was that deep, that water just rolling. She hit that apple tree, and she just turned her right out. That fill wasn't along there in that road there. That bridge wasn't filled in there like that. The creek crossing the road came up here, the county road. I got right down. That was low down through there on this side of that store building. By my God, it was deep man. These fence posts up here along this bank here towards these Horner girls is just about that much of them are sticking out. My God, it is the worst that I ever saw. But now that was that one time. You know where that knob is down here, don't you, where they call round knob down here, and Jack Linger is up here on the upper end of the place, or do you? Water ran around that on both sides.

FS: It was just somebody wanting rent that over there. I told them they couldn't. It couldn't be them because the Corps are gone. Well, dang. She said, "We've been everywhere looking." She said, "We wanted the country." There's nothing out here. Nothing at all.

AW: I could get places in town, but I'm not going into town. Off camp under the buttered rock. So, I know where they are. I used to park some up there around them. I'll go back there and crawl in under them.

MK: Or you'll go to town.

AW: Or I'll go to town.

FS: There isn't nothing wrong with town.

AW: No. There's a hell of a lot of wrongs with the people that's in it.

FS: Well, depending on his –

MK: So, that high water was in [19]36?

AW: Yes.

MK: You say there hasn't been –

AW: Nothing. No. I know George Smith, he's dead and gone now. But he was a dam router. He's telling about his boy. He just got married, that Dick Smith, the one with Sarah in Weston. He'd moved down here right close the creek, and the water got up in and ruined his stuff. Here was a Billy hearken to me about there in the bank. Well, I said, "What did you expect when you moved down the creek like that?" He didn't have very much more to say. But now it did. That town run down there. It'd just come out of there too. It wasn't all Skin Creek. God, the town run and come down out of there and just washed the hell right out of Weston. It was a cloud burst, boy. When you get one of them, there isn't nothing that's going to hold it. It was a sight. But I'd

never seen anything like that in my life. Right up here on a place right up here on the creek, there was a haystack fenced up there. Matt Snyder is running the place now. Just picked that haystack up and brought it right across a real rough place in the creek. Picked her right up and brought her right up here on the little point and set her down. The pen was stepping right around her.

MK: [laughter] Well, that's some rough water.

AW: Yes, sir. It's a lot of water when it can just pick things up and take it. Brent Marsh lived there on the hill. He just brought his hay pens right down here to our place and let them sit down there. He asked if we'd call him back. I said, "But they're yours, aren't they?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Get them out of here [laughter]." No, sir. No, they don't have much rain and much floods, I don't figure, in Weston. That Polk Creek section out there helped Weston. Whenever they put in those small dams out at Polk Creek, that did Weston more good than anything that they've ever done yet. That was a big dam and all. I really helped them. That Polk Creek was a rotten, little place, pretty long back through there and no fall to it. It got in there; it stayed in there. I can't remember what it's supposed to be up here. I ought to. Because on the schoolhouse out there where I went to school, it used to be on a pole right over there. But anyhow, no, there's just 10 feet fall between here and around Knob schoolhouse.

AW: That's where you take up Hoggard where our other place is.

MK: Right down here?

AW: Yes, on down below John's. Well, I would think there's more fall to it than that, but there's not.

MK: Well, how much fall is there between here and Brownsville?

AW: I can't tell you. I've heard, and I can't tell you to be right. I wouldn't want to tell you what I don't know.

MK: It looks just like it's not going to be very deep.

AW: It will not be deep up here. I don't think. I don't believe there'll be any water up here.

MK: Mudflats is what Matt called it.

AW: Now, Jack Linger, I guess is still down on his place. Louis is living up there in the trailer yet, I think. Is that right? But I haven't been down there. I guess Jack's staying. They've paid him for the house there and for his land, I guess. But he's staying there taking care of it for them, I guess, for the Corps.

MK: Yes. I don't know when he'll have to be out.

AW: Well, Jack's up there high. As far as he's concerned, he won't never have to get out on the

account of water. I'm sure of that. If Jack dies and he ought to be, he'll be dead before he's billed anyhow. They've been a long time, boy, getting ready to build it. It worked out. Seemed like as long as I can remember getting started from the time it started until now. I know Kent Butcher down there; they were running his basement whenever we went to Clarksburg the first time to fight it. I don't know when that was. Must have been a long time ago. Of course, Kent Butcher and Marj, they hadn't been married very long. Now, poor old Kent I think he's about gone. He moved away from here, and he's over here on Hackers Creek, I guess. Someplace over there. He had I think a stroke and in a heck of a shape. I don't see him out around. I've seen Marj once in a great while, his wife.

MK: When all these folks died, including your wife in 1979, was there some sudden thing that happened that particular year that seemed like it was really going to happen after all?

AW: What, the dam business?

MK: Yes.

AW: Well, they knew then that we thought you can't keep a person from thinking. They were willing to fight and did fight. But they still thought they were fighting a losing battle. Now, that's why. You just couldn't get a man to tell you that. But you could tell that people knew and most they were whipped. There were a lot smarter fellows than I was. I knew damn well it was whipped. Because you can't get on behind these damn politicians, one will lie for the other. They'll do anything you get them hooked. But being honest, whenever you are elected to a public office like that, you forget if you ever were honest – if you ever were before. There are not too many people who get in there if they're really honest.

MK: That's right.

AW: No, sir.

MK: Was there some time that that feeling changed, and people began to really think that it was a losing battle?

AW: Yes, there was. I can't speak for everybody. You just have to judge by a person's actions. I never did ask anyone if it was thought. Now, John Reiderborn from down here would tell them what they were all the time. I thought he was right. But I didn't argue the pro or con. I just did all I could do to help fight against it. Because I didn't think it was a thing that we needed. Whenever I got to, I could help them. Whenever they wanted something, I gave it to them if I had it. I just turned the place over to them here. Matt and them will tell you that. They got whatever I had. I didn't have much, but they got it all, whatever it was. Place for their horses and everything else. Place for gas and water for all of the people who were here. I have been lucky that I had a good, strong well. They didn't have it over there. I had two, one up the milk house there, just as strong as this one is. You can't go out and buy you a place with wells like that either. I went right over here to Crawford and was looking at the place. Pretty nice place only it's been here a while. Fixed up nice. But I began asking them about the water. You could tell that they were scared of it themselves. Until looking at another place the other day right

close, it's not in the corporation of Weston, but it's out outside of the corporation and everything. Now, they've got two wells drilled there, and still they're hooked onto city water. Well, that well there, my God, this woman here washes Jesus Christ. It's awful. It never phases. There she is sitting in the chair. But that's the truth. She just keeps throwing and washing.

FS: Don't be talking about me. I heard it.

AW: No, I didn't say anything against you. I said, but you voice a little. It is frank. You can't go no place else and rent you a place like that by hell where you can just keep on washing. They don't grow them like that. But I was lucky whenever the Peck & Snyder built this notch here, you could bail that just as hard as you could bail it, and it would just jump up that hole. You could take a smoke glass and look there, and it just jumped up that hole. She jumped up to you, you could touch the water with a long handle shovel. That's how high she would come up. He just kept on baling and baling and never phased it. The same way over there at the barn. Of course, now this water here is hard water here. Just don't make as good a coffee and stuff like that as some of it that I've seen. Right down there where I lived down on this creek, that little mound down there, that's awful good water down there. It always was strong, but my God, we never used no water like we've used here. Here, all those people, they would take all the water they wanted. They used a lot of water here.

MK: You're talking about the festival?

AW: Yes, sir.

MK: What was the idea behind that festival?

AW: Well, it is to get money to fight against the dam, I reckon. I never asked them what they're going to do with the money. But they made a lot of money here. I know one thing; they used a lot of it I think helping out. I think they did. I don't know personally, but I'm just going by their talk. There are too many people that are into it. I'm sure they were doing what was right about it.

MK: Did they have some pretty nice crowds?

AW: Oh, Christ, yes. I've seen it here. You couldn't stir them to stick no place. Clear up this road here, and it parked up there and all these meadows parked full here of cars. They had 4-H stands and one thing and another here from Crawford or Walkersville. I don't know which schools they had it. Their schools had their 4-H stands here. My god, there was an awful crowd here, man. They came from every place.

MK: Did you like that old time music they played?

AW: Yes, I did. Yes, sir. Yes, boy. Right over there was one old guy burning horror. I knew him ever since we were kids. I lived by him fifty-four and a half years, right here. There was never a day. I saw that guy. He ran the area gristmill, blacksmiths shop. There never was a time where we didn't see each other two or three times a day. I miss that. I know very well he misses

me. I know he does. He never did ask me for accommodation, but what he got it. Likewise, I never asked him for one, but what I got it. Those are things like that that you hate to give up. That's some of the things. Poor, old devil, worked there, and he had him a pretty nice place there. He owned a store building and all this other, this right-hand then here. Whenever I was a kid, I set up buggies here. They put them in that big park and sold them then just like automobiles. Tad Jones that lived there where Jack Linger lives now, he ordered buggies, and they'd go to Roanoke and get a car, load up and bring them over here and set them up. Then the far end here to the right, they were out of the saddle shop and the harness shop. Stryker's harness and all that stuff, it could come right here in Ben Dale and buy it.

MK: Where were the buggies made?

AW: I know that Studebaker was one of the kind of buggies, and the Zane Gray was another. Now, where they were made at, I couldn't tell you. They were put on a car someplace and brought in here on the railroad cars. They were the axles and the seat and those were together. The axles were put through there with the nuts on a crate. Then the rest of it is you had to put on there and set it up. I set up a many one fit since a day there. Worked all day setting up buggies right there for W.T. Jones.

MK: How much did he get for them? What year are you talking about?

AW: We were talking, I would say, along in ten and eleven and twelve and on up there, right around in that vicinity. I didn't pay much attention to the price. All I was wanting was that 50 cent to get to do that. I did my work. I never always had a job when he was setting up buggies. A young guy would bring an older buggy in there. I remember those two. But now he had more mates than that. But now that's just two that come to my mind. Studebaker made a wagon too along with the buggy. He handles Studebaker wagons.

MK: Do they have to be set up too?

AW: Yes. But they weren't so much to them. I know we never used the Studebaker. My dad always had it in his head they run hard. We used the Kramer. We'd go to Weston Bob Bass and all and get our wagon down there.

MK: Kramer?

AW: Kramer, yes.

MK: What were some of the other makes?

AW: Well, the Conklin. Conklin I always thought run like a block sled [laughter]. I don't remember. I suspect there was another in their too. There weren't too many different kinds for a guy to figure on. The harness, my God, and saddles, it was a fright. You could just go there and buy anything that you wanted, any kind you wanted. He kept them right there in that building ready to lay on a horse's back.

MK: Did Studebaker make the harness too or –

AW: No. I don't think. Stecker was the harness outfit, Stecker brothers.

MK: Where were they out of?

AW: I don't know. Stecker brothers, I couldn't tell you. Vernon had these signs. They'd send up signs. I know we had them over there about the Zane Gray buggies in there the last time I was in there and paid any attention. I just don't know where they come from. I don't know where. I did then. But where they come from, I'd hate to say.

MK: Well, who had the fastest horse in those days to pull them?

AW: Oh, that was saying a lot. I got it. That was on the next page, and they hadn't turned it over yet. A man might have the fastening today, and he wouldn't have it tomorrow.

MK: [laughter]

AW: [laughter] Yes, sir.

MK: But they were always trying them, I guess.

AW: Yes, sir. When I grew up, I had one. By God, I'd try them too.

MK: What sort of a horse was that?

AW: Well, the one that Jack Linger's brother and I – he had a little pacing gray mare, and she could run God like green lightning. I was kind of afraid of her. I bought a little old straight-legged. She wasn't a little old, she was young. She was a Lord Roberts. She was a half race mare, straight legged thing and ewe-necked. One night, Bernard and I and Helen were around up here. His cousins came from up in old Russell Linger and then came from up in Randolph County. But I forget. They have a big farm and dairy up there. I think they're running the dairy.

MK: Oh, down near Huttonsville.

AW: Yes, Huttonsville, that's right. They thought they had some pretty fast horses. Maybe they did up there at Huttonsville. I don't know [laughter]. But we got started to run them, and we left them up here in Ben Dale. Bernard and I just went on down this road, a pretty nice place to run them. We let them mares out. We got down below Aspinall there and going towards down in that little place there before you go up that bank there. I just let that in the mine on, and I got right up. We were running right side by side there. She wasn't doing her best. I don't know whether his was doing any best or not. But we run them like that and turned around on schoolhouse, we turned up Hoggard and stopped there. I thought we waited for an hour before Russell and them came [laughter]. They came after a while. When they came on, Bernard and them went home, and I came back up the road. But now, Bernard never did tell me, or I never did tell him. But I think he was about half afraid of that mare of mine. She could run Jesus

Christ. Up in the Bernards, I'd seen her run before. I didn't have a horse with her. But, boy, she could run now. I don't mean maybe [laughter].

MK: Where did you get that mare?

AW: I bought her off of Tom's end here at Weston. He had a livery baby stable. I was going down there to school. I'd go over there every day, and I'd look at that mare. She was just young, about four years old, when I brought her home here. She was gentle. I traded her off for a black mare after I had her a long time. That black mare could really rack man and as smooth as you ever set on. No one wasn't going to take your road away. It didn't go on flock, it'd beat her. But that bloody mare, my God, she could fly. She was by Lord Roberts. Oh, poor old Bernard, he was a couple years older than I was. He took something wrong with his back, cancer I guess, in his spine. Killed him young. They lived over on that knoll over down there. There's a nice house down there burnt. Yes, sir. Oh, there Bernard and Jack's dad. He lived through a lot of this. He knew this was going to happen. Now, they've got a place right up here. Jack has, and Russell and them. They own a home place up here, their dad's home, Bruce's, and Dean's home place. They own that. The girls are Ella and Ruth. I know them. They went to school up here, and I went down here.

DK: The Horner girls?

AW: No, Russell Linger's sisters, Ruth and Ella. They lived up here for a good bit before they went up there. Their mother was a Teeter, Granville Teeter's girl over here on Stonecoal. Then they moved up there and bought a farm up there. The girl still owns a half interest in this place here, and Jack owns the other half. I guess Jack owns all of it. I don't reckon the other kids own it. I don't think they do. But Jack, I think, oh, he runs it anyhow. But I think Bruce owned it. He has the other half, and Dean owns the other half up there. But Jack can't buy this. They won't sell it to him. The girls up there, they won't sell it. They're going to keep it because there's a nice house location over there. But now, the Corps takes part of that, the lower end of it here. It lays up back away from the creek, takes off up that holler.

MK: Who were the two women you said that are still –

AW: Horner girls, Mary Lee and Maxine. They're still over there.

MK: We haven't talked to them.

AW: You ought to go over and talk to them.

MK: Will they talk to us?

AW: Oh, yes. They'll talk to anybody. They'd be glad to have you. Tell them that I sent you over there.

MK: Okay. Would that land up there that's in the Linger family, would they be able to build on that or is that something that the Corps has a kind of easement on too?

AW: Now, I never did ask Jack right where the easement come to there. But I figured the easement comes from what he said about the amount they took about on the old home place. Now I figure. It's a nice house seat there. I can remember that it's a beautiful old, log house there.

MK: But this trouble about being allowed to keep some land but you couldn't build on it is –

AW: Well, now that's the way that the lower part of that there. There's 4,600 of acres down at our place on the Hoggard there. That's the way that you can't sell it. You can't build nothing on there or nothing like that. You can graze it, maybe mow it, but that's it.

MK: But that's not necessarily true of all the stuff that they're taking on further out?

AW: No, I don't suppose. Really, I wouldn't say because you know a lot of people with closed mouths. Wherever you run across one of them, well you just have to keep your mouth shut and not ask too many questions. I never was taught to ask too many questions. I always thought I could hear enough and keep my mouth shut. I still think if a man will just keep a – my mother always told me a steel tongue made a wise head. My God, you can find out what you want and just keep your mouth shut. But now these Horner girls are nice girls. Neither one of them married. I don't reckon they ever had a boyfriend. I can remember when they were born. My mother was there at their home whenever each one of them was born. They lived over here on Sand Fork at that time. They have a farm right over here. It comes up at the top of the hill here on the right-hand side. It's grown up as far as that's concerned. But my God, they got some good land over there. I don't know. I expect 150 or better acres and maybe more. But Will Horner and their mother went together. I know they went together for 20 years before they were married. Then Lowell Will died young. Believe that he was getting up in years the right smart bit. I forget what he took and died. He was a young man though. But I would say he was forty-five, somewhere along in there. Then Lola died. Their mother died I suppose about three years ago. She was the last one of the Butts. Just left these girls there by themselves. They had an aunt who was crippled that died before their mother did, Lela. She never was married. They had three uncles, I think. But anyhow, they're all gone. When these girls are over there themselves, I feel sorry for them. I think I ought to go over and talk to them. I ought to. But I don't know. There's just something about this thing. You just hate to go around people where it's going to have to leave, you don't want to see them go. Another thing about it, they might think that you're trying to find out about some of their business or something like that. It's the best just to – Carol told me, said, "You ought to go down and see John. Talk to him." I ought to, but God, I hate to and want to too. But now John's in a bad shape. He's hooked up bad. He got all that stuff that he'll have to move. There he's got an Inwood sister. He's just in the heck of a hard road there. I don't say he has to be, but there's nothing I can do to help him. I don't know, it's just something. The Horner girls, I've seen them come down. I believe it was Sunday, they came down out there from the cemetery. Their mother is buried up there. Well, their dad is too. I went out there and hollered at them. I was out there, and I hollered at them. They always like to talk, and I always tried to help them. Whenever they were keeping a few cows and they were having trouble, I always tried to help them. I think I have helped them some, and I was always glad to do it. But their granddad was a nice man out of the way too, Ed Butt. I think that they would talk to you. I

asked Matt how they were getting along? He goes and sees them once in a while. He said very good. But Matt was under the impression that they were going to sell this or trade this place off for a place to live and let the Corps have this one too. Well, the Corps has taken it, and they've given that to some fellow to – I don't know. But they said there wasn't nothing to that. They were going to keep that. They told me that out here on Sunday.

MK: Everybody's wondering what Aubrey's going to do.

AW: Well, they haven't got a damn thing on me. Aubrey's wondering about that himself.

MK: You're not going to town.

AW: No, sir. If you hear them, they've been in Weston or any of these other towns, you'll know where to find me. There's some damn undertaker who will be working on me.

MK: [laughter] Got it.

AW: That's right [laughter]. That's the only damn reason I'd be there [laughter]. Oh, boy. Those sons of bitches, I don't want to be around them. You can see her dwindling away too, boy.

MK: What's that?

AW: That town. They'll do anything now to get you to trade with them. Yes, sir. They couldn't stop until they got the road. Well, they all go to Clarksburg [laughter] there. By God, they got these people mad at them when they go to Buchanan when they have to go to a grocery store or wherever. They don't fool with them. You can drive up that street, and it's just like going into a ghost town. Looks like you're in Wyoming.

MK: So, progress hasn't helped Weston?

AW: I don't think so. I think their progress that they've talked about has gone out the back door. Of course, you couldn't get those sons of bitches to own up to it. But now they're having bearing-down pains.

MK: Bearing-down pains?

AW: Yes, sir [laughter]. Whatever you want, that's what I'm going to call it. They're pushing down on them all the time. We're not lifting them up. That kind of tickled me. That's the only thing that the fellows got to get any kick out of, is to drive up Main Street there, and there isn't nobody up there. I can remember when Weston used to be a pretty busy little place. I can remember when Ben Dale had done more damn business in one day than they do now in a week.

DK: Right here.

AW: Right here.

MK: Was all this here?

AW: Well, there are two gristmills and stores and this buggy shop that I was telling you about, and a harness shop, three blacksmith shops. I saw horses hooked all up that lane there of ours. Clear up that way. Clear through there and Vernon horse store there. All around up this way and clear through here on both sides up to this store right up here on this lot of mine that burnt down. There was another store there and another store up. There were three stores. My God, they came from far and near. People would come in here. A lot of these horse traders, a lot of them would come in here, they would never ride the same horse out of here that they rode in. They'd come here and trade horses. Boy, now it was a business place. Now I'm not lying to you. You could come here. You could get you a new mowing machine, hay rake, tether, or a buggy or a wagon or whatever.

MK: Did they have a stock market too or just trade around?

AW: Just traded around. Yes, there was a blacksmith shop right here on this place, right there on the corner there, on this side of the road, one right up there right on below the cemetery there, and one right down there by the creek right there where that tree blew over. The hill was busy all the time.

MK: Was it that way up until the Second World War or when did it taper off?

AW: Yes, it was up until the cars began to get more plentiful, a lot of cars, and then the horses kind of begin to go out of fashion. No, you could come in here and buy any damn thing you wanted, any kind of footwear or anything like that, or a cloth. Old Fair Berninger had a store over there where that building where Vernon has over there. Now, it was a store, boy. My great uncle had a store up here, Jim West, my God. The post office was right down underneath it there. Austin was the first post office, then it got to be in Ben Dale.

MK: What was the first one?

AW: Austin.

MK: Austin.

AW: A-U-S-T-I-N.

MK: Why did they change the name?

AW: I don't know.

MK: Was there a to do over that?

AW: Well, you see that, they changed that whenever I was young, I don't know. But I can remember they came down the stairs out of the store, and the door and came down the store and right down the steps coming down the side there and right off into the post office that way where

you come in from the other side. I can remember the mail carriers come in there, Bill then, my wife's uncle, he carried mail from Weston to here.

MK: You were in the dairy business back then, were you?

AW: Yes, I was in the dairy business but not then, no. My dad didn't die until 1920. He died in 1920. Then well just got along the best way we could. Finally, I got some cows and went to sell a little cream. Then I got into the dairy business of selling to – what is that there at Clarksburg where they're used for canned milk?

MK: I know what you mean.

AW: Well, I can't think of the name. Then I got into Grade A milk. I was into it before John was. I got him into it. I kept pounding at him until he went into it.

MK: How many heads did you milk?

AW: I had about twenty-five heads all the time.

MK: Milked them all by hand, I guess.

AW: No, I got machines.

MK: Milking machines.

AW: Yes. Did milk them by hand for a while. Hell, I can milk a cow if you'd give her milk down. A good milk cow, I can milk her about as quick as you could put the machine on there. But my, I haven't got the grip of my fingers now as I had then. I could just sit down if a cow would let it down and didn't milk hard, well I could knock it right out of there. I've sat down and milked a 3-gallon bucket and then get another 3-gallon bucket and milk a half more and just keep right on going right out of the same cow. But you have to have a good milk cow to let it down like that as far as that goes.

MK: Did you raise a bunch of kids then?

AW: No, I don't have no children.

MK: No children.

AW: I had one who died at birth. No, sir. Matt was here, I believe, night before last. He's got some hay in the barn over here. He came over and got some hay here a little bit and lying to me [laughter].

MK: [laughter] So, he likes to talk.

AW: Oh, yes.

MK: Stop in and tell a few lies.

AW: [laughter]

MK: Just long enough to tell a few lies.

AW: [laughter] Well, you don't have to talk very long to do that.

[laughter]

Well, I haven't known Matt Snyder very long as far as that goes. I didn't know there was such a creature as him walking around. I reckon I saw him a time or two before my wife's funeral. When we were over at the funeral, I saw someone come in and walking. They said that it is Matt Snyder coming and walking up to the funeral home there. But now they haven't been here too long, Francine and him over there, I don't think.

MK: Did you ever know his family back before then?

AW: Yes, I did, I reckon. I forget what his dad's name is. But I knew his uncles and some of his relatives. He had I think it was an uncle that stayed here. He drove a team. He had a pair of his own, a horse and a mare. What in the hell did he call that old mare? Flow. Over there where milked cows, it was a low like place there before I built that there. I had a car in the shed there. Went to get it out and slipped down over the bank. Mr. Carl Snyder was staying there. He had a load of stuff on his wagon. It was early. I was going squirrel hunting. I just went in and harnessed old Flow. I knew she'd pull it out easy and took her out and pulled the damn car up to where it'd go on its own. I put old Flow back in the barn and just left the harness on her. Because I knew Carl would be out there and would want to harness her before too long [laughter]. My mother died laughing. Carl went out, and he came back in. When he came in for breakfast, he said, "Ms. West," he said, "I've done something last night I never done before in my life." She said, "What was that?" He said, "Upon my honor," he said, "I left the harness on old Flow all night." [laughter] Oh, she said, "Oh, really?" "Yes, I did." He said, "She's standing right there with that harness on him." Mama knew what I'd done [laughter]. She just nearly died laughing and didn't tell him no different. But he was lazy, Christ Almighty. Now, he'd lie to you. That Carl would. Hell, he could lie about the job and then turn right around and take a contract of it [laughter]. I devil met about being Kent and Carl Snyder [laughter] and Tom Snyder.

MK: Did you ever tell him that you left the harness on his horse?

AW: Yes. He began telling me after. But I'd gone squirrel hunting. I left him soaked for a long time, maybe a week or more before I saw him. Then I told him about it [laughter]. He'd just get up on there and ride uphill and down. Damn lazy Carl was – it was pitiful [laughter]. He didn't hurry him though as far as that was concerned. Now, his dad was, let's see, Lee Snyder. Matt has told me his dad's name, but I've been there and if I can think what his dad's name is. But that's the bunch there. Now, Tom Snyder was a male carrier over at Roanoke for a long time.

He carried on Route One, I guess it is. I think Matt lives on Route One. I figure he does.

MK: Did you cut your head really bad?

AW: Yes, I did that in a car accident up here on that last hill there, going up there one morning going out to Carl, me and the two boys. Got right up again on that hill there where that first guardrail is. I hadn't put on my roof tars yet. There was the right smartest of snow on the road there. She began spinning, and she just spun right over and went right into them. I just went right up and cut my head on the mirror. Oh, I bled like a devil. They took me down to the hospital and wanted to keep me down there. I came back after they sewed me up. I'd be damned if I didn't have to get back after pneumonia fever. I bled just like a horse. Christ, I bled all over everything. I just sat there and held it until the ambulance came and left a damn tit up there with, they sewed her up there. Well, they were too tight or something there [laughter].

MK: I did the same thing, car wreck.

AW: It didn't hurt me a damn bit, that didn't. The boy that's Carl's got killed. He was laying on the back seat, and it just threw him off in the floor there in the car. Tom, the older boy, he's here. But it didn't hurt him a damn bitty. Kind of threw him up against the dash. I went along getting my tires on when I come back by garden. I don't neglect them that way anymore. But it wasn't no snow on here, just when they got up again that hill and run into that darn snow. I wasn't driving fast either. But they can get out of control pretty easy sometimes. I drove for a long time since 1925 and never knocked the paint off of one. But you're not too good. But what you can do is get pecked, I'll tell you that. Oh, my eyesight isn't no good now than what it ought to be.

MK: What was the first car you owned?

AW: First car I owned was a 26 model Ford with a ruck steel axle in it, if you know what that is. Do you know what I'm talking about? Well, it was a regular Ford. It had a, I don't know, a ruck steel axle. It had a different housing on one side of your rear end. You had a lever there to jerk your back. That gave you another gear, and it gave you more power in all the gears. An old Ford just wouldn't cough too long until he'd quit, one of those older ones, the 26 models was. Then when they began to improve them some, it was a nicer looking car than the older one was. I don't know whether it was any nicer or not. But anyhow, there was a bunch of us, nine of them, model T Fords went to Webster Springs one Sunday. Your foot brake and your reverse and your little gear was all down inside, down in your oil where your transmission is in the wheel there where the bands run. If you'd push on low gear, well, you'd have it low. You pushed on reverse while that was in the middle, well you could put it in reverse when you let her back while it was in high gear. So, it just doubled the power. But anyhow, there were nine of us who went up there. Those mountains are pretty long up there for a model T, and he didn't pull it just as fast as these cars nowadays. My God, we were coming back I got looking great scene roll us backing up a hill. Whenever you'd get out, when you couldn't pull them high, well you had to go to low. When you burnt your lining off while you were down and out. Then you had to go to reverse. Whenever I couldn't make it in high, I just jerked it back in that other lever, and I just went on. I never had to no place else. Hell, they were backing up them hills back in there in Webster, and I just went straight ahead [laughter].

MK: Over Point Mountain?

AW: Yes. I didn't run off from him, but when I got down there in Haggard Valley, I stopped there and Ross coming, running down through there. He was coming from across there next, and my God, he ran into me. The road was wide there, but he didn't have nothing. We'd had as much break on a rooster as you would on that thing. I never had a bit of trouble. They'd take their floorboards up and get down in there and tighten up their little gear and all. I never had no floorboards up. Didn't cost too much extra either. But I had to put in right before I got it. You could put it and shove her up and low and pull her back and that and shove her up and low and it'd spin its wheel just any place. I don't care what again, either you could pull her right against the building, she'd still dig down. Had a lot of power. Then the next one was a 30 model Ford. They were pretty good cars those days.

MK: Did the Depression hit you pretty hard over here?

AW: Oh, Jesus Christ, yes, it hit you hard. Yes, sir. Mark when I tell you that it's going to get over in here again too.

MK: It is.

AW: Yes, it is. I can feel it crawling in. Yes, sir. We've got a man up there in the White House that wants to see something like that happen.

MK: Why is that?

AW: Why is that? He favors the money and people, or he wouldn't have been there. In other words, if you want to get in there, you better be on the side the money is on. He's going to help the ones that put him in there.

MK: Does he remind you a little bit of Hoover?

AW: Yes. Only he's a bigger liar than Hoover. Hoover didn't have much sense to lie. But when Reagan gets to nodding that head like a jackass standing in the shade, shading himself, by God he can lie. Yes, sir. That fellow can lie. I haven't got to see again this old son of a bitch. But I don't like him. I just don't like him. I just don't like for a man to try to make people believe things that he's trying to make people believe. If you think a depression isn't coming, just wait and see who butts are biased. It's already in the West. I pity those poor farmers.

MK: It looks just like it did back in the [19]30s when they foreclosed?

AW: It's awful. They're going to foreclose right out there, now you mark it. But I tell you, that's awful for man to have to work all of his life and then lose it. Then if you'd have heard what's his name on television the night before last, tell the amount of taxes that some of these big companies pays and how much money they get back. Well, you'd know how why the fellow wouldn't want to be on the big side. It's awful.

MK: What was it like for you all back here in the [19]30s?

AW: Well, sir, I worked every hour I could get right down here at Ralph Jones where Aspinall is, that's his home place. He was president of the Bridgeport Bank. He went ahead and farmed here. He paid us a dollar a day, and it bore itself 10 cents an hour. If you made \$2, you got 20 cents. Vernon Hall right there. Me and him, pile of bricks back here on the hill. For 10 cents an hour and Elwood working down there. He'd come back here. He married. Ralph was his uncle. He'd tell us, "Now when you see that son of a bitch coming," he said, "Tell me, I'll get up and go to work." Well, we weren't no boss, and there was nothing about it. After a while, we'd see him come. We'd tell him he's coming, and Elwood would get up and work. As soon as Ralph's head went back down over the hill there, he looked around a little bit. Well, El would sit down. The two of us had to make a showing for three. But I worked at that. Whenever he didn't get that, well I'll be bought up here. He had a store up here, and I owed him \$40. Of course, he never did ask me for it. He's Horner girl's uncle. But I still knew I owed it. He got me on the relief down here, on WPA. I worked on that. I helped build this road from 19 over here on up around here and back down here and helped build it. Then one day, they had the tools over there in Vernon building and Ernest Boer came up here. I'd worked for him a little bit down there at Weston along with the rest of the boy. We'd gone down to Weston and helped fireproof a ward there in the hospital. Ernest for the county foreman, he gave me the keys and said, "I want you to take these fellows out and work them." I built this road down the creek here. I didn't get very much more for it. We didn't – none of us got nothing, but we could eat. That was all there was to it. Of course, some days you didn't have – my gas bill, I lived down there by the creek, gas was 34 cents a cylinder then. Coffee was 15 cents a pound, 8:00 a.m. coffee. Stuff just like that you see in proportion. Flour was 69 cents a bag.

MK: 25-pound bag?

AW: Yes, sir. You could take \$5 and fill a pickup bed. Of course, some days we didn't buy any bread hardly.

MK: Were you already into dairy farming?

AW: No. Hell no. I couldn't have bought the horn off a dairy cow then. No, sir. In other words, Ralph Jones there was the only fellow that was doing any good here.

MK: He owned the bank.

AW: He owned the bank, and he owned this place here. He had a good piece of land. I do know that he bought a bunch of cattle. He brought a bunch of steers, and he had to keep them over. He couldn't get his money out of them. The next year, he kept them two years. But there wasn't no money made that way. Kenny Bluppy, he was the right smart of a Democrat and that devil Ralph about, and he was a brother-in-law to him. Devilin' about getting them cattle shot so he could drive them to another market or put them out again, lease them out or get someone to keep them another winter [laughter]. Boy, it was hell. I know I was painting my house roof right down there by the creek. We were working up –

[end of transcript]