

Tucker County, West Virginia Flood Audio Recordings

Helen Sites Oral History

Date of Interview: February 14, 1986

Location: Tucker County, West Virginia

Length of Interview: 00:56:50

Interviewer: MK – Michael Kline

Transcriber: NCC

Helen Sites: Sites.

Michael Kline: Is that your married name or your maiden name?

HS: No. I was Auville.

MK: Auville?

HS: Right.

MK: Who was your mother and dad?

HS: Guy Auville was my dad. Polly Kisamore was my mother.

MK: Polly?

HS: Polly Kisamore.

MK: Kisamore. Where were you raised?

HS: Brushy Run, Wingo.

MK: Right close to where your home was when the flood came?

HS: Yes, sir.

MK: How many kids was there coming up in your family?

HS: We were 14. We're 12 living.

MK: Tell me all their names. I'm always interested in big families. Can you remember them?

HS: Well, the oldest boy is dead. His name is Granville, Eva, Richard, Harvey, Calvin, Stanley, of course me, Margaret and Marvin, Reva, Susie, Mary Lee, and Golden. I don't know if I left out or not. How many was it?

Female Speaker: I didn't count [laughter].

MK: I wasn't counting either [laughter]. Is Margaret and Marvin twins?

HS: I got 12. Yes.

MK: They were the only twins in the whole bunch?

HS: Yes.

MK: Your dad must have had a farm.

HS: Yes. He had a farm, and he ran a store. There used to be a store right where the house washed away. They lived in the store building. They had the post office, which was called (Brood?) at that time. But they took the post office to Wingo in later years.

MK: Was your dad the postmaster then?

HS: Yes.

MK: What was it like living in such a big family?

HS: Well, I can't say it's any worse than living in a small one. We had respect for our parents. In the families today, it's completely lost. Our dad was very strict. I remember when we used to go to the table to eat, we had a bench behind that held six of us. He was very strict when we ate. He didn't allow any talking. You ate your meal. You left the table. He was very strict. But I can't say that about the families today. I really can't.

MK: How long had your dad's family lived in Pendleton County?

HS: Well, he was born in 1889. He died last year, the 3rd of March 1985. My mother died January, four and a half weeks before him.

MK: Were they ill at the time of their death?

HS: Well, Mother was in an old home in Virginia, Bridgewater, Virginia. My dad, he was back at the home place. They moved to Virginia in 1946 and moved on a farm. It was from the farm that my mother went in this home. She got real bad mentally. They sold the farm to put her in this home. My dad came back here because he had this back here and a place to come to. He had 30 acres up on the mountain where he had sheep. He was pretty well satisfied when he first came back. Then he got to complain with his legs. He couldn't walk. He couldn't get up on the mountain. It went from his legs. I don't know. It just seemed like all through his body. It was hard to give away. He had so much fluid. Finally, it got him. I say he was ten years in that state. I went to stay with him in June of [19]84. That's how come I got in the flood.

MK: Your home place there?

HS: At his home place. He left the house for me after he left, and the mountain place, too. My sister and I owned the mountain place, one in Elkins.

MK: What happened to all the other 12 children?

HS: They're scattered around. I have a brother in North Carolina and a sister in Arizona. The most of them are in Virginia, all but my sister in Elkins.

MK: Did you go to school up on Brushy Run then?

HS: I went to the two-room schoolhouse in Brushy Run. The flood took half of it. Then I went to Circleville. Went through high school, and that's as far as I went.

MK: Did you marry after that?

HS: Yes, I did.

MK: Did you raise a family?

HS: Yes. We had four children.

MK: Where did you raise them, that Circleville or back here?

HS: No. We lived up here in the upper end of (Timber Ridge?) [inaudible] in Maryland, 15 years.

MK: Then you came back after that?

HS: I came back from Maryland to our farm we had left. We raised beef cattle. My husband was still working in Maryland. He had a heart attack and had to come home. When he came home, things changed.

MK: Things changed?

HS: Yes, they did. He had got into this drinking, and he had other women friends, buying them presents and things. It just didn't work. I took it just as long as I could take it. I worked hard on the farm. I fed a hundred head of cattle for six years by myself, thinking he'd straighten up, but he didn't straighten up. He got mean to me. He beat me. I said, "If my life couldn't be any better, I didn't want to live." So, I left. My children all wanted me to leave. Because none of them would come to see us because they knew the situation at home. There hadn't been one of them to see us for two years before I left. For the last couple of years, I've had it rough. I went to my daughter's and stayed in Preston County until I came to my dad's in [19]84 to take care of him. He had nobody to take care of him. Nobody else was interested in him. They could care less about him. My sister in Elkins and I were the only two that thought anything of him. I was going to go to work after I went to my daughter's, and I got straightened up from getting away from my husband. Then my sister in Elkins, she told me that we would have to do something because the other children wasn't interested. We did talk to them once. They said, "Well, put him in a home. We didn't want it done because he didn't want it done." I told Eva, my sister, I said, "Well, I'll just go over and stay with him." So, I went there. Well, I was back and forth from January until June, when I finally seen he couldn't make it no longer without somebody. I stayed with him until he passed away, March of [19]85. I was there when the flood came along because he left his estate to my sister and I. Because we were the only ones who showed any interest.

MK: Do you remember November 4th pretty clearly then I guess?

HS: Yes, I do.

MK: Was it raining here?

HS: It was raining, a dark, dreary day, which it had been raining three or four days or maybe a week, maybe as much as a week. I know it had rained a long time. I had a friend live right above me in a trailer, (Helen Wooddale?). We chummed around a lot together. On Monday morning, November the 4th, she came to me. She wanted me to go with her up to her uncle's to see if we could get him to go to my uncle's. She says, "He's not well," and she's afraid he'll get up and go out and get in the water, which the water had come up pretty high then. But we didn't succeed in getting him out. He wouldn't go. That was about 11:00 a.m.. We came back down to her house. We kept watching the water. It would come up. Then it would go down, up and down all afternoon. We decided about 2:00 p.m., we'd go back up and see if we'd make another attempt to try to get him persuaded. (R.C. Hedrick?) and his sister lived in this house. They were Helen Wooddale's aunt and uncle. We went back up. When we got up right below R.C.'s house. The stream from off the hill had come up and got so high. We couldn't get back up to their house. We were afraid to cross. So, we came back down. We didn't try to go across because we were both afraid. We started to turn around to come back down to our houses. The bridge right straight across from where this water came out of the hill and crossed the road into the river, we seen it go right there. So, we came back down. It was just pouring the rain down. We were all wet. We decided to go in her trailer. We went in her trailer and made us a cup of coffee. We drank the coffee. We kept an eye on the water because we could see it right out from her window in her living room. We were there until I'd say 3:30 p.m. I said, "I wonder if the mail would come." It was so dark. You couldn't hardly see anywhere. Just real dark. And she said, "It's doubtful." Priscilla had called me that morning and told me, "Come over here." Well, Helen said, "She wasn't going to leave her trailer." That was my friend. I told her, "Yes, she had to leave it if it come up -- started to come up to take it." In about 3:30 p.m., the water broke over and come through under her trailer. I said to her, I said, "There's nothing we can do." I said, "I have to go back down to the house and see what's going on." But it wasn't real deep then. It was just coming at a slow pace. I went down to my house. I left her up there by herself, but I didn't stay long. The reason I didn't stay long, right behind my house, it broke over and started coming into my yard next to the well. Then by that time, the water that broke over above her trailer was coming down by my hen house and on the other side of my house, but not bad. It wasn't anything to be alarmed about at that time. But you didn't feel safe. You just had an uneasy feeling about it. My dad had a collie dog. I kept him tied because people have sheep. I thought maybe he might bother him. All morning long, that dog whined. He kept looking up the creek. He wouldn't go in his nest. He wouldn't eat or anything. So, I went back. I just went this way across. I said to him, I said, "Let's get out of here." I said, "The water's coming up too high. It's going to take both of our houses." At that time, the floor under her trailer was quivering. She didn't want to go. I said, "Yes, you are. You come on." She got a few things. She had a little dog. She put the dog in the car. She had a suitcase with just a few clothes in. She took that and put it in the car. She went down to my house with me. We moved our cars. I did move my truck on the bank next to the mailbox. But the water came right down through there later. Her little dog was carrying on. She went back up to her car. I went in my house. Of course, her car was out on the road out of danger. I went in my house. When I went in, I looked out the upper

window. When I looked out, I could see nothing but a big gush of water coming right at the house. About 4:30 p.m. this was. I had my raincoat on and another coat under it, my boots, and everything. I grabbed two suitcases that I had laying in my bedroom. I went out. When I got out, it was on the second step of my steps to go down and already coming in back of the house. I had banisters there. I had loosened the old dog when I first came down from her house, from his nest. He come up on the porch with me. I tried to get him to go across the banister with me. He wouldn't go. So, I went with my two suitcases. I went out and open my truck door and threw my suitcases in the front seat. When I did that, the water came right up at me and just gushed right in front of my truck, but not bad. It didn't get my suitcases wet or anything. Mostly on the driver's side. I get in. I knew my truck would start because there's never been any water in the motor, and it started. I got out of the way and took it up the road, where my friend's car was. I came back down to my house on the road walking. I saw my cousin come up the road. He had on this yellow plastic suit. I said to him, "Do you think there'd be any danger if you go over to the porch and get the dog?" I said, "I don't want him to drown." He said, "Yes, I'll go get him." So, he waded about waist-high and went over and got the dog. The old dog come right to me. I took a rope and tied him up to my tailgate on the truck. Well, we didn't know what we – any of us was going to do. I said to Helen, "Let's go out here in the woods to this little barn." It was (Willard Hendricks?). I said, "At least it's got a roof over our head, and we won't get so wet." We went out there. We were out there maybe 15 minutes, and our friends then below us came to us. It was Macy Harper or Macy Hendricks. She married Harper. I mean, married Hendricks. She was Harper before she was married. Willard and my cousin, Paul, and a friend of his and his two boys came to us in this little barn. They said Macy was sick, and she was taking shots for sugar. They'd have to try to get her to my uncle's, which was about a quarter of a mile up the road. So, they all said they would go try to help get her across the stream of water below R.C. Hedrick's house, where we couldn't get over in the afternoon. So, they all gathered up and left. They said to us, "Do you want to go along?" We said, "No, we don't want to leave." We said, "We want to see what's going on." They all left us, and they went up to R.C. Hedrick's stream. They carried this lady across and got her up to my uncle's. Helen Wooddale and myself, we stayed in that building all night with our dogs. We went back and got her little dog out of the car. I had my old big collie. We were in this little barn. There was a division in the back with some hay. We put the dogs in there. We stayed out front. As night come on, it got dark and lightning, but I don't think they were any thunder. I judged it was about, oh, 8:00 p.m. We kept going out. We had a big light that we could throw clear across the river. The water came down the road. I'd say it was 10 feet deep. We were no more than 15 feet from it. But we figured we'd have to hit the hillsides sooner or later. We kept an eye on it. There was another barn on uphill we were going to. But hopefully, we stayed there and watched what all happened. Every little bit, we went outside. We never slept any. It was around, I'd say, quarter after 10 or 10:30 p.m. We heard this awful noise. No one will ever know how it sounded. You have to hear it for your own self to know. It was the water broke over up at my uncle's. It had taken part of the schoolhouse. What it didn't take, it just caved the roof right down in and just flattened it. The water came on down then toward R.C. Hedrick's house and took his house. This portion of his house, all but the kitchen, came down behind Helen's trailer and brought her trailer down. Her trailer hit my house. When it hit my house, of course, it just flew out in the water. The water was, I'd say, 10 or 12 feet. There were so many pieces. They were going just everywhere. Her trailer, those beams, I guess, held together pretty good. When it passed us, it was all together. But there were a couple sides looked like it had split. It followed the road. It came down the

road. It followed the road and went to the left towards (Bud Hedrick's?) house. It hit Bud Hedrick's house. When it hit Bud Hedrick's house, that was the last we had seen of the trailer or his house. His house just flew up in the air like a bunch of toothpicks. That's the last we had seen of the house. This was going on around 10:30 p.m. It was about 10:45 p.m. when we went back in, but we stayed out there and watched. I don't know if the electric was still on the lines or not. But we looked over at my house, and the transformer, the electric was jumping off the transformer the length of my arm. The lightning was running across that creek, the whole width of the creek, to the hillside. When we first heard this big noise, I said to my girlfriend, I said, "It's the end of time, Helen." We didn't know what was coming. I said, "We better go back here in the hay and pray." We did. We were saved from that flood that night. The next morning – we hadn't slept – about 2:00 a.m., I looked out. I'd seen the water had gone down in the road some. I said to her, "I think the worst is over." I said, "By morning, we can get out of here and go see what happened on up." So, I judge it was about 5:30 a.m. We could see but not too good. We got out, went out, and crawled through the fence. It was a fence down below this little barn. The water was still in the road pretty deep, but we managed to wade it and went up our truck and car. There was two other guys who had their cars parked there, too. They had brought them up there early. We had them all parked there. It washed debris through under all of them. We had pulled out from under them. Helen's car was the last car on the road. There was some water in it. We went on up the road, and we just walked at a slow pace until we got up to where our uncle's house was. The road was gone, right below where his house was, washed out where we couldn't see no road. His house was gone, and she said to me, she says, "Helen, they've washed away." I said, "Yes, you're right." I said, "They're gone." I said, "The only thing we can do is to take the hillside right by his kitchen that was left." I said, "We'll go to my uncle's house." So, we took the hillside. We walked, I'd say, about a mile up against hill and crossed over in the holler. This holler was the same stream that we couldn't get across at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, November the 4th. But we got across on rocks, and we started around the hillside. We saw so many floods, I mean, not floods, slides come down off the hill. I said to her, I said, "We better not go in below." I said, "They're liable to come on down, and we'll get trapped in them." So, we walked in above. I judge, until we got to the – down to my uncle's house, it was a good mile. All the way, the ground just felt like walking on a sponge. Just like you just going down in so far, and you didn't know whether you was safe to even walk on the earth. When we got to my uncle's house, they were all glad to see us. We told him that we didn't think R.C. was anywhere around. We thought they washed away. Some of my cousins, two boys, they went down the stream then that day. We stayed around the house and drank coffee for a little while. We struck back out and went back down because we just couldn't be at rest anywhere. We just wanted to keep on the go. Every day, we get up. I stayed with my uncle three nights. My girlfriend's still with him. I stayed there three nights – well, along the creek bed, three days. We'd go down there every morning about 8:30 and see what all happened. We'd see it every day, same thing over and over. The water kept going down. One day, we decided to go to our friend's house, (Brittany Raines?), who lived about quarter of a mile from both of us. We went over and talked with them for a while. Then we went back up the creek. On the third day, we went down the creek. We were standing at my truck eating a cheese sandwich. I looked down the river. We were pinned in there. We couldn't get out no way only to walk out. The road's all tore up, all the way Curtis 33. I looked down the creek bed, and I saw this guy walking. I said to my girlfriend, I said, "That's my son-in-law." It was. I knew his coat. When he came up to me, I said, "Boy, I'm never so glad to see you." I said, "I want out of here. He said, "I had to come see about

you." He said, "We tried every way to find out if you were still over here or what happened." He said, "We couldn't find out anything." He said my daughter was really uneasy about me. He said, "I'm going to take you out of here this afternoon." He couldn't get no further than above one go about him off his car. He walked all the way down here below one go to Timber Ridge Mountain and up here and across. I said, "Don," I said, "I can't walk out of here with these shoes." My shoes were off of my feet. We'd done so much walking. He said, "Well, I'll go get both of you shoes." So, we were hanging around there waiting for him to come back and keeping our mind on what happened and talking. It wasn't long until I looked down the creek again and there came my oldest son. He had come all the way from Maryland. The National Guard had stopped him. He didn't want him to come through. He told them that he had a mother up here. She was in the flood, and he was going through. He came to me. He'd been up at the post office at Wingo and got my mail, and he was carrying it. He stayed with us until my son-in-law came back. We got our shoes on. We were ready then. Helen, I hate to leave her, but I wanted out. I'd seen enough. One day, while we went down to the truck is when they -- somebody, I think it was some friends of ours, had walked out to get medicine or something had told me about Catherine and John, Priscilla's sister. That was hard for me to take.

MK: You were real close to her.

HS: Yes, I was. But anyway, I walked over here, and we went home with my son-in-law.

MK: Can you tell me more about the awful sound that you heard that night?

HS: I can't explain it. It was like thunder. I thought the mountain might be caving in. I had every kind of thought you could think of. I just can't explain the sound. It was like rocks rolling down off a hill, and they were hitting into each other.

MK: Everywhere, after the flood, you can see where these rocks had rolled out, miles after miles and miles.

HS: Yes. Well, some of those rocks back there at my house now, they weren't there. A lot of those rocks were brought downstream. Of course, I know some of them washed out of the earth. But I know some of them didn't.

MK: I think it's almost 16 weeks, isn't it?

HS: It seems like longer now.

MK: What's life been like for you since?

HS: Well, I was in a state after the flood where I didn't sleep for about —

MK: You couldn't sleep?

HS: I could hear all kinds of noises. It was just the sound that I heard that night.

MK: It kept coming back to you.

HS: Yes. It did and the roar of the water and the rocks in the water and all this noise that we heard upstream from us.

MK: Were you saved before that night, or did you get saved that night? Can you tell me a little more about that experience?

HS: Well, it was just a feeling come to me. I'd never asked the Lord to forgive me of my sins or save me before. But that night, I had the best feeling I ever had. It was just a feeling that you just wanted to get everything cleared away. You had a feeling that if everything was going to be all right for you the next morning, you just had to ask the Lord to forgive you and try to make the best of your life from then on.

MK: Has that feeling stayed with you?

HS: Yes, it has. I mean, I feel hurt when I see a lot of people doing things since the flood. It seemed like everything right after the flood, people were more friendly. They associated more, and they had a better look on life and everything. But I'm afraid that's slipping away from them since the flood, from a lot of people.

MK: Hard to keep your hopes up with snow on the ground and winter setting in, I guess.

HS: Yes. It was really a bad time for a thing like that to happen. But it's to be, or it wouldn't have happened.

MK: Do you think it was pretty ordained for that to happen?

HS: Yes, I do.

MK: Part of God's plan?

HS: Yes, I do.

MK: What do you suppose God had in mind?

HS: Well, that's something I don't know. But I think He had this in mind maybe to bring people close together or closer together and to try to get this part of the country straightened out anyway.

MK: What are your plans now?

HS: Well, I'm hoping if the weather ever clears up, to get my trailer and have it set out here on the lot. Priscilla has let me put a trailer by her garage.

MK: Is that a FEMA trailer?

HS: Yes.

MK: What was your experience in dealing with it?

HS: Well, it's like I read in the paper. When something good comes to help the people in need, the greed comes in and destroys it. I didn't have too much success with FEMA. But they agreed to let me have a trailer, and that's all I want.

MK: Can you think of anything else? Not really. Unless you want to elaborate on any of the difficulties that you had. I think that was maybe a story in itself, some of your dealings with FEMA and attempting to stay up here with Priscilla and FEMA wanting you to move down in the trailer part of the [inaudible].

HS: Well, when I called them and told them that I wanted a trailer, there was nothing mentioned about going to the trailer park. I told them I had a private lot and that I would like to have the trailer put on, since I didn't want to go back on Brushy Run because of everything I had seen go on back there. They agreed at the time, and they sent (Clayton Hardy?). He works for FEMA from Buckhannon, which he looked the lot over. He said there was nothing wrong with the lot. But at that time, they had put in one for my cousin just up the road here. They had put in the drain lines and put the septic into his son's septic, which is not legal. So, I told Clayton Hardy, I said, "I'll try to talk to FEMA and see what they'll do for me on the way of a septic system and let you know." I called them. They didn't return my calls. So, I called Clayton Hardy and told him. He said, "Well, I have a paper from them." He said, "Today's the due date. I have to reject the lot." I said, "Go ahead and reject it." So, he did. It was a couple of weeks after that or only a week maybe, I called FEMA back. Finally, I did get out of them. Mikey worked with them as to what their requirements was in order for me to get the trailer. I'd have to put my own septic and my own water lines and electric. All they do would be to furnish the trailer. They would hook all these things up if it was there. They wouldn't bring the trailer unless all these things were there. Well, I went to Riverton to order some supplies for my septic system. I talked to (Mike Medas?). After we decided to get the order sent out, he said to me, "Did I have assurance that I would get a FEMA trailer?" I said, "I don't have it in writing." I said, "The only thing I have is what they told me on the phone." He said to me, "If you don't have it in writing," he said, "you might as well forget it." So, when I came home, I called FEMA, and I told them. I asked them why they didn't want me to have a trailer. I said, "I haven't received anything from FEMA for rent." I said, "I know some people that went into the trailer park, and they got \$1,200 for rent." I said, "I haven't received anything." Every time I'd call FEMA, they'd say, "Well, the trailer park's available." I'd say, "Yes, I know it is, but I'm not going." So, I had a pretty good talk with them one afternoon after I talked with FEMA. They didn't give me any satisfaction about getting the trailer. I talked to (Bob Tuckerman?), old Franklin. I said to him, I said, "Well, I know what you've done for other people. What you do for one, you should do for all." I said, "There's two other people in my situation who want trailers on private lots." I said, "It's possible we may have a hearing." He said, "Well, go ahead." That's the way he talked to me. He said, "It's your priority." I said, "Yes, indeed it is." He didn't talk very nice at all. I think after you called me on – the next day after I talked to him and told me, Mike, that you had called FEMA and that they said they were going to let me have a trailer. But before you called me, I think it was before

I called FEMA, or they called me. I don't know which. We made so many phone calls. I got all confused at the time we talked and everything else. But anyway, Mike told me the same morning that FEMA told me that they were going to let me have a trailer. But I'd have to get my own electric unit and all this. Then we went and talked to Riverton Recovery about the electric, and Mike Medas called Franklin. They told Mike that they didn't know whether they'd let me have the electric. They gave me a number and said, "Call this man. He might let you have it." So, when I came home and told Priscilla, she said, "They can't keep anyone from getting electric." So, the next day, she called – what's the name of that place?

FS: Public service.

HS: Public service. Then she turned around and called Montague Power Company and told them she'd called them. They said, well, they're just going to give me the electric. They'd send the man over. He's already been over and got my electric hooked up, what he's supposed to do with the trailer? But FEMA just did not start – they started out okay, but they stopped too soon. They didn't treat everybody alike.

MK: You never had hard feelings?

HS: I don't have no hard feelings against them.

MK: Doesn't that make for hard feelings?

HS: Sure did.

MK: So, you're going to get your trailer now set up.

HS: As far as I know, as soon as we can get a septic system in. The weather, it's a holdup.

MK: You think the Recovery could have gone any better? How could it have been organized better?

HS: Well, in the first place, this Riverton Recovery should have -- there should be some identification for the people that lost their homes and the people that didn't. Because that's where I say, when you get something good going for the people in need, why these other people come in and take advantage of it. Then they have to cut it out, which has been going on all the time. In Preston County, they have IDs. When you go to the store to buy something, you don't have to pay tax. I went to Bowers to get 400 feet of this flexible pipe to put in the drain for around this field where I'm putting my trailer. I told them I was in the flood, lost my house, and they said, "Well, they couldn't – if I didn't have an ID card or something to show, they couldn't take the taxes off." They had to charge me taxes, so I paid the taxes. So, something's going to have to be done about finding a way to sort out the ones that need these tax relief things and other things in order to keep people from destroying things when you get something going for the needy.

MK: Sounds simple enough.

HS: I mean, I know some people that makes a thousand plus, went to Riverton after groceries, after food. Yes, I do. In fact, I was in there. I was in a position to know.

MK: Were they in the flood?

HS: No, no flood at all. I talked to (Kay Seitz?) about that. She said, like I said, there's always something has to come along to destroy anything that's put up for the people to try to get back on their feet. People like that is the ones that's doing it.

MK: Well, I have a feeling it's going to all work out somehow, but it sure has caused a lot of heartache.

HS: Yes, it has. I read in the Elkins paper yesterday where you're supposed to go to your county commissioner and fill out a form for this tax relief before the end of this month, which will help out.

MK: Well, I appreciate very much your time and your stories this morning. You have a wonderful way of telling it. It's a sad story, but still, I'm glad we've preserved it or something. Do you have any objection to this material being used?

HS: No, I don't.

MK: A radio series or in a book form?

HS: No.

MK: Anything else then? One of the interesting stories I've heard told time and time again down in Brushy Run that was very surprising to me was the amount of looting that took place in the flood. Many people thought that was just as devastating and demoralizing as the effects of the flood.

HS: It sure was.

MK: I guess, some of the people had to leave their homes down there. Before they could get back, people had taken away their personal possessions, in some instances, come right into their houses and trailers and taken things out of their trailers that weren't even damaged by the flood. Do you have any stories or any experiences related to the looting, or did you see any?

HS: I saw a lot of looters. But as far as to see them go in people's houses, I didn't. But there were other people that said they saw them, and they tracked their footprints right in the sand. When they went in to get – they thought they could maybe salvage some things. I know this one girl, (Beck Teeter?), she was in Morgantown, and her trailer washed away while she was gone. She didn't get back to it until Thursday morning for Monday. There were footprints all over inside where they'd been in. They took guns, pictures off the wall, and several things that she could have salvaged, which was not right. I mean, the only thing I had seen down below my house was a pair of pruners. I couldn't pick them up for three -- on the third day, I picked them

up. Because it just seemed like I'd seen so much going on. I knew they were mine, but I just didn't have – I don't know what it is about a person that you can't do such things, even though you see it, and it's yours. But it was just the flood still running through my mind and how it happened and all that I couldn't pick those pruners up at all. But I finally picked them up.

MK: But for a couple of days, you felt like you couldn't.

HS: I just felt like I hadn't functioned for a month, just like everything had been drained out of you. You didn't have the energy or anything about you that you had before.

MK: Did you have a feeling, looking up and down Brushy Run, that it was just unbelievable what had happened?

HS: Yes, if I hadn't seen it happen, and someone would have told me, I just couldn't hardly believe it. My dad's buried about a mile from my house up there on the hill. When I'd seen all these slides, I got worried about the cemetery. One day, I walked up there to see if everything was all right. We just put a new chain-link fence around it last year. I could see from the road; the fence was all right. But I went on up to make sure that there were no slides in it, and it was okay. But now the 30 acres that he owned, his pastureland, is on the opposite side of Brushy Run. I looked across Brushy Run up to where the land lays. There was one slide after another in the pasture, great big ones. It would come down so far and stop. It was headed towards Brushy Run. But it would come down so far, and it would stop. My uncle had quite a bit of that on his farm.

MK: So, it changed the way the land looked and everything?

HS: It's not the same place. I've been up as far as the hard top goes. But now a friend of mine said he had gone up in there. He said it was terrible. You have to go on foot. He said the upper part of Brushy Run was terrible. There's one place back there at the end of the hard top where it comes together just like that, the earth. Just like it'd come over top of the water, the flow of the water, and the water just seeped through it and went every which way.

MK: How did you feel about seeing it all change the way like that?

HS: Well, you feel like you just don't have the desire to be around a place like that anymore, the way I felt. I couldn't lay down and go to sleep back there. Right now, I couldn't of a night. Because you'd always have it in mind. If that had happened while we were in bed, it would have been a lot more drowned. I'm thankful for one thing, that my dad went in March. Because in his condition, I don't know what we'd have done.

MK: Would you have stayed in there with him?

HS: That's right. That's what I told some of my friends. I said, "If he'd been living, I'd have been in there. I wouldn't have left him."

[end of transcript]