

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Tornado of 1985

Personal Experience

O H 1267

KATHLEEN NEWELL

Interviewed

by

Douglas Senseman

on

July 22, 1989

- S. This is an interview with Kathleen Newell for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Tornado of 1985 Project, by Douglas Senseman, at 1405 Hollywood, N E Warren, Ohio, on July 22, 1989
- Kathy, could you tell me what you were doing in the spring of 1985?
- N I was working at the Auto Club as the head of the license department We were located at 660 North Park Warren, Ohio
- S How long had you worked for AAA (Automobile Association of America)?
- N At that point? Let's see. I have been there 21 years now, so it would be seventeen
- S What do you remember about the day of May 31, 1985?
- N What do I remember? It was hell
- S You were working that day?
- N Oh, yes We were working As far as the tornado goes, we heard warnings were out. It was on a Friday night and there was a bunch of us who were supposed to go over to Clancy's for a night out I heard the warnings and I said to the boss and one of the women that were going, "I do not think I am going to go tonight I better go home." They looked at me and said, "Why, do you think you can stop it?"
- S Now, what time did you hear the warnings?
- N It had to be around 5 00, roughly We got off work at 5:15 and it was just before quitting time that I heard it So I would say roughly, 5:00
- S. Now the day at work Had there been anything on the radio before 5 00?
- N I do not remember that, not that I heard It seems like I was working up in accounting that day I did not have a radio up there, where downstairs I usually have a radio So I am assuming from what I can remember it was 5 00 the first I heard
- S So it is 5 00 and you are debating whether or not you are going to go out

N They convinced me to go We walked out of the building about 5 20 or 5 25 and I want to tell you the air was the strangest I have ever felt. I have never been in the tropics, but from what I hear about it, it was strange I have never felt it before By that time, one had already touched down in Bristolville, which we did not know right then

S. So you went to Clancy's.

N Yes, we went to Clancy's and about 6 50 the lights went out. It hit up on the hill on the Strip and naturally, the party gang, they wanted to go somewhere else So we come across town a couple blocks away here They did not have any power. We went from that place around the corner to one of the guy's apartments and, in the car, is when I heard it hit Newton Falls We went in the house and one of the women who was with me, Connie, used to work for the Howland Police She was a dispatcher She got them on the phone and tried to find out what kind of damage was done in Newton Falls Naturally nobody knew anything The phones were all dead into Newton Falls so there was no communication. They were going to go out to eat and we were getting in our cars and I said, "Hey guys, I am not going I am headed home if I have one " I headed back to Newton Falls This was roughly 7 20 or 7 30, somewhere in there I was headed up the back way, Palmyra Road, which is Warren Township and I saw the damage that was done there Knowing the top of the land, I thought, "Oh my god, you are in trouble " All the way home, I think I had a premonition of what I was going to see I did not have any idea of what I was going to see, but I was pretty sure it hit that area

S Just to go back for a second, you said that you had observed the damage that had been done, specifically what damage?

N Oh, the houses were down, the things that came out of the houses and off the houses were stuck in trees and shrubs across the street People, of course, were all milling around They had come from down the road to see their neighbor's houses and all this, wires down, trees down You knew it was bad When you see clothes and furniture stuck to trees on the other side of the street, it is really bad It took years for them to clean that mess up, too When I got into Newton Falls, the closest I could get to my house, I turned down a side street, I could not go any further I could not get onto my street I had to park my car in a neighbor's yard up the corner There were trees down There were wires down all across the streets in the road

S Now on the way into Newton Falls, are you listening to the radio?

N Yes, but I do not think I was hearing it My thoughts were going They still did not have any specifics at that point. Nobody knew anything

S Again, when you are looking at all this damage and all the debris, did you ever stop and talk to anybody?

N No I was just headed home I had two animals in the house and that is what I was worried about

S Is it dark when you were approaching?

N No, not then. Probably getting dark In May, at 7 30, I think it was starting to get dark

S Did you pass any police?

N Not then Not yet. I did not have any trouble getting in If I would have waited any longer, I would have By that time, later on, they were all out; electric companies, phone companies, police, everything

S So you parked your car, now?

N I ran across the street to my house, down the street and across, and it looked like a doll house sitting there because it was down on the ground All the foundation blocks were gone from under it With that, it raises your house something like three feet, to four feet. I can remember one of the strangest things, my neighbor was standing on the roof, fixing his upstairs window because the window was blown out I can still picture him up there The trees were down all over the place It was a mess I was worried about the dog, of course, and as I approached the house, several neighbors joined me Because they had already gone through it, they knew it happened, so now they are coming to help me I guess There was a man there who had already had a heart attack a couple years prior, and a young man, who I did not know at the time, and one of the women, and they said something about the house I do not remember what it was I said, "I do not give a damn about the house I have two animals in there " Well, the house had been pushed over away from the driveway Between the driveway, was solid ground and the door was something like a six or seven-foot space Debris piled up underneath it,

but it was basically open and there was no way I could reach my door

These guys, using hand by hand method, got one of them over and unjammed the door. My dog was standing in there wagging her tail just like when I come home every night, just like nothing had happened. We got her out and said, "There is a cat in there somewhere." This young man took a flashlight, it must have been getting dark, because I remember him having a flashlight. He went in the house and he looked all over. You know cats do not come to strangers too well, anyway. He could not find him.

A ninety some year old neighbor across the street told me I could stay at her place. She is afraid of dogs and I had Pixie. I was not about to get rid of her to stay with Mrs. Schaffer. I did go over there because I did not know what to do. Everybody else heard saws. You could hear sirens all over. You could hear saws. It was a nightmare. You never heard so many saws because everybody is cutting branches away from their houses and off the street and they were already picking up debris.

I did not have debris to clean up, which was crazy because the garage took the whole thing. I had nothing but this cement slab sitting there. The house was damaged to the point where they could not repair it, but it was there and my possessions, most of them, were inside. Some blew out the bedroom wall because it had a split like you had taken a cardboard box and broke it at the corner. Basically, I did not have any debris to clean up. They were all out working and I was at the neighbors and I helped her fix a window that had busted in her kitchen. The other side of the street had very little damage at the time looking at it. Later on, apparently the foundation shifted and screwed up a lot of the houses. I understand the stairways come away from wall and stuff like that, but to go in on that street and look, it looked like that side of the street had not been hit. From my house, clear down the street to Warren Road was just nothing. There was not a house standing.

S. How far is that?

N. It is a small block, so three-fourths of the block was gone. That is three houses. One big town and a half story house had been turned upside down. I understand, people saw it. It just went up in the air and came back down on its top and smashed, nothing but a pile of wood. They had two dogs in there. Apparently they came out of it okay. Anyway, I went on over to Mrs. Schaffers for a while and all I could think of is getting to family, I guess. I had made two trips back to the house to hunt for my cat. I walked around calling him and he would not come. I said a few things to

the neighbors which I cannot remember right now, and I finally headed back to Warren to my brother's house. I had the dog with me. I pulled in the driveway and they had naturally been trying to get me knowing that Newton Falls had been hit. Nobody could get into Newton Falls at all, telephoned or anything. They could not get in. By that time, they could not even get in by car or on foot.

Mrs. Schaffer that I was staying with, her son lives up in Kinsman. He heard it happened, and could not get through by phone, so he drove down. He was coming in Warren Road, and could not get more than two or three blocks away when the police stopped him. He crawled up onto a railroad track that is behind my house. He looked down there, now he knew this area for 40 years. He was a child when he lived there. He says he got up on that railroad track and looked and he did not know where he was. It is amazing how we use trees, houses, or anything for landmarks. We were not even aware of it because you take all that out the following morning.

My brother, sister-in-law, nephew and his girlfriend and I went back up there to get as much out of my house as we could so that it would not get stolen or damaged any worse. After we loaded the trunk and car we found the cat, too, they did. He had been out the night before, but went back in the house, so they found him for me. I could not go in the house because my legs were shaking. Here is this house hanging over an empty foundation, part of it was empty. There was some debris holding sections of it up. This house is waving up and down and I was not about to go in it, but they went in it and they found the guy. Then we loaded the cars up, my car and their truck, then my brother said, "Let's walk down the street, see how bad it is down there." Warren Road used to be just lined with big oak trees, I believe, and maples. They were so large. Now, none of them are there.

S Let us go back for a second to Friday night. I want to go back to your trip back to Warren. From what you described, it sounds like people were pretty calm and working methodically.

N No, I think they were in shock. They were in shock. You do what you have to do at the time you have to do it. They were out there going through their stuff. They were chopping trees, but like I said, I do not think any of us remember what we said to each other. Going back, I did miss that. Going back out of Warren, it took me an hour. It took me twenty minutes to get into Newton Falls, but coming back to Warren, it took me an hour.

- S Tell us a little bit about that trip back into Warren that night
- N All I can remember is that just about any place, part of Arlington road had some damage, so there were crews out, electric crews, your telephone company, gas company, everybody was out. There were gas lines involved in this, too. Of course, there were police officials of some sort. Sheriffs, depending on where you were at, Sheriff's deputies. Plus your onlookers who had to stand out in the road. I remember coming back on Palmyra and part of the problem was getting through. There were people standing there. It was like they were going to see the Trumbull County Fair, there were strangers in Newton Falls on that block I had never seen before. Of course, that was the next day. It took an hour to come back. Once you pass that one section on Palmyra then there was no devastation the rest of the way into Warren. Actually, a ten minute trip took me about forty minutes. That is about what it amounted to because they slowed the traffic up for the working crews. I do not remember as much as I should because when I got held up, I remember bawling a lot as I was driving back. I really cannot picture too much other than I was stopped until the road cleared and they let one or two cars go by and so forth. There was a lot of traffic out there on the way back.
- S Were the street lights working?
- N No. As a matter of fact, out of Warren they were not working, all the way up the strip. We discovered that when we left Clancy's, that whole section of the strip was out. Most of Warren was out, actually. Several of the areas did not get power back for three or four days. Eddie and Cheryl lived on Kenmore. They lived on the end near the strip and they did not have power for four days. The street lights were out. Once I got out of Warren, I did not find any street lights. They did not affect me getting back.
- S So you make it back that night to your brother Ed's house, and what is it like when you get back there and how are you describing it?
- N I did not have to. We sat and watched television by this time. It was all over the news. They never mentioned Newton Falls, but they showed us Niles. As you remember, the whole Trumbull County got hit plus parts of Pennsylvania. Wheatland was on television. I described to them what I found. They just kind of sat there. I can still remember Mark and his girlfriend, Jill, just sitting there in a daze as I was telling it. It was quite a

night The next day then, like I said, we listened all night long to the television because they were showing different scenes. I do not believe they got into Newton Falls. Finally, I got a phone call that night from a girl in Wisconsin. She got through. Nobody local could get through. She got through, though. She found out where I was. She had lived in Wisconsin and heard Newton Falls got hit. Locally, Newton Falls was not put on the local stations, which blows my mind. It was certainly all over the country. I have understood since that, it was the worst that has ever hit, ever so many of them at one time. It hit such a wide area.

S So then you are going back on Saturday. What was the weather like Saturday morning when you are getting ready.

N Well, let us go back to Friday night now that you mention weather. Driving down Palmyra, I looked up and the moon was as beautiful as it could be. Saturday morning was beautiful, it was humid, but I do not remember what the weather report was for Saturday. Sunday they had tornado warnings out again. My sister was in the house with the wind shaking it up and down. A relative of my brother-in-law's worked for, I cannot remember what he was, a reserve or something or other, and he carried around one of those little boxes and it gave his warnings and so forth. He stopped by to see the house while we were there and while he was there he got a call on this machine that the tornado warnings were out again. I said to my sister-in-law, "Let us get the hell out of here." So we did not stay long. There was a terrible period there for three or four weeks were every time we turned around there were tornado warnings. Whether or not they pushed the panic button because of the one incident, I do not know. No, that moon was beautiful Friday night. I did not get to enjoy it, but it was there.

S So Saturday, was a beautiful day, humid but beautiful. You are heading back out there and what is the trip like heading back to Newton Falls?

N What is the word? Devastating I guess would fit it because now I am with other people that are seeing it for the first time, where I had seen it the night before. They could not believe it. It was so wide spread, you could understand if one block got hit or a couple of buildings but there was so much of it. The trip to get to my house, we had to pass so many different areas to get to it, even though it was all in the same path.

 Down on Arlington Road, there was one section that had nothing but a row of trees for as far as you could see and those had been there all

my life and all of the sudden they were gone That took a long time before they cleaned it up so that it did not stand out You know, when you see a tree trunk with nothing on it, you cannot miss it They finally got them all cut down about a year ago so that it did not look so bad That reminds me of another thing

When we got up there on Saturday, now I had lived in that house for forty-five years and knew that town like the back of my hand, and never once could you see a water town on the East side of town to the West side of town until that Saturday morning My brother and I stood in my driveway and I said, "Russ, look at that." My brother came over that morning and we could not believe We had never seen it and then all of the sudden there it is Very strange feeling

I started to say earlier about walking down the street, we turned around and if someone had blind folded us and taken us down to the corner and taken the blind fold off, we would have not known where we were at, and both my brother and I were raised on that street That shows how much we depend on trees, bushes, houses, and everything to tell us where we are at. Another thing I started to say was about the birds. There were no birds, because there were no trees for blocks around I have got a neighbor right now that goes out and wants to shoot them or do whatever he can to get them out of the trees because he cannot stand them I love them, when you do not hear them, you miss them We take all this for granted, that town will never be the same in this life time or yours for that matter I have been up there several times since and I cannot go down my street too often. You go down there and naturally and the trees and the debris is cleaned up now and nobody has rebuilt on that street from my house down I drive down there and all I see is my driveway, a cement slab Nobody has done anything and it looks strange just sitting in the middle of the street The other people, I guess their driveways are there also because their driveways were blacked topped also It will never be the same in our lifetime You go up these streets and see no trees. You could never see the high school on Center Street as you are driving up Bert Street Now it is out there, as soon as you cross the bridge you can see it It is very weird

- S Now did you have problems getting into Newton Falls on Saturday?
- N Yes, not as bad, because most of the crews had worked the whole night I gathered. I really do not remember that well
- S What I am getting at is that they wanted to make sure that only residents

were going

N Yes, that is right We were not stopped for some reason coming in the back way Wait, we were stopped, it is hard to remember, there was a sheriff's deputy I told him that my house was up there and I used to live there He told me that that was fine and we told him the truck behind us was with us and I guess that was good enough for him. He could tell by the look on our faces that we were not out joy riding. I remember we called my insurance agent and he was stopped when he went in and he had to show his insurance card for them to let him through. It is amazing, a lot of people were in there that Saturday, they must have walked in, and they did not stop the people on foot There were strangers milling around all over walking up and down They saw me carrying my cat back to my car People that I have never set my eyes on before They had either Action 21 or Minicam, one of them, drove up the street in a Jeep taking pictures on a Saturday That never appeared on TV though. They were there I do not remember too many crews on our street on Saturday though Everybody that was doing it was the residents They had Amish people come in to help clean up They cleaned up my backyard There were a lot of bricks in the backyard By the time I had seen it the next day, there were not any They had already been there and cleaned it up

S Kathleen, when you left off, you were talking about the Amish people cleaning up the bricks Was that volunteer work?

N Oh, yes They heard about the trouble in Trumbull County and I cannot remember how many of them, 30 or 40 of them had all piled into cars or trucks or something, and got there They had somebody bring them because they are not supposed to drive I was not there at the time because we did not get there first thing Saturday morning to get everybody in that house together, up and showered and dressed It took us until, I would say 10 00 a m , by the time we got there And this had already been done before we got there. So they were there with the sunrise

S. When something tragic happens like the tornado, you remember certain good things that people did and then you remember certain bad things that people did Maybe that would be one of the good ones Can you think of the two opposites? You know, something real nice that maybe strangers did for you and then maybe the opposite, something that was real petty

N Right off the bat, the good was the fact that so many of them came and ran to me when I first got there and the man and that boy got the dog out. The woman across the street offering for me to stay there. Other people, neighbors that were new to the neighborhood that I had never really had a chance to get to know because I worked all the time, they came over and made sure I was doing okay and wanted to know if they could do anything. Like I said, not having debris to clean up, I think if I would have had a mess to clean up in my back yard, they would have been there to help clean up. Out behind the house there was a great big pile of debris that had been a swimming pool from the neighbors, and apparently their garage and part of my garage landed there. So they were going through all this stuff. Whenever he found a tool that was not his, he assumed it was mine, so he put it up on my cement slab. I ended up with some of the tools back. That was a day or so later.

There was an awful lot of good human interest stories, I think that came out of that, that nobody of my knowledge ever dove into. If you are an animal lover and you had a pet in it, and it came through it, I know there was a lot of strange stories. They came over and told me about there one dog, a German Shepard was blown away, but she got him intact with a chain around his neck. One was out hunting for their dog and finally, it did not recognize it, it walked by and it was totally covered with mud. She did not even know it was hers until it started following her and she turned around and looked at it and said, "Oh, my " I cannot remember its name. Everybody was friendly, like I said, that I did not even know before. Like I said, if I had needed help, there would have been more stories I could tell you because the people were helping the others that did need it.

Now on the bad side of it, the neighbor that lived next door to me was like another father to me and his wife, we were close for all those years. In fact, they were good to me when Mom died, for the four years prior to this happening. We were very close. He got upset because my house was pushed up against his and my insurance company was tying my hands. I could not get it demolished as soon as the contractor would of done it, if they would have let me do it and butt out. They did not like the price so they started hunting for somebody else to get a lower price and I think like two weeks went by and they could not get anywhere near the price that the local man had quoted me. So in this two weeks, my house is sitting right next to the neighbor's. He told me once, he said, "I ought to sue you because you are on my property " His wife had flowers all over the place and naturally a lot of my house is sitting on her beautiful geraniums. She made a crock about that. This was like a day or two.

after, we were still all in shock, I know it I know she did not mean it at the time I came back with some remark, I do not remember now, but it hurt Then later, after it was all over, we were just as close as we were before If I would have stayed in that area, I know we would have gotten along fine I think everybody was in a shock, they did not know what they were saying. They had to have National Guard out

Now, my house was accessible if you wanted to climb over an open area Well, by Saturday evening, we had it fixed so that we could go in and out of the front door safely My brother, nephew, sister-in-law and I had fixed up a ramp type thing up to the door so we could get in and out safely and carry stuff in and out So Saturday night, anybody could have gotten in there if they wanted too So they had the National Guard park right out in front of the house all night Then the following day, I think it was, we were cleaning up and getting stuff out of the house and the neighbor said, "Come on over for a sandwich and a cold drink " Then it got to be night when we were there And the neighbor was sitting there also, here he saw a flashlight out in his debris out in the backyard Here somebody was rifling through the stuff, seeing what they could get, somebody who is not from this area Luckily, he saw it and he went out and stopped it Anytime something like this happens, you got your sticky finger coons running around trying to get something for nothing They are not stopping to think about that that little bit of debris that was out there, was all that these people had left They lost everything but kids clothes

S This was happening despite the National Guard being there?

N Well, they were not there during the day time They just stayed at night And apparently, I do not know when they came because I never saw them there They came late because I was the only one not staying in the area Everybody else was camped out in their cars or staying with the neighbors. I had no reason to stay there at night I would not have stayed in that house for anything for that matter I do not know when they showed up, but I was told that the National Guard was there for about two or three nights until my house was boarded up See, I was the only one that they could really worry about going in since I was not living there, but the house was intact and so was the stuff still inside there Even though a lot of it was damaged, they did not know that We got out anything at first that I would have been upset had it been stolen, records, books, stereo system Granted it did not work when I got it here but at least I got it and no one else stole it We got TV's out of there, things that could have been carded off That is not nice when people go running through to see what

they can get. They are not thinking that these people have already gone through hell as it is and they are going to swipe something they can

S You mentioned people living out of there cars, you mean people were literally living out of there cars?

N I really do not know. I know people set up campers, small sixteen footers. But I really do not know where my neighbors were staying, I cannot picture them. Once I got the stuff out of there like in three days, I never really went back up much except when I had to with the insurance adjuster and that type of thing. I cannot remember where they were at.

S So you really you faced a huge task because here you are with this house that is totally off it is foundation. How did you go about that? What was your first priority there? What would you have to do?

N Getting the stuff out was the first priority that I did not want because if you had another rain, the roof had a big hole in it from the chimney. When you have insurance, one of the things they require you to do is to fix it to prevent any further damage. Which I think that it is silly now that I think about it. Because by the time that was all arranged and I had to get a contractor up there to board the place up. We already had all the stuff out of there that I wanted out, or that I could safely get out. A lot of it I was afraid to move.

You have got this house hanging over this hole. I did not have the facilities to get the large refrigerator out, the stove, or the washer and dryer that were in the basement. Somebody got it, but I did not. I told the contractor who was going to demolish it, I said to him, "You can have anything you can get out of there." You go back to the good and the bad, I just remembered the phone calls I got at work, I forgot about that. One day the phone rang about six times. Neighbors wanting to know if they could have this and have that. About the third or fourth phone call all I could think about were vultures. The people that have known me for forty-five years, it was like they were vultures. You are bringing back memories that I forgot about.

I remember getting very upset, I got over it and I guess that is why I forgot it. At the time I remembering thinking, they wanted couches that were left in there. Well, the adjustor warned me that glass was everywhere. Splinters of glass can go into this furniture, even if you take

it and get it professionally cleaned, they cannot swear they are going to get it all out. Who would want to sit on a couch and get a splinter. That glass was even under the cushions, it was amazing where it went and how it went. I had an end table that was just pitted from little pieces of glass, you could not see big hunks of it, so it had to be little slivers that hit this. Which also is amazing, how did the dog come through it. I can see the cat moving fast enough, but how did my dog come through this without getting killed. Something happened to her, but on the outside looking at her, she did not have a cut or a mark on her. I forgot what you asked me.

S We were talking in general. We went through your priorities.

N Your insurance adjustor helps to a certain point even though he was an idiot.

S The only thing I was going to ask is obviously, with all this devastation, were you even able to get fast service from him?

N No, not from mine. That is why I no longer have him. Some of the people in that neighborhood were getting checks written out to them the following day. If you look at an insurance policy, now that you are a home owner, there are four figures across there that you are paying for, the price of the house, any buildings on the house like a garage, personal possessions, and the other is to cover anything that will cost you like if you have to go rent an apartment until your house is repaired. Buying food because you cannot cook, I cannot remember what it is called now. But if you add up these four figures going across the board, these people were getting the checks for the whole ball of wax. Everything I got was chewed up and spit out.

These people ended up with homes you could not believe. You saw the picture I showed of this little house that was turned upside down on a roof. That thing was not bigger than half of this house and this is a small house. She now has got a beautiful ranch style house. The people on the other side of Newton Falls, the west side, I understand, I have not gone out there, they have built what some people refer to as mansions. Because they got insurance money and were able to go for it. I did not even know how much until the last minute, how much of a house I could afford. I finally had to threaten them with a lawyer. I had another insurance friend fighting for me, saying that I was getting ripped off.

I do not know if you remember, but there was a lot of talk about the appliances that went through this because of the power surge. If you would take the TV and plug it in, the thing could explode. If you plugged in your washer and dryer, you could catch fire. All this stuff was damaged except the TV's. I had two portable TV's that did not get harmed on the outside. The rest of it was just jumbled around so bad and dented even from other things hitting it that I said, "Do I have to take these out of here?" We even discussed the fact that the refrigerator, it was a very large one, would not be safe to even try to get it out of there. So I put it on my list of items lost, personal possessions lost. I got a depreciated figure out of it, so when I got done with like a \$13,000 list, I ended up with like \$5,000 for it or something, I do not remember the exact figures. That was all do to poor insurance agent because the next insurance agent that I got he said, "You get replacement value." If anything happens now, I am going to get the cost what it is worth, not depreciated ten times or whatever.

I had stuff in the basement that my parents had that had to be fifteen years old that was in a cabinet that we could not get open because the house was sitting on it. There was a silver platter in there, how can you put a price on a silver platter? I did not get anything for it. Things that I could have sold at a garage sale that I might have gotten \$15 for, I could not list because they would not put a price on it. All in all I lost, plus you never remember everything, I can still sit here and something will come up. I will say, "Where is that thing I used to have?" And I find that was gone, it is not here, it is at the other house. That went on for the first couple years here quite a bit. Things that people do not stop to think about that we take so much for granted that you have a house that is supposed to protect you from the elements and your possessions and it can be gone in 30 or 60 seconds. It does not take much more than that I guess.

S: You said you were there a couple days afterwards, you were there Saturday and then did you go back on Sunday?

N: Yes, we were there on Sunday. I think we had to go to work Monday. But I think there were a couple evenings that Cheryl and I, my sister-in-law and I went up to get as much out of there as we could. Clothes, dishes, that is something that you hear stories about strange things that happen in a tornado. The house was pushed eastward and then stopped when it hit the neighbor's house. That sudden jar, everything continues going with the

momentum. Records in that one room were all in the center of the floor, kitchen cupboards and doors were flung open, dishes out on the floor busted. My mother had a very good set of dishes that we only used twice a year, Christmas and Thanksgiving, you know how that goes. There was not one of them chipped, not one of them cracked. I still have the set, just packed it up and put it away a couple weeks ago and put them in the cupboard.

Pictures that were on the wall, that were on the west wall that should have fallen like everything else did, there were baby pictures that Mom treasured one of myself and one of my two brothers in oval frames, they were still hanging right on the wall. It did not even look like it jarred them. Very weird things like this went on. I was one of the lucky ones, I did not lose anything that could not be replaced. I think I had as much headache with the insurance, it was as much hassle for my insurance after it was over as it was happening to begin with. In fact, looking back, it lasted so much longer with the insurance because I hassled with them for two or three months. I think it was as bad as the tornado actually destroying the house.

S All the red tape?

N Yes. You could not believe it. I spent hours of making lists of things that were lost. Like the garage. Everything in the garage was gone. I had an air-conditioning unit from Sears that was supposed to be getting picked up that next Saturday. The repair man was coming to pick it up, I cannot remember why now, if I had a warranty and they were going to replace the whole unit, or if he was going to repair it and then I was going to have to pay for the repair. But when he came out on Saturday, there was no garage and no air conditioning unit so I got nothing out of that.

S He came out the Saturday after the tornado?

N I think so. It was just a few days. I cannot remember just when. It must have been a week day because I think I was at work when I got a call from Sears and they said, "We went out to get your unit, where do you live?" I said, "Hey, the house is gone buddy, the garage is gone and of course the unit is gone." Somebody said there was one laying several blocks up on the railroad track and I could not have carried it myself so it just stayed there. I do not know who got it. It did not work anyway. Had I had it, I would have

ended up with a good air-conditioning unit once they repaired it for me

That insurance company, I tried the stereo system when I got it to my brother's house, it did not function properly, I got the receiver, the cassette deck and the turntable. The cassette deck and the turntable did not function. I told the adjustor about it and I told him that it was not working and that I should be able to list this. He said, "Well, if you have it then why are you listing it?" "Hey, it does not work buddy." "Okay, put it on the list," he finally said. At first he was nice and then he got nasty. So I ended up putting it on the list. Then when they get done depreciating this whole thing, you end up with the pittens out of it.

As it turned out, it was able to be fixed, but I did not tell him that. There were a lot of things, the insurance like I said, the demolition. What is the word they use to get rid of the house, I cannot think of it. They ended up totaling it, they knew that they could not repair it. It took them four days, the adjustor and the engineer decide that they could not repair this house. So that was four days where everybody else is walking around with money in their pockets to start. When they finally made up their minds, they could not repair this house, by the time I tried to get a contractor, they were already tied up. I would have waited five or six months to get a house rebuilt. All in all, I think that was part of the reason I started hunting in Warren since I work here, rather than rebuild on the land, I decided to relocate.

They planned a cutie on that too. They did not tell me that when I was house hunting that once you find a home, you will get in money the difference between what you pay for the house and the cash value of your home was worth. In other words, what I am saying is, I could have got a \$50,000 home and they would have paid for it, but they did not tell me that. So I stopped at the cash value of the other house, I was afraid to go anywhere near over it. So I got a house that was equivalent even though I could have gotten more, but they did not tell me that until I signed the contract for this house. It was on a Thursday night I signed the contract for this house. The following Saturday morning I got a phone call, I was still living at Ed and Cheryl's, he told me then that they would pay me the difference, and it was already signed. I think he found out how much and knew that they were not going to be out not more than \$2,000, I think is what they ended up giving me the difference. Had I known that, I could have gotten a nice house, like everybody else ended up with.

S So you were out of your house for about three months until you finally signed the papers.

N Yes, because it was the first week in September that I got in here. The people did not need the 30 days. I cannot remember when I moved in, I thought it was the beginning of September. I know they did not take the whole 30 days so it had to be later than September.

S When was the last time you saw your house in Newton Falls whole, or what was left of it? How many times did you end up going back?

N Roughly, count the times it took to get stuff out, it must have been six or seven. I know I had to go up there to meet the adjustor. I was up there when Baker Construction boarded it up. Then when they were ready to demolish it, we wanted the wood since I had paid it. My brother needed it to build a bedroom in the basement for my nephew so I could live in their house, so I went back up that time. That was when some of the guys that were with me went in the basement, which was hazardous just to walk in there, and they got a few other things out of there. I had a beer mug collection and a lot of them were in the basement and some of them were smashed but they found several that were in tack and brought those up. So I would say 10 to 15 trips, I suppose all in all.

S. Did the city officials from Newton Falls ever contact you for any reason?

N Yes. While this insurance company was tying my hands getting it demolished and getting the hole filled up, I was getting nasty letters from the city of Newton Falls. I was raised in that place and lived there for 45 years and all I heard was, "Get this mess cleaned up." It was about that nasty. They did not say, "Hey, what is the problem? Do you need help?" It was, "Hey, get this thing taken care of. It is a hazard." Which it was. I did not like it either. I was still paying insurance if anybody would have gotten injured it would have been up to my insurance company to pay for it. It was my insurance company that tied my hands.

They first told me to get somebody to take it down, and when I started to Ed Collats out of Newton Falls would have had that down in two days and there would have been no problem. The hole would have been filled up and the whole bit. The insurance company did not like the figures so they took two weeks longer and in the meantime I am getting this letter from the City of Newton Falls, "It is your responsibility to clean this up." I never answered or called or said anything. When you stop and think two

years later, there was still a mess up there on Bridge Street, I wonder if they yelled at anybody up there to get it, or did they just pick on somebody that they knew was not staying here. They knew I was not staying in Newton Falls. I do not know. I do not like the way it was handled at all. Of course at that time, you are touchy, it did not take much to set me off in those days. I guess I was feeling put upon or something. I thought it could have been handled with a little more grace and a more tact.

S. So the City never really contacted you to say, "Hey what can we do for you?"

N. No. The only thing I got out of them was when I thought about rebuilding, I had to call the City Engineer, I think it was, and asked about rebuilding on that lot because it was only 45 feet across and the ordinance said it had to be 50. He says that was only for new residence. If you have owned that land and you had a house upon it, you could still rebuild on it. Which was nice. As it turned out, they tied my hands for so long, I lived down here for three months before I got the money out of the insurance company. I decided that my friends were down here and part of my family was down here and my work was down here, why do I not start hunting for a house down here? So I found this one otherwise, I had plans drawn the Sunday after the tornado went through.

Like I said, you are in shock. But I had plans drawn of the new house I wanted built. Then I decided against it. I kind of wish I had not. Part of me does and part of me does not. I would not have wanted to walk out of a house that did not have any trees. It looks like my neighbor, he says, "I did not know I lived on a farm before." He walks out of his door and all he sees is bear I and up to Warren Road. As far as the decision of relocating it was a hard adjustment because you are used to those people. We were a very friendly neighborhood. I could have went in six directions and gotten help if I needed it. There was several men in the neighborhood that knew I was alone that kept an eye on the house when I was not home. It made you feel secure. If something would have happened when I was not there, like a fire or something, somebody would have spotted it pretty quick and done something.

Coming into this new neighborhood, there was only one neighbor that made themselves friendly and approached me. They are the only ones I know yet. I figured when I was here for a while if they do not want to me, I do not care I will not meet them. So I do miss the neighborhood.

and it is quite an adjustment coming here. I look out the window and I never see anybody that I know. Where in Newton Falls, you would sit in the living room or on the patio and cars going by and people going by that you could chit chat with. So the whole thing was quite an adjustment. Not just loosing the house but making the choice of relocating was quite an adjustment

S Well, I want to thank you for doing the interview. I appreciate it.

N You are welcome.

End of Interview