

## *1936 Flood Stories Reunion*

Michael Nobel Kline: Wait a minute. Let's try it again.

Nancy Tucker Gibson: My name is Nancy Tucker Gibson.

MNK: Okay, great. And your date of birth?

(audience laughter)

MNK: I didn't ask you how old you are.

NG: April the 11th, 1929.

MNK: Okay.

NG: I was seven years old when the '36 flood came. And my mother, my aunt, my grandmother and my two brothers and myself stayed in the flood at 203 North Huron Street. And we had two steps; it would have been on our second floor. And at that time we had a baby grand piano. And we propped it up on ladders and on the mantle. And the flood come up and just took it like it was a toy and marched it all over the, the two rooms in the first floor. Of course it ruined it. But we saw chickens on couches going down the river, or down the street and all kinds of things. And one house that my mother lived in on North Erie Street was taken out with the tabernacle when it let loose and broke through. We weren't living there then. One of the houses that she lived in. But it was very interesting. We had no gas, no electric, no water and no

(017)

telephones. And my father was a fireman, and he brought us food in a boat. And they'd bring us food in cans with no labels. And we didn't know whether, what we were going to eat when we opened up the cans. But we ate. Usually peaches and tomatoes, I can remember that. But it was very, very interesting. But there was no, no utilities at all. The water got so high, it just--And then of course when the flood went down--I think it stayed up four or five days, and it when it, when it went down, the mud was this thick in the yards. And it would crack, and then the city would come along and dump it in trucks and take it away. It was all good top soil, we should have kept that. But it, it was interesting. I, I remember a lot of things that--And then after the flood--Of course we were kids, and we walked around on the garage doors. I went through the glass. I have a scar from that. Never did tell my mother how I got it. But, you know, you walking on the glass just to see if they'd break, I guess, I don't know. Kids are kind of dumb. I was one of them. So that's about all I know.

MNK: Did you--You didn't talk about what it was like to see the water come up, did you. Could you start with a, with a--

(033)

NG: Well, it, it came up a foot an hour. I can remember my mother and grandmother, none of them slept. Because they'd get up and look; it was up another step, up another step. We had two steps, would have

been on our second floor. It was, it was scary for them. I didn't, wasn't--I was too young, I didn't care where the water was!

MNK: And your father came out in a boat and brought can food for you to eat?

NG: Um hmm.

MNK: But he didn't take you out of the house?

(038)

NG: No, we stayed in the house. We stayed in the house. And her father was a fireman also, and he brought us food and--They kept check on us. Somebody said there were only three families on the Island that stayed during the flood. And we were one of them.

MNK: Why?

(041)

NG: Well, we really had no place to go. Because mother and grandmother and Aunt Winnie and we all lived, you know, in the same house. So we just stayed. I don't know.

MNK: Do other people have questions for her? Okay. Thank you very much.

NG: You're welcome.

MNK: Can you say, 'my name is?'

(046)

Bill De Bolt: My name is Bill De Bolt. I was born October the 5th, '29. And at the time of the flood I lived on what was considered the lowest place on the Island. It was on South Wabash Street, the last house practically on South Wabash. We intended to stay in, but as the water kept getting higher and higher, my dad got our next door neighbor, George Stobbs and Gene Warner, they took us out in the boat to the steel bridge. And my aunt from McMechen met me at the steel bridge, my sister. They took us to McMechen. And my strongest recollection is Paul Miller on WWVA was on the air continuous for like seventy-two hours dispatching rescue boats to people in South Wheeling, East Wheeling, on the Island. And the man was on the air continuous for like seventy-two hours dispatching. They brought in Coast Guard boats, but that

(058)

didn't work out because the weight from the Coast Guard boats knocked all the porches off the houses on the Island. So they had to go back to rowboats. At the time my mother and dad decided to leave, it was getting too high. It was almost to our second floor then; it was a little cottage. They went out in a canoe and the wave, the tide caught them right at the end of the steel bridge. And they and the canoe, my dog and their suitcases ended up on the altar of Saint Lukes Episcopal Church over there, washed them right into the church. And I was talking to Mr. Long from the Island, I remember when I came back to the Island after the flood, McAllister's Drug Store was at Virginia Street and South Penn, and there was an airplane wing jammed up against the side of the

(067)

building that had floated down from the ... Airport, that had taken it out. But flood time to people on the Island, that was party time! Get a case of beer and start at one end of the block, you got the other end of the

block. Well, if you got them moved up, all right, if you didn't, that's all right too. It was party time. They really enjoyed it. You could always tell the strangers--When you got all your furniture moved up to the second floor and you left your house to go wherever, the strangers would come out and very carefully lock their doors and leave. And the old timers would come out, leave their doors open, raise the windows. Because when you came back and the door swelled, you didn't get back in your house till it dried out a little bit. And then you came back as water went down. And if you were lucky enough to have water service, you got a hose and as the water receded, you hosed the floors down. Then every

(078)

time you walked across the rug after a flood dust would come up from the silt that was down on the cracks of the floorboards. And during the minor floods we used to stand in the middle of the streetcar tracks on Zane Street on the Island. Cars would drive through the water, we would stand in the middle of the streetcar tracks, which were slightly elevated. Cars would get down in the dips there, then it cost them a quarter to get them pushed out when they ... out! It was money making time! But we enjoyed the floods. '36, my mother and dad said they thought about leaving the Island. We didn't finally leave till '43. That was when all the boys were in the Service and there was no help, that's when we finally left the Island. But I enjoyed my years on the Island. It was great. Everybody had a piano, except Nancy's family, they moved them up to Madison School and put them on the stage in Madison School. That was piano storage at the time, anytime there was a flood. And I remember the various services, Salvation Army in particular, they were excellent to the

(091)

people in the flood areas. And some of the other services had a very bad reputation in Wheeling for years, particularly after the '36 flood. But Salvation Army was great. They did a lot of service for the people. My mother and dad ended up in the Market Auditorium. They had a refugee center in the Market Auditorium on the second floor. They were there, I think, for five days. And eventually got back. We missed a lot of school, which was great at the time, I think! And that's about the most of my recollections of it.

MNK: Very nicely told. Does anybody have any questions? Great. Thank you so much. Oh, sorry, Carrie, Carrie--

Carrie Nobel Kline: Permission slips.

(102)

MNK: Oh, yes. Can you say, 'my name is?'

Frederick Reichenbach: My name is Frederick Reichenbach. I was born March 25, 1915.

MNK: And your address in Wheeling?

FR: Triadelphia. Route Two, Triadelphia.

MNK: And maybe we should get phone numbers while we're doing this. I forgot all the others. Can you give us your phone number?

FR: Five-four-seven, five-four-four-seven.

MNK: Okay. So--Why don't you, why don't you start with the first thing you can remember about that

day, what, had it been raining or--

(109)

FR: Well, no. Winter. We had so much snow that you could walk along the street and your stomach would push the snow. Of course that laid up in the mountains till spring. Then we had a three day rain preceding the flood. And then all that snow came down all at once. But when I think back to the '36 flood, my thoughts go to the people, how they reacted to each other. You could live next door to someone and never know their name for years. And then after that flood, you knew everybody and everyone knew you because everyone was helping everyone. So that's something I remember about the '36 flood. That's some of the positive things. Then there were characters that I remember. There was a man who lived at 39th Street on the riverbank in a

(120)

shack. But this man had been a gentleman. And he always went around with a dark suit on with a silk lapel and a ... collar and a dicer ..., you know what that is. And he never quit. And the flood took his shack away, and then right across built a brand new one. And then ... seem like every schoolhouse, every church had a soup kitchen so you didn't know where you was at, you could stop in and get something to eat and there'd be bunks to sleep on. My father had a paralytic stroke about a year before that, and we lived on a second floor at 39th Street. And my concern was how I'd get him out of there if the water got up into our second floor. And it came within about seven inches ... But I was young, it was an exciting time. I remember staying on that alleyway between the Capitol Theater and that other building. And it looked like a seven room

(132)

house came down. And the guide wires from the bridge was laying in the water. And this house hit that wire, went down under. And when it surfaced, it just exploded. I think what happened was compressed air exploded. And that was impressive. But there's a lot of stories out there. There's--These are the things that sticks in my mind. There was a German man lived down 39th Street, and I remember standing on the riverbank with him. And he kept saying to me, 'it will never be as high as the '84 flood.'

(audience laughter)

(141)

FR: And when someone today says '36 flood, I think about ... saying that.

MNK: Anybody have any questions of him? Was there something else you thought of?

FR: I'll think of them when I get home.

(audience laughter)

???: That's exactly right.

MNK: All right, can you say, 'my name is?'

(146)

Mabel Griffith: My name is Mabel Griffith. And I'm from, was from South Wheeling. And my father and mother had a small confectionery store on Wood Street.

MNK: Could we, could we just ask your, your date of birth and--

MG: Nineteen nineteen.

MNK: The, the full date?

MG: December 14, 1919.

MNK: And you're currently living at?

MG: One fifty-six Columbia Avenue, Elm Grove.

MNK: Phone number?

MG: Two-four-two, two-five-two-seven.

MNK: Could you start again telling us about your father?

(153)

MG: My father and mother had a small confectionery store on Wood Street across from St. Marys Catholic Church, if any of you know where that is, right above 36th Street. And the flood--That's a rather high place in South Wheeling, and nobody thought it would get in there. And the folks that lived next to us were Schulls, named Schulls. And Mr. Schull had been born in that house, and he said, 'no use to worry, it's never been in here, never.' So we didn't! And the pictures that I had that I brought today, they were taken before the last day because we were out and around. And the night before, the, the height of it, I looked out the--I kept walking back and forth and looking out the front door, and you could see it coming up Wood Street. And I'd go back and say, 'Oh, daddy, it's coming, it's coming.' And he just didn't believe me! And he was blind, by the way, and of course depended on me to tell him. So

(166)

about twelve o'clock we decided we'd better go upstairs. We had a, it was a two-story house. And our bedrooms and living rooms were on the second floor. So we took things up in case something did happen. And we had an open fire in the living room and we had the heat from that. And the next morning--And daddy forgot his radio of all things. So the next morning he went down to find his radio so we could tell what was happening, and he flopped his foot into two feet of water. Second step up, it was water. So he waded through and got his radio and I suppose any of the other things, I don't remember what all we left. But we cooked our meals on the coal fire. And my mother's family was from Buckhannon, and they were hearing all this and they couldn't find out. We were too poor to have telephones, and they wouldn't have been use anyway. But anyway, they contacted the studio. At that time that's the way people inquired and kept up with things if the rest of you remember. They would

(180)

call in and deliver messages. So they had called, and we kept hearing on our radio, what happened to the Minns family. Were they safe, and all this and that. And they--We couldn't get any word back. So, finally the firemen came the next day around the time of the height, I guess it was. And they were in the boat. And daddy said, 'Well, why don't we send out a note and tell them to call,' and that they would get the message. So that's what we did, and that put their minds to ease because they had news that we were all right. So we heard it on the radio that we were all right. So, I think that's about the most I remember about it.

MNK: How long were you, were you up there then before you could--

(189)

MG: We went up that, that night it was coming in the front. And then--I think till the next evening, and it went down enough that we--We just had about two feet so it didn't take very long for that to go down. Had plenty of mud when it was over.

MNK: Other questions? Thank you, that was really nicely told. All right.

???: ... oh, way, way back.

MNK: Say, 'my name is.'

(195)

Bernice Hannen Archer: My name is Bernice Hannen Archer, and I was born May 16, 1920. And at the time of the flood I resided, resided on the corner of 3648 Jacob Street, which was a block, a block down this way and a block down this way from where Mabel lived on Wood Street. Wood Street, it was the street, is the street in back of Jacob Street. And our store was on the corner and Meinharts Dry Good Store was across on the other corner. And then going down this way was Garstings Hardware Store. And across this way was McElroys Drug Store. And next to McElroys Drug Store was Deltwaller's Restaurant, the best restaurant in Wheeling. All the doctors and other professional people came down every day at noontime to have their dinner.

(210)

And because we had a pay telephone in our store, Mrs. Deltwaller's helpers would come across the street to give the meat order to either Nordemans or Wenzels. So every Saturday night we were always on the receiving end of roast beef and gravy and homemade pie! So, of course we'd generally have a few people stop in on Saturday evening to enjoy that too.

MNK: You know I haven't eaten my dinner yet today.

(audience laughter)

(217)

BA: We haven't either! But anyway, we, my dad and mother had this confectionery newsstand. So with a newsstand, that means of all the magazines that you had to cart up to the second floor. And, man, after a few floods no wonder my arms are so skinny! And we lived on the second floor. It was the only flood that we did because mother said after that experience we would never live in a house that had water. Because we didn't realize how dangerous it could be. And so we always went to our relatives out on 29th Street then after, after that, after the '36 flood. And we ate whatever we had available, which wasn't that much. And we were starting to wish for something that was cooked because Mabel said that her people had the, the coal fire on the second floor, but we didn't. And so, what we decided--Someone had to bring ... Our electricity worked, so we turned upside down the electric iron and plugged it in and tried to fry eggs!

(audience laughter)

(236)

BA: That wasn't so good! And, oh, ... else--

MNK: Well, how'd they taste?

BA: Terrible. And then of two, the lady from the Island speaking of her piano, we had a piano too, except

it was an old piano. But it fell over in the water. We sat it high, but it tumbled over. And so we were out of a piano. That was one of many pianos we lost in all the floods that we had had. And then, too, grandmother, mother, rather--Grandmother too was a wallpaper hanger. And Jean knew her, my grandmother. So mother--After the flood waters went down, it was halfway up the first floor where we lived on Jacob Street because Jacob was lower than where Mabel lived on Wood Street. So our water was halfway up the first floor. And mother wallpapered with newspaper as soon as the water went down because the building being bricks retained the water in the bricks. So we had newspaper wallpaper for, well, till almost Christmas time. Mother decided she better put some wallpaper on the wall because we (257)

didn't want newspaper for Christmas time. And so then mother put, tore that all off, all that--The newspaper was still wet from the water that it had soaked up. And so then--And speaking of Jean, see my grandmother lived in Goosetown. Well, Goosetown, it was, that was the picture that, that the young man took the picture of. It was undated--Goosetown was undated because of the Wheeling Creek rising. And so we had to move grandmother up too before the flood came. Of course Goosetown always had floods every, almost every year, at least once a year because of the Wheeling Creek always rose. And my grandmother lived in the last house down on East 11th Street. So that we meant, that meant that almost every year we went down to grandmother's and took all her stuff up because, because, well, Goosetown always did flood, didn't it. And--Let's see. Oh, and my--I have to tell this. It didn't have to do with (273)

the flood, but my dear grandmother, she had a shower in her basement. So that meant all the football players and all the baseball players that had played games out at Tunnel Green were in her basement on Sunday afternoon after the ball games. So grandmother's house was always, was always real active. (279)

MNK: Well, that's great. Thank you. Does anybody have any questions of her?

CNK: Did you get an address and a phone number?

BA: Oh, yes. I live at 1153 National Road. And my telephone number is 242-1907.

MNK: Okay. Thank you very much. Can you say, 'my name is?'

Richard Hoffman: My name is Richard Hoffman. I was born November 13, 1913, or, yes, 1913.

MNK: And your address is?

RH: My address now?

MNK: Yes.

RH: Forty-eight Monroe Avenue, Wheeling.

MNK: And phone?

RH: Two-four-two, three-oh-eight-seven.

MNK: And your address at the time of the flood?

(288)

RH: Six hundred Main Street, Benwood.

MNK: Great.

RH: Mine's a short story. We lived upstairs in the old bank building and 6th and Main Street. And whatever, the water was so high that the boats that was the volunteers in it going around trying to take care of people's needs, they couldn't go from one side of the street to the other. Because the trolley wire run down through the middle of the street, and the water was up so near the trolley wire that they couldn't get the boat underneath the trolley wire. And we had about thirty-five steps, I think, up to our apartment upstairs. And during the flood my grandmother died, and they couldn't get her out because the, the door was too far down. We only had one entrance, and that was at the front. And the door was too far down. It was covered over with, with water. And we had to hold her there for three or four days. And then Mr. ..., the

(305)

funeral director, came and got her and took her out in a boat. Then they had to hold her, I think, seven more days before we could take her down state to bury her. But whatever we got was, for food and all, was--We'd let a, a wire or a rope basket down, and they would put bread or water or something of that sort in it, and then we'd pull it up through one of the side windows. That's about the completion of my story.

MNK: Was your grandmother ill anyway or was she so shocked by the flood

or--

(314)

RH: No, she was, she'd been sickly for a good while, and she just passed away. Maybe the excitement had something to do with it. But she died, and then we had to keep her in the house there for a few days before they could remove her.

MNK: Do you remember the, the water coming up? Can you describe how that--

RH: Oh, it seemed to me like it came awful fast. And after we got in there, why we were isolated. We couldn't get in or out, either one, unless you'd shinny down a boat or something!

MNK: Okay, thank you very much.

RH: Thank you.

(324)

MNK: Any other questions? Can you say, 'my name is?'

Jean Wycherley Kennen: My name is Jean Wycherley Kennen. I was born February the 12th, 1918. I lived at 34 Virginia Street on the Island when the flood was, in '36.

MNK: And your address now?

JK: Twenty-five-oh-three Cadillac Avenue. And 242-5382.

MNK: Great.

JK: And I--

MNK: Yeah, start at the beginning.

(331)

JK: Well, I wasn't in the house when the flood came in, but my mother and dad had lived on the Island all their life. And they knew it was coming. And my dad had a press machine, so the boys had to go down

and take the arms of the press machine off. And the rest of us carried home canned food up to the second floor because mother said it was going to come in. And we did that all day long. We--And of course the kids all carried chairs and things upstairs. By afternoon--I live within a block off of Virginia Street. The flood wasn't on our street yet, but it was going down the alley to Ohio Street. It was going down Front Street. And my sister came and we--My mother sent my twin brothers and I, who were younger, out to Dimmeydale to baby sit. So they were going to stay in. Then it became so flooded that you couldn't get back to Wheeling.

(343)

My sister went out to Elm Grove and rode the train into town. Mother and dad finally were taken out sometime during the middle of the night out of the second floor into a canoe. My dad's scared to death of water. So for two days we didn't know where they were. They had been taken to the Market House, and then they went to North Wheeling to live with, stay with my sister's in-laws. So when we got back home, then I helped my brother, we went in a canoe and we delivered food from the Red Cross when you could get to the steel bridge. And we took it down Penn Street and down Ohio. And I could stand up and hand it to the people on the porches and that. And it was mostly bread and milk and coal. Now we had a potbelly stove ourselves on the second floor, and so mother

(354)

and dad had no fear that they couldn't eat or things. But then when it came up the second time, we all stayed in. So, of course we had not moved any of the food or things downstairs so we still got along fine. When we start taking wallpaper off, my father found fifty layers of wallpaper. And he was, he and mother were paper hangers, so he was rather glad that it didn't get to the second floor, but we did get all that paper off. So when the '37 flood came, all we did was squirt the wall, and so we didn't have to repaper. But, not being in it, I had no fear of seeing the water coming up. Although my cousin over here lived in, later lived in the house when I lived on Ohio Street. And there were three boats that upset going down through the alley. And the one man was a, was drowned. And--But the other two boats, they were able to get back in.  
But

(366)

that--Coming off of both sides of the bridge, there was quite a current that went down through this alley. And from Ohio to Virginia Street and off of Front Street. So that was, that was kind of--We were all running down to see if we could do anything, and I wasn't afraid of the water, but we were just able to tie a rope on two houses up so they could climb out ... their self. But we had fun outside of the worry after--When we didn't know where my mother and father was, that was the worst. They ended up at the Market House and they, where they had set up refuge for them.

MNK: How many stayed up in the Market House?

(376)

JK: Oh, there were hundreds. They were on the second floor. And--

MNK: The dance floor?

JK: Mother and dad--Yeah. Mother and dad probably got about one of the last two beds in there that night.

Because they didn't take them out till about three o'clock in the morning. My dad just wasn't going to go out the window into a canoe or a boat! But he did.

MNK: Thank you very much.

JK: You're welcome.

(383)

MNK: Say, 'my name is.' I'll hold it.

Francis Kurkaw: My name is Francis Kurkaw.

MNK: All right. And--

FK: I was born April the, April the 4th, 1918.

MNK: And your address at the time of the flood?

FK: Four twenty-nine North Front, on the Island.

MNK: Okay. And your address now?

FK: Is R. D. 1, Valley Grove.

MNK: And phone?

FK: Five-four-seven, oh-seven-one-four.

MNK: Great. Tell me about this, the neighborhood there on North Front Street. What sort of houses was it?

(392)

FK: They were real nice houses and all. And when the flood was starting to come up, my parents knew that there wasn't going to be any gas, so my mother cooked up a lot of steak and had that for when the flood was up. And all the gas and electric was turned off. And my brother had two, a boat and they kept going down and get the food down to steel bridge and bring it back up. But we stayed right in the house. We had apartments in the back, and the people down there came up and stayed in our house on the second floor. And the first floor, it was all flooded three feet, ten inches. But when my dad built this house, he built it high enough to take care of all the floods. And this one, he, he guessed that it was three feet, ten inches on the first floor, so he missed on that. And as the water was going down--Our piano was in there, and my brothers took it out in the river and just let it go down because it was spoiled anyway. And that's about all I think.

MNK: What were your feelings when the water was coming up, though? You didn't talk very much about that.

(413)

FK: Well, I just stayed there in the house with them. I think there's quite a few stayed on the Island in the house. And, I don't know, just stayed there and went through all, see all the stuff floating by and everything.

MNK: Because you were, you were a teenager by then.

FK: Yeah. I was born in '18.

MNK: Yeah.

FK: So I was a teenager. Yeah.

MNK: Okay, are there questions, anybody?

(421)

CNK: Was that frightening then?

FK: What?

CNK: Was it frightening when you were about 16?

FK: No, that was thrilling!

(audience laughter)

FK: It was an experience, you know. Because I went through quite a few floods on the Island.

???: That was ... right?

FK: No, North Front.

???: Down where ...

FK: Right by McDermott's Garage if you know where, where--

???: Yeah

FK: McDermott's Garage was.

???: Oh, yeah.

FK: Right by that, uh huh.

(428)

???: Simons, Simons lived there.

???: Right.

FK: Simons lived across the street up the

???: The river side.

FK: Yeah, up the--

???: And Fredericks, the pharmacist downtown.

???: What was your number?

FK: Four twenty-nine North Front.

???: Okay, we'll probably ...

MNK: Okay, thank you. Your name is?

(433)

May Orth: My name is May Orth, and I was born April the 10th, 1914. And we weren't in Wheeling in the flood, but we lived out the Pike. We lived on a farm. And we had no radio. We had no electricity. We had no gas. And we had a crystal set. And we listened, and you had earphones. In order for two of us to listen, we'd take them apart and each just take one. And we listened to the music from the Gospel Tabernacle all the time. And we listened to WWVA, and they were calling for volunteers. So my father went in, and he worked at the end of the steel bridge calling for coffee. When he'd come home, he'd say, 'another cup of coffee at the end of the steel bridge.'

(audience laughter)

(446)

MO: That was my experience in '36.

MNK: That's great. And your address now is?

MO: It's R. D. 1, Box 240, Triadelphia, West Virginia.

MNK: Phone?

MO: Five-four-seven, one-nine-three-four.

MNK: Great, thank you so much.

Hollis Hackethorne: My name is Hollis Hackethorne. I was born the fourth of November, 1926. What else ...?

MNK: The, your address at the time of the flood?

(454)

HH: Address at the time of the flood was 4134 Wood Street in South Wheeling.

MNK: And your address now?

HH: My address now is 1045 Howard Street, Bridgeport, Ohio. And my phone number is 633-6841.

MNK: Okay. So this is not a, a particularly short story. Where does it start?

(461)

HH: Well, it starts with the word that flood is coming up again. It was prone to do. Whenever we heard, someone who had a radio heard the announcer say, 'it's getting to thirty-six feet,' we knew that that was how much water it took to get in where we lived. And thirty-six feet was the magic number, so we went, in this particular flood, over to on Water Street. Forty-one hundred Water Street was where my mother's parents, in the upstairs apartment of a large double brick house. This is right across on the opposite corner, or was, from the Bloch Brothers Chewing Tobacco factory. We went over there to stay with them. We, my brother and I, set through the afternoon and looked out the front windows looking right down into the river and watched it get higher and higher and watched objects come down. Chicken coops, houses, livestock. Someone mentioned the tabernacle from Wheeling Island going down, or a part of it. We saw that. We were delighted, 'here comes the tabernacle.'

(audience laughter)

(485)

HH: Down the river it went. Well, that kept the two of us pretty well occupied throughout the afternoon and the evening until it got dark. And then my grandfather said, "All right, you two boys come with me. We men will go sit in the kitchen and talk." So we went in the kitchen with the lights out. They sat at the kitchen table, and I sat in a chair by the back window at the back of the house. I don't know how much time went by, but the water was now up in the street rising pretty rapidly. And you couldn't see much outside, it was very dark. My grandfather said something about, 'I think I'll turn on the light.' As he reached up to turn on the light, which was controlled by a little chain, a little string, and that was the last thing I remembered until I woke up. And I was hanging upside down in debris. And I could see sky above me, with both ankles pinned with some pipes. I suppose they were water pipes of, of the house, I don't know what, probably the water pipes. There was a gas main

(507)

that ran under the sidewalk on Water Street right past the corner of that house. And evidently it was a

leaker. No one had ever--We never wondered why nothing grew, no weeds or grass grew on that corner. Now that same sidewalk--I was down there the other day, the same sidewalk is still there. The same bricks. And so evidently--It was thought that what happened was that as the water rose, it forced gas up through that sidewalk, and it, it got up there, although none of us smelled anything. And when it reached the heating stove, which was a potbelly that you, you burnt coal in, it exploded. My mother told me later that the house exploded twice. But in truth, I never heard a bang. I never heard anything. The house was blown into a big pile of debris. My grandfather, my older brother and myself, we were not injured. Our clothes

(531)

were ripped, that kind of thing. We were not injured. And when I--I guess when I regained consciousness I heard the two of them standing down below me about, oh, probably about twenty feet away yelling at me asking me where I was. And I yelled back and said, "I'm down in a hole here. My, my ankles are pinned. I got to see if I can get out." Because a boy nine years old, anything that happened it was his fault. And I was trying to figure what I did to bring this about.

(audience laughter)

(543)

And I didn't know whether I wanted to crawl out of there or not! So I, I worked, reached up and got my ankles loose by spreading these pipes apart as much as I could, and I climbed up out of there and climbed down. They were standing on what I suppose was a little section of roof which hasn't blown into splinters. And stand there looking around, I guess, you know, what happened. And so while we were standing there, a number of men, I don't know how many, appeared out of nowhere wearing rubber boots that came up to the hips. We used to call them hip boots. And people would get them out when there was a flood so they could walk around in that, in that water. And of course there would be people rowing up and down in boats too. My grandmother, my mother, my older sister, my younger sister and my younger brother, who still lives in Wheeling, were in the middle room of the apartment where the stove

(566)

was located. My grandmother and my younger sister, who was at that time six, were killed. It took my grandfather, my brother and I, it was very easy to find us, we were standing there talking about what happened, where were the others. And they carried us across the street through the water over into the Bloch Brothers Tobacco building. And upstairs in there they had like a little infirmary thing, and they had some beds in there. And they placed us on these beds, and then they, they went back over and they found my mother, who had one foot, she was under debris, had one foot pinned under, which give her trouble the rest of her life. It would swell and so forth. It wasn't broken or anything, but injured. They found her, brought her over. So then they continued to search. And she said that she heard my younger brother, who was at that time three, yell under there somewhere. He was clear down in

(590)

the water, and the upper part of his body was, was being held up out of the water by one finger which was stuck on a nail on a beam. And this, of course, was the reason he did not drown. One man from the

neighborhood said, 'Don't worry, let them take you over there. I'll keep looking until I find him.' And they did find him, and they brought him over. And he was none the worse for wear. He wasn't really seriously injured either. And I guess it wasn't until sometime later they found my sister and my grandmother. They were unfortunate enough, although they were in the same room as the others, to be blown, to be covered by the debris, the beams and so forth and struck by them. And they had internal injuries as well. And down into the water where they drowned. My mother believed that they were killed by the beams which struck them in the head and caused internal injuries. The funeral director at,

(615)

at that time was Cooley Bentz in, in South Wheeling was tactful enough to tell her that, 'Oh, I don't think they drowned, there wasn't any water in their lungs.' I recently, after my mother's passing, I went to the courthouse in Wheeling and looked up the, the certificates. And they both did indeed drown. So the water was at that time deep enough that they drowned under this, this debris. My older sister, who still lives in Wheeling area, sustained the, the worst compound fracture of the leg that I've ever seen in my life. And I've seen a number of them since that, and this one was really bad. They, they took us from the Bloch Brothers building then, and I don't remember how they got us over to Wetzel Street. Maybe--It may have been a boat, it must have been.

(638)

They got us over to Wetzel Street at about 38th where the street was up higher. And the ambulance would get down that street where it couldn't get into the others; the water was too deep. And they transported us up to Ohio Valley Hospital where we stayed for, I don't know, it seemed a couple of days to me before they released. My sister who had the fractured leg though, had to stay there, I believe--I remember that it was fourteen months that she was hospitalized and had to have any number of surgeries, I don't know how many. So then in '37 we had two more. I heard someone say something about 1937. In, in the spring of 1937, we had two floods. I remember staying with two different families in, in '37. And I thought, 'Well, that's funny.' I remember being in that house and a house up there right in the area of Saint Marys Church on the other side of the street, a brick house down there at the corner.

(666)

And then I was reminded that in 1937 we had two of them. Now, after, after this, my mother was of course terrified of floods, and they had devastated her life from the time she lived in Wheeling, having been in the 1913 and on and on. That she built a small house in '37 on top of Mozart Hill overlooking South Wheeling, clear on the top. I see a picture over there of the incline ramp going up. Right at the top where that incline was. That incline was moved to Pittsburgh in, I think it was 1919, somewhere before my time, before I came along. I didn't get to see it. But my mother said she--There it is ...--That she rode on it. So that meant that we had to climb up and down that hill to go to Ritchie School. And then later we had to climb up and down that hill to go to work in South Wheeling, and when you were finished, climb back up. We took it in stride because, gee, that was where we lived. It wasn't till very long ago that I realized that there was an advantage in that. This built a tremendous heart muscle climbing up and down that hill.

(audience laughter)

(701)

HH: I went in to Wheeling Hospital a couple years ago to take a stress test on a treadmill. And the doctor started this thing out, and I said, "This is nothing." He said, "We're going to make it faster, and we're going to make it steeper." And I said, "Can you make it as steep as that hill over there?"

(audience laughter)

(710)

HH: And he said, "No." And I said, "Well, you're not even going to make me pant."

(audience laughter)

HH: So that's about the story.

MNK: Look at you today, you're a picture of health. You said--

HH: I thought, I thought I was old until I heard some of this.

(audience laughter)

(719)

MNK: You heard there were, there were beds in, in the Bloch Brothers?

HH: They had a room up there which evidently was their infirmary if someone got sick or something, and they had some beds in there in a ... Like, oh, what we would call a twin bed today, I guess. And there were, I don't know, maybe three, I don't remember how many. And this was the first time I ever saw Seven-Up.

(Side Two)

MNK: This was the first time you'd ever--

HH: The first time I'd ever seen the product Seven-Up. One of the men there went and got a couple of bottles of Seven-Up somewhere and brought it in and said, 'You boys drink some of this. It's good for you.' And anything was good for me, and of course I drank it. I was delighted with it. And--But scared to death trying to figure what I did to cause all this disaster.

(audience laughter)

HH: Because anything that happened in, in the whole of South Wheeling, all the kids would turn around and say, 'He did it.'

(audience laughter)

HH: I was always--After a few years my mother figured it out, she said, "You're just the one they blame." And I said, "Wha-la, now you've got it."

(audience laughter)

???: You got blamed for it!

HH: Of my age group that I knew back in the '30s, but some of my old playmates, but in truth, some of them are already dead. And--But there must be some ... somewhere. Maybe they wouldn't want to see me because we used to fight a lot. You had to fight your way home from Ritchie School every day. They had bullies in the school, and a bully would come after you and want to beat--They would hit you with their books. Maybe some of you remember this stuff. One time I laid the bully low. The geography book was the biggest one there was. And I came out of the north door. They told you which door you must go out,

so the bully knew where to find you.

(audience laughter)

(020)

HH: I came out the door. I had decided I'd had enough. And a bully, you know, has a following of smaller boys who don't want him to pick on them, so they're his buddies. So I figured it out, I was young, but I wasn't stupid. I said, 'I've got to devastate the bully to put a stop to big kid.' I don't know what his name was. I came with geography book, and I made my way through the crowd of followers. I come up behind him, and I laid him with that geography book across the head. And it put him down. And I turned around to get the rest of them, and they were gone. And I had no more problem with those bullies.

Another time I out maneuvered them in an alley. You could go down Wood Street to go home. You could go down an alley. You could go over and go down a railroad track. And there were four of them who would chase me, want to hit me with their books, beat me ... So one day I said this was enough. There wasn't no use telling your parents because they'd say, 'I don't want to hear of

(032)

that. What did you do wrong. What did you'--I got a double handful of the nicest pieces of gravel, there plenty of it around Wheeling, and I concealed it behind a telephone pole about a hundred yards down that alley on the left side. When I came out of school, sure enough, here they came. They said, 'There he goes, let's get him.' They took after me, I ran down the alley like I was scared to death. And when I got to that pole, I ducked behind it. And I get down, I fill my hands with these pieces of gravel. Now I'm armed and they're not. And I heard one of them say, 'He's hiding behind that pole, we can get him now.' And I waited till they got in range, about here from that wall out there, and I stepped out with my stones and I brought blood. And after that, I had no trouble with them either, and I was a specialist with the use of a stone. I would take the thing, and I would conceal it in my hand. If this kid was bigger than me, I would come up and I would act like I was going to take an ineffective

(046)

swing at his face with my fist. But that, in effect, wasn't what I was doing. As I got close to him I would release the stone into his face. Oh, there are kids with scars here and here.

(audience laughter)

(048)

HH: And their parents would come after my mother. My mother would say, 'Come on, give me a break. Look how little, he couldn't have done that.' She didn't, she didn't ask me because I was trained, I would have had to tell the truth and say I did it. I did it all right, but no one believed that I did it.

???: ...

MNK: Say, 'my name is.'

Gene Long: My name is Gene Long.

MNK: And your date of birth?

GL: December the 29th, 1924.

MNK: Nineteen twenty-four. What was your, what's your address now?

(056)

GL: Four-oh-six South Front Street.

MNK: And your phone number?

GL: Two-three-two, four-six-one-one.

MNK: Where were you living at the time of the flood?

GL: At the time of the '36 flood, I was living on 24th Street. Well, I decided to grab my dad's boots and go around the corner. Consumer's Cafe was on the corner there. And I decided to take Arley Moore from over on the Island there a walk around the flood, see. You know Arley Moore? So I put him on my back and I come across, around the corner of 24th and Chapline Street. Right now I'm going to show him where the cellar door's still there. Where that place burned down, the cellar door's still there. So I said, "I'm going down to take a picture of it." So anyhow, I come around the corner, well, they open the door, you know, where they throw the barrels of beer down. And what happened--

(066)

You're right. I stepped out, what a shock that was. Boom, I went down. I went down and Arley Moore more or less saved me, held on to my hand, because he was on my back. And a man in the beer joint come out, and he says, 'My friend's down in the water here.'

(audience laughter)

GL: I remember looking up trying to get up like that. I couldn't get up like that. I, I couldn't get up, you know, I had the boots that are filling up with water. Nobody, eleven years old, you know. ... and that guy says, 'That kid's down in there.' They brought me out, and I was all right. And they says, 'Are you all right?' I said, "Yeah, I just want to go home," I says.

(audience laughter)

(071)

GL: So another story. Then we moved to, to the Island, see. But I want to say one thing for Saint Alphonses down there, the priests and the sisters and everybody did a fantastic job. They housed the people there at the Columbia Club and made beds and that there. And at the YMCA they did it. And the Market Auditorium they had places where these people were in the floods could go and come. But Saint Alphonses was one of the greatest there. The nuns and everything got food and everything. Now then when I moved to the Island, getting back to this now, when I first moved to the Island, I say, 'Well, we ain't going to have no more floods.' And it started. When I moved on the back river I wanted to be a nice neighbor to my friend, and he had a trailer up the, up the alley there. Well, his tanks broke loose on his trailer, see. So they

(080)

come down, and I thought, 'Boy, I'm going to save them.' So I had a boat, I always had a boat, you know, an old john boat. So I went out and pulled the tanks in, tied them to my back porch. I thought, 'Boy, this is nice.' And I told him, "Red," I says, "I got your," you know, "I got your, you don't need to worry about it." The next morning I look up and my, my boat, my boat was still there, but the porch went down the street with his tanks on it and knocked my neighbor's fence down.

(audience laughter)

(086)

GL: Then the other one I had. I had kennels. I don't know whether any of you remember when I had the kennels up there, dog training kennels. So I decide to bring my dog in because I didn't want to be away from her because she was pregnant, a big German shepherd, see. So I'm living at 506 South Huron. So I had her on the back porch like that. And I went inside there. Well, I always taught her to retrieve things, see. So something come floating down, my German shepherd dove in the water. Here she is going down, a guy says, "Your dog's going down the alley." Said, "Oh, my God." It's, you know, it's pregnant and she's ready to have puppies. I said, "Oh, my God. What do I do?" So I got my boat again, my old john boat, down there I'm going down. I caught her down there where the, you know, where the drive-in was. And she was lodged against the fence there, poor thing was like this. And I almost tilted over with her, but I pulled her out of the thing, and we pulled her back. And I went back and she had the puppies on the porch.

(oohs and aahs from the audience)

(096)

GL: So I saved her and the puppies. And I sold the puppies later. Yeah, that's a true story too.

???: Yeah, it was down there.

GL: But there was another story I wanted to tell you, but--Let's see. Oh, I know the one I want to tell you. It was the ice flood. Anybody remember the ice flood? All right. I'm being, always when I had my john boat I always went and helped the people out to get, you know, things. If they needed to go to the grocery store, I'd get my john boat and get them in there and help them out or help them move their furniture and everything. So this one with the ice flood, I come around the corner there, and I thought--When Pete Savage from Wheeling here was with me, fellow tile setter of mine. And we're going up there. As we come around there on Wabash and going up Virginia Street, I couldn't get through because I wanted to help these people out. They, you know, they had to get some groceries and that. And what I did, there was ice there, and I says--Will Bosley--I don't know whether Will Bosley--Remember

(107)

Will Bosley there? He says, "I got a pick there, but you can have the pick." So I pulled the boat over there, and he give me the pick. And as I started around, I thought, 'Well, this is great.' I was just picking through it. Well, I picked a hole in my boat.

(audience laughter)

(110)

GL: Picked a hole in my boat, and the boat was sinking. I said, "What are we doing?" He was throwing a line to me and people were screaming. And me and Pete Savage waded up in the water up to our waists. It was--He says, "I should have never followed. You're goofy anyhow." He said, "You get me in a boat, and here," he said, "I'm freezing to death." Well, you can imagine how cold it was.

???: Oh, yeah, it was cold.

(114)

GL: It was really cold. Anyhow, they got us out and put us in blankets. And I said, "I'm sorry I couldn't

get your groceries. I sunk my boat.” But there’s other little stories I tell. But anyhow, I’m glad we all-- And I think these two people are really great to get this thing together. But any time you want, I have a little museum on the Island there up on the--And I’m going to sell the building, but I started it ten years ago with my deaf mutes. And that’s how I started, putting pictures up. And I got sports and floods and write ups about years ago and everything. But if--You’re welcome in there sometime.

MNK: And the Wheeling Steel Hour.

(121)

GL: Oh, well, if you notice I was on the Wheeling Steel. Did you see, get the thing of West Virginia, the new thing. Well, you’ll see a picture of me and my family on one. We was on the Wheeling Steel Hour.

???: Oh, I remember that.

MNK: Gene, somebody--Gene, somebody said there was a song made about the ’36 flood.

GL: There was. Well, I don’t know that I remember that one there. All I do is *River Stay Away From My Door*. If you notice--Now if you’re on the--

MNK: Can you sing a little of that?

GL: Oh, yeah.

MNK: Here, I’ll hold it.

(127)

GL: (singing) ‘You keep going your way, I’ll keep going my way. River, stay away from my door.’

Come on. (singing)

You ain’t got a cabin. You don’t need a cabin. River, stay away from my door. Don’t come up any higher. I’m so all alone.

Keep my bed and my fire. That’s all I own.

I’ll keep ... your .... Don’t you break my heart.

River, stay away from my door.’

(audience applause)

GL: I forgot some of the words.

???: Well, you did a great job.

???: Gene, do you remember the theme song for the Steel Hour, Wheeling Steel?

(137)

GL: Yeah, I got it over there.

???: Got a feeling I’ll be stealing--

GL: Back to Wheeling, West Virginia.

MNK: Can you sing it?

GL: Oh, I forget how it goes. I’ve been singing so much this week I forget the--

???: ... She used to sing, she was--

???: Dotty.

???: Dotty ...

GL: Yeah.

???: And that was her theme song--

GL: Yeah.

???: For the steel group.

GL: I was just a child on there when I was on the Wheeling Steel broadcast. And I remember us all singing like that when we was headliners on there at different times. We was on the radio with different programs, like Universal Products and Wonder Bread. I was on for Wonder Bread at the State Theater. And we was the Long Brothers, probably you remember us years ago. The two--

???: ... live on 26th Street. ...

(145)

GL: No, I didn't live on 24th, I lived on 24th Street, 24th and Jacob there. I lived there right across from Millers. Millers lived there, and I lived right across the corner. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's when I lived there. But I'm still singing. I was pretty hoarse from all the songs I sang at Saint Patrick's Day. Anybody remember Father, Father Frederick? Do you remember him? Oh, you won't remember, you was too young. Father Frederick, anyhow. And he didn't want to go in the old man's home and he's ninety-three years old. So they took him out the Welty Home. And he's out there, and I was on a couple programs there with the Opals. And I says, "Well, Father, why don't you get back playing piano." He said, "He was my choir boy when he was a little boy." Which I was, ten years old. So Saint Patrick's Day they told me that he was playing, and I was booked on all these places. I says, "I got to go out and surprise him."

(156)

He's dressed with a ball cap on and everything of Irish on there. And he's playing the piano and in I walked in. And I sang, him and I, for a whole hour entertained the nuns out there, the different ones. We all sang *When Irish Eyes are Smiling*, all these different numbers. And Father played the piano, and I sang. That's the first time we sang together for sixty years. Because I was ten years old when I was with the choir boys. And he left Wheeling. But he's ninety-three years old now, and he's still living. He's one great priest, I'll tell you. He was a comedian with it, I'll tell you. To hear him talk, he's real cute.

CNK: Saying, 'my name is.'

Hazel Snyder McKeever: My name is Hazel Snyder McKeever, and I'm seventy-one years old.

CNK: Say that once more.

HM: My name is Hazel Snyder McKeever, and I'm seventy-one years old.

CNK: Okay, and your present address and phone number?

HM: Four-four-three Wagner Street, Wheeling. And my phone number is 232-7966.

CNK: Okay. Tell me about the flood of '36.

(169)

HM: All right. We lived on Kentucky Street, and I had three older brothers. Our uncle was Fred Maucke who had the 8th Street Boat Club across the river. And down from Kentucky Street it led to the beach to what we always called Snyder's Beach, and that's where so many people would go down swimming in the

summertime. And we all had boats. And so at, at the time of the flood arose, my brothers were very busy taking everyone off the Island. Many, many people they rode off the Island. As the water would reach the person's house, then my brothers would go and take them off the Island. And many people wouldn't let anyone except my brothers take their families off the Island. That's what great river men my brothers were. And so when it came time for us, we were the last ones to be moved. And it was very late at night and the water was up lapping at our steps. And we happened to live on Kentucky Street, which was about the highest street on the Island. And so we rode off down Front Street at night, everybody's door's open on Front Street. Nobody in any house on Front Street. And the water just going through. It was very eerie, very, very spooky. And so when we got down to the bridge, the

(188)

Suspension Bridge, firemen were there to help us get the boat in, because at that point on the Island the water was very, very swift. And so we did manage to get to the--And we, my dad took us up to my aunt on 8th Street, Mrs. Maucke. And we stayed there for three days. But my brothers and my dad came back to go back to the house. And it was there that when they left the bridge that their boat turned over and they had to hold onto the boat plus a telephone pole that was very handy close by. Because they were almost swept away. But the firemen helped. The firemen got in one of their boats and came out and helped them or they would have been gone if there'd been no one there. And so they continued up to our house and they spent the next night there until they just couldn't stay any longer, and they had to go back over to Wheeling. So that's what I remember so much. Leaving our house and the entire Island covered with water, and we were the last ones, I think, to leave.

CNK: Gosh.

(202)

HM: Such an experience.

CNK: Gosh. So then--

HM: It was a big cleaning up job afterwards. Of course we all went back. As soon as the water was going down, we went back to clean up. And everybody who had a piano on the Island, the pianos were out in the middle of the street, ruined. And so many people lost their photos and their albums. Because they were so important back then to people because it was in the 1930s, and all we had was a box camera, black and white photos. So that's--That was one little story that I remember.

CNK: Well, then your father and brothers went back to the Island.

HM: Right.

CNK: And they stayed in the house?

(211)

HM: They stayed in the house until they couldn't stay any longer because we got about three feet of water in our first floor. And they came over then one night to stay on the mainland. And then they went back the next day when the water started dropping.

CNK: And how did they get back over to Wheeling?

HM: By boat. They took their boat and made it through. They were all excellent. So, that was just a little

story I wanted to tell. But of course we were in lots of floods because we lived there practically all our lives. And we, we made every flood that there was to be in!

CNK: What were some of the others you remember?

(220)

HM: Well, I remember the ice flood. I think Gene was talking about it when I came in.

CNK: Yeah, tell me about that.

HM: We lived up on Belle Isle then, up on North Erie Street. And there was just--The ice just covered clear across to the mainland. I mean you couldn't see any water, and it was just moving so swiftly. And so one of the neighbors came up in his boat and took me out. And we took pictures of it out in the water. But it was really tremendous. I've never seen anything like it in my life, the ice flood.

CNK: You didn't have to move then?

(228)

HM: We moved things out of the basement and some things up on our second floor, but if I recall right, I don't think we had any water on the first floor that year. I'm not sure, but I don't think we did. I think it was very close, but we managed it. But it was so close.

CNK: What did it look like, how far--

HM: We got so--You've never seen a flood?

CNK: No, and certainly not an ice storm either.

(234)

HM: Well, I'll tell you that up in Pittsburgh and the river coming down in areas there where they had the big tow, big barges tied up, many barges broke loose and they came down with the ice. And there was one that got stuck at the north end of the Island. We discovered later it was headed right for our house. If it had not been for the high ground there, it would have probably come crashing down our house. And one barge went, completely missed the Island and went to the back river, and it was stuck in the back river for the longest time. So we, we were lucky that way.

CNK: You went out--

HM: We had many floods!

CNK: You went out in a boat though with this--

HM: Right.

CNK: Neighbor to watch the ice?

(244)

HM: Um hmm. We rowed out, not out into the channel, not out where it was just really speeding down because that would have been too hard to have rowed the boat. But we did go out, and it was quite exciting.

CNK: Exciting?

HM: Yes, uh huh. I love excitement!

CNK: Endlessly, huh?

HM: Endlessly. Every flood I've loved. Well, you know what they usually do in a flood, you always get

in a supply of whiskey.

CNK: What?

(252)

HM: Whiskey, you know, you always get in your whiskey bottle. And then if the houses are close enough, you put a board from your place, from your porch over to the house next door. And then that way you can mingle, you know. And if it has to go clear down the street, you do that. And so you're not completely alone in your house. And then of course someone always has to get over the chills, and we have to have a little bit of whiskey and water or something like that! And you have to have a deck of cards ready. And you have to just while away the time until the time comes that you have to get the hoses out and start cleaning immediately as it goes down.

CNK: So when the water's really high, do you, you put the board up on the second story?

(261)

HM: Well, if it gets that high, then perhaps you're able to go out through a bedroom window upstairs to reach over to their window, their roof up on the second story. But if--I, we never had to do that, but that would be a possibility, yes.

CNK: What kind of cards would you play then?

HM: Oh, five hundred or anything that anybody wanted to play. Five hundred usually.

CNK: Now what about as a kid, you were quite young in '36?

HM: I was thirteen, yes, thirteen.

CNK: Did you get to--

(270)

HM: But, but I don't know, some people became panicky and wanted to leave the Island immediately, but we never had that in our family. We never panicked. I think it was because we were always associated with the river. And we, we swam in the river all the time. When I was six years old, I was taught to swim in the river. And of course we had our boats and we would row across the river and row out to catch the big waves from the big paddle wheels that would come down. And we just had a wonderful time on the river. So a flood was nothing, you know.

CNK: You remember the paddle wheels?

(281)

HM: Oh, definitely.

CNK: Any of the names?

HM: I, I should. My brother would be very ashamed of me if I told him I couldn't remember the names of the big boats. I think the one was the W. P. Snyder.

CNK: W. B. Snyder?

HM: W. P. Snyder, I think it was. No relation to us.

CNK: Was that in relation to Harry Frank Snyder? He had the ...

HM: I don't know.

CNK: A sternwheeler.

HM: Oh, I don't know. And--But all the big paddle wheels would come down from Pittsburgh down to the Mississippi. And as soon as we would be on shore just looking around someone would yell, 'boat.' We'd get in our rowboats and go row out there so fast and take the waves. And if you took the waves in a canoe, it was very, very exciting.

CNK: That's what you had, canoes?

(293)

HM: No, we had a rowboat. But some people had canoes and would take a canoe out. You know, the waves were so huge and you just--And it was very exciting. I had a girlfriend lived next door, and we would go down to the river in my boat and go out in the channel and take off our clothes and take off our bathing suit and tie our bathing suit to our ankles and swim in the nude. And--But we were always afraid because my Uncle Fred was there in that boathouse, you know, at 8th Street. And we were afraid he'd get his binoculars out. And if that would happen--So we'd swim around and then we'd go under water and put our bathing suit back on, get in the boat and go back.

CNK: But you managed to hang on to your suits ...

(305)

HM: Yes. Wouldn't that have been terrible if we'd have lost a suit. Oh, I don't know what we would have done. No, we managed to hang on to.

CNK: Just kind of held them and swam.

HM: Tied them good on our ankles. That was ... My mother never knew.

CNK: I won't tell her.

HM: When she said to us, "Now go down to the riverbank and play," she never knew that that's what we did.

CNK: That was you and your neighbor?

(310)

HM: That was Miss Becky White, uh huh. She lived next door to me. We were very close.

CNK: That's a great story.

HM: Did lots of things. Rowed our boats completely around the Island. Becky was up not too long ago, and she said, "Remember when we used to take the boats around the Island?" "Yeah, wasn't that fun."

Rowed clear around. Boy, that was a job.

CNK: Was it?

(317)

HM: Yes. And the back river was so low that sometimes we'd have to pick the boat up and walk it to deep water where we could finish our trip around the Island. And, and I've had adventures on the Island where I've almost lost my life, I mean in the river. But we always made it through.

CNK: You almost lost your life in the river?

(322)

HM: I was almost pulled under a large, a large barge. It was a nightclub. It was a club at the boat, at the boat club we had between the bridges on Wheeling Island. My brother and, and as we went, as I tried to

take the boat into shore, I forgot about it was June and that the current is very swift in June, and that a large, large boat has a current by it. It pulls the water under it. So if you ever dive from a large boat, you dive away from it so you won't be caught in that current that's under the boat. So I forgot about that and I took my boat too close and the, it just snapped it like that, took it right under and took my shoes off my feet. I had enough presence of mind to hang on, stand up and hang on and pull my legs up. And then we had to scream and the river men came and saved us. But we were hanging there, I had two girlfriends with me. We almost lost our lives, but the fellows, the young men were sitting

(342)

clear at the end of the ramp where all the boats would be tied up. And they were clear at the end. And when they saw the boat come out, then they knew that I was stuck up there and they came running up to get me. They were so afraid that maybe we were all under the barge, you know, but we made it through.

CNK: Wow.

(347)

HM: That's when Charlie Schenerline and Dr. Crosby and, oh, a lot of boat people stayed there then, had their own yachts with the yacht club.

CNK: Would that be ...

HM: Back in the '40s.

CNK: Father, Adelaide Schenerline ...

(352)

HM: It wouldn't be her father, but it would probably be a relative if it was a Schenerline on the river. They had the roofing company, Charlie and all of them. Yeah.

CNK: Gosh. They had boats on the river, did you say ...?

HM: Yes, uh huh. The Schenerlines always had a boat on the river. They, too, were boat people. Charlie used to say, "When you take the first swallow of the Ohio River," because we all swam in it and you had to swallow sometimes. And as soon as you would swallow the first swallow, you became a river rat. So we were all river rats! And proud of it!

CNK: Was it, was the river clean then?

(365)

HM: It did not have all the pollution like today. I mean chemical plants up where we lived. But it did have open sewage. It had the Wheeling Hospital up there that things would be put in from the hospital, you know, because everything was open sewage. And--But we would swim out in the channel so there was less pollution out there. We would even swim at night. Sometime when I think about that it frightens me, that we would dive into the channel at night off of a boat. We did that, can you believe that. We were so stupid. And our parents thought nothing of it. It was Depression days, and that's where we would spend a lot of our time. Parents and all would go down in the evening and have a picnic down there. And the kids would go swimming in the river. So it was quite, quite exciting.

CNK: But you go out in the rowboat first? And go...

(382)

HM: Sometimes we would just walk out from shore. We made sure that our beach, this sounds terrible, but it was between two sewers! So there was no sewer right where we were, you know. Does that sound terrible! But this one big sewer, and it would go straight out, you know. And then the other. But I remember one year that the children who had enough money to go swimming in the swimming pools, their hair turned green that year, probably from something in the swimming pool water. Ours didn't, and we remained healthy. We were never sick! And our hair retained its regular color!

MNK: ...

(395)

CNK: And your hair's the right color!

HM: It didn't hurt my hair. You know, maybe there's something in that.

CNK: Preservatives!

HM: Right. Uh huh. Yeah.

CNK: Well, what did the--

HM: The Island was wonderful.

CNK: Yeah.

HM: My Aunt ... Maucke up at 8th Street, she phoned my dad one day, and she said, "There's a beautiful home up here for sale. I want you to come up and buy it." And my dad worked for the streetcar company on the Island. And he said it was really too far, you know, "I'm close to my work here," but he'd think about it. She said, "It's a steal." And it was. It was one of the mansions up there. I don't know what it sold for in depression years, but probably not like anything like it would be today. Because I know one mansion on south end of the Island, Rudy Liner paid 4,000 dollars for it, you know, in the depression years. And this was brick and beautiful. And so he took a vote at the table, and nobody wanted to leave the Island. Isn't that terrible? Now I look back and think, 'how awful.' But he called her back and he said, "The boys won't leave the Island. They wouldn't have their swimming place over there."

CNK: So who was there in your family then?

(416)

HM: I had three brothers and myself and my mother and father.

CNK: Everybody voted?

HM: Yeah, yeah. The boys, oh, I can hear them. 'Oh, I'm not moving up there. We won't go. We want to stay here on the Island,' you know. Now--

CNK: And you?

HM: I didn't care, I really, one way or the other. Although I would have hated to have left the Island. It was a great place. We all--Everybody knew each other on the Island, almost, you know. That was just a great place.

Wonderful--

CNK: What'd you do--

(425)

HM: Family. Wonderful families. My, our neighborhood was more like a German Irish neighborhood.

And--

CNK: Was what?

HM: German Irish, you know. More of a German neighborhood.

CNK: How, how did--

HM: It was great.

CNK: You see that? Did people carry on those traditions?

(430)

HM: They--One of my neighbors, Becky, the girl that went nude swimming with me in the river, her mother called me one day and I, I moved off the Island then. And she said, "The neighborhood isn't the same. All these young mothers coming in here, and they don't know how to treat their children." She said, "You know, we never screamed or yelled at any of you children outside." And she said, "That's all young mothers do now. They get outside and scream at their children, and we never did that before in this neighborhood." So I guess it was changing. It's kind of--I said, "Oh, that's sad." Because that's true. We were raised--The neighbors were, like helped to raise everybody and no one screamed at anyone and screamed at the children. If you did something wrong, why they just told you about it. Wasn't like, you know--

CNK: Told you about it?

(447)

HM: Yeah, if we did something wrong, the neighbor would come out and give us a story or chastise us a little bit. Nothing like screaming and calling you a name or anything like that. It just wasn't done. The old, the old way of raising children. So I liked those old days that way.

CNK: Yeah. You say the neighbors kind of raised one another's children?

(456)

HM: Well, we looked after--For instance, you know, there was no, there wasn't any program if you needed help. You had to depend on your neighbors for help in the Depression years. You know there was no federal aid, so to speak. And so no neighbor in our neighborhood would allow another neighbor to starve, anything like that. If a neighbor got sick, all the neighbors got together and took food in. It was just that way. And if a child needed something, why a child was sort of looked after, you know. If that child's father died, why maybe someone else in the neighborhood would sort of look after that boy or something. It was just--Like giving advice or something like that.

CNK: Did you know of a case like that?

(470)

HM: No, but I know that my dad was more or less that way. If we, my brothers sort of had many, many friends that came to our house. All three of them were involved in different things. Like my oldest brother in the football team, well, all the football players came to our house. And then maybe all the track guys came and then like that. And so my dad was there. And they loved my father. And they called it Pop Snyder's Stable, is what the boys called our house. And mom and pop were always there. And he, they always had the children in to play cards. I mean it wasn't a matter of, that you turned anyone away. If

someone came in the house at dinnertime, an extra plate was set. You didn't have anyone just waiting for you in the living room. They had to sit at the table, it was that sort of thing. So, it's all, all in the past, I don't know.

CNK: Pop Snyder's Stable, huh?

(490)

HM: Pop Snyder's Stable. And they'd put up Mail Pouch pictures. And I'll tell you a really funny story. My dad had one of the only telephones in the neighborhood in the Depression days. So all the boys came to our house to call their girlfriends. And if somebody would call for a neighbor, we would get out on the back porch and yell, 'Hey Willard' or 'Hey', you know, 'you're wanted on the telephone.' So my dad--My mother papered that room where the telephone was. And my dad said to my mother, "Now I'm putting my phone number for the company right here so when I need it I can catch it right there. I'm marking it right here on the, on the wallpaper right by the phone." So the boys found out, you know. So that night they all came in and wrote all their phone numbers all around my dad's phone number. And it was gone, you know! He came in and he said, "Where in the hell is my phone number? Look what these damn boys did," you know. And the boys are all laughing and carrying on. And we thought that was the biggest joke! He lost his phone number.

CNK: The girl was innocent?

(515)

HM: The girl was innocent. Oh, I was innocent. I absolutely did not put a phone number on that wall!

CNK: Well, what did these--What did the paddle wheelers look like?

HM: Oh, they were wonderful and I--

CNK: Paddle boats, I should say.

(522)

HM: I know I got some of the pictures. Gene Long has some pictures of them, I know, because my brother gave him so many pictures. And I'll have to go home and look up and see if I can get in my mind some of the old paddle boats, the names of them. But we knew which boat had the biggest waves. Oh, it's going to be, I'm going to say the *William Snyder*. Oh, biggest wave, we were out there getting the waves of those boats. I wish I could do that again, but, you know, then they brought in the, the, oh, the oil burning boats. What is it I want to say.

???: Screw boats.

(534)

HM: Yeah. And there was no paddle wheel. I mean it was just a little trickle of water back then. We were all so sad when they took the paddle wheels off. Sad thing. It's just part of our life gone, you know. At my Uncle Fred Maucke's boathouse he kept all the canoes over there. And that was a great, a great area to go through. It had a certain smell to it, you know what I mean? Old buildings and the old--And you see, smell all these canoes, you know, you'd go through there. and Uncle, Uncle Fred had a monkey, and it was given to him from someone that came up on a boat from Florida. And it was the cutest little thing, and it loved the water. He would put a string around it and throw it in the river, and it would go clear down the

channel and bring up a brick, you know, and wave it around. It had the run of the boathouse. And so one day, though, he, the monkey got out of the house. My aunt, she, that monkey did everything to upset her. It would start peeling the paper off the walls, and it

(558)

would try eating the wax fruit and it would swing on the chandeliers, you know. It was just--And so one day it got out of the house and it went up, climbed up on the outside of a building up to the second story apartment and went in a woman's bedroom as she was dressing. They heard her screams all over the neighborhood. So he had to get rid of the monkey.

CNK: And that was the end of the monkey?

(568)

HM: That was the end of the monkey, yeah, the monkey.