"Expansion of the Citizenship Role": Altruistic Behaviors of Buffalo Creek Residents Following the Flood

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Julia Ann Lewis

Marshall University

Huntington, West Virginia

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as meeting the research requirements for the master's degree.

Advisor Kenneth Ambrose
Kenneth Ambrose, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology/Anthropology

Committee Member Lynda Ann Ewen
Lynda Ann Ewen, Ph.D.

Committee Member Richard Garnett
Richard Garnett, Ph.D.

Leonard Deutsch
Leonard Deutsch, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate College

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Abstract

"Expansion of the Citizenship Role": Altruistic Behaviors

of Buffalo Creek Residents Following the Flood

The residents of Buffalo Creek Hollow engaged in a variety of helping behaviors following a 1972 flood. In *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood,* Kai Erikson (1976) described these residents as being numbed and apathetic, doing nothing to help themselves or anyone else. They were stuck in the initial stages of Wallace's "disaster syndrome" and could not help the people around them. Dynes (1974), Dynes and Quarantelli (1972), and Barton (1969), on the other hand, wrote that people in disasters tend to act in an altruistic manner, helping victims whenever they can. Dynes (1974) and Barton (1969) described characteristics of disasters and communities that encouraged such altruistic behaviors. On Buffalo Creek, the disaster impact was sudden and socially random, producing different "types" of victims. The communities along the creek had a high degree of social integration. Residents were able to identify with victims and feel sympathetic toward them. These factors encouraged the "expansion of the citizenship role" causing residents to feel an obligation to help victims and contribute to the good of the community. Examples of specific helping behaviors among Buffalo Creek residents following the flood were extricating trapped individuals, providing first aid to the injured, providing food and shelter, providing clothes to those without, gathering or covering bodies, and clearing debris from roads. Therefore, Erikson's thesis was simplistic.

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Introduction

At the end of the first semester I took graduate courses in sociology, Dr. Lynda Ann Ewen described a summer project in which students of various disciplines would be researching the Buffalo Creek flood. Marshall University had just received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the Humanities to establish the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia. "Community Responses and Resistance: Buffalo Creek Beyond Erikson" was to be the center's first research endeavor. That summer I enrolled in an independent study course dealing with the above topic. This project dealt with the depiction of the Buffalo Creek flood in West Virginia Studies textbooks (Lewis 1997). Dr. Ewen also encouraged students to read various depositions from the Dennis Prince et al. versus The Pittston Company lawsuit in which survivors sued the coal company that had built the failed dam. While fascinating to read, I could only read a limited number of the depositions that semester.

One of my job responsibilities as a graduate assistant at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia was to create a database of the depositions. Although two other graduate assistants had previously worked on this project, the project was far from completion. The depositions, along with an index of names and volume numbers, had been donated to Marshall University's Special Collections Department in the James E. Morrow Library in October of 1981 but had never been accessed for research until Dr. Ewen began her research on the Buffalo Creek disaster. While the accompanying index was helpful, the only information it

provided was a name and a volume number.[1] Our goal was to create a database that would not only give a volume number and name for each deposition, but also the plaintiff's birthdate, sex, occupation, level of education, marital status, number of children, military service, and town of residence at the time of the flood, along with the date the deposition was taken, what troubles or concerns the plaintiff had or was having, lost persons or belongings, and who, if anyone, had warned him or her that the floodwaters were approaching.

One requirement of the independent study course was to read *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* by Kai T. Erikson (1976). While I had disagreed with parts of his description of Appalachian culture and people, I accepted his depiction of what happened during and after the flood. After reading more depositions, I reread Erikson's book and was surprised by his description of how residents behaved after the flood.

> When the last of the black water finally melted into the Guyandotte, an aching silence fell over the hollow. The survivors were huddled together all over the hillsides, numb with shock, afraid to move. "We were like a litter of puppies," said one, "wet and cold with no place to go" (Erikson 1976:41).
>
> But soon people began to drift around in slow dazed circles, looking for missing relatives, seeking shelter, picking through the damaged stores for food and blankets and shoes, and trying to comprehend the sheer enormity of what had happened (Ibid.:41).
>
> In the upper half of the valley, however, where the devastation had been almost complete, survivors had no choice but to remain on the hillsides, crowding around campfires or wandering disconsolately among the ruins (Ibid.:42).
>
> As morning turned to afternoon and the winter light faded early, most

---

[1] There are more than five-hundred fifty-two plaintiff depositions. Although the volume numbers go up to five hundred fifty-two, some plaintiffs had two depositions and these volumes are labeled, for example, Vol. 367 and 367 A.

people did nothing at all (Ibid.:42).

Later in the book, Erikson described his survey of disaster literature in which he found similarities among the studies. Disaster victims are numbed and shocked at first, but then they experience "a sudden and logically inexplicable wave of good feeling" and reach out to help rescue workers and other disaster victims (Ibid.:200). Erikson (1976), however, maintained the residents of Buffalo Creek behaved in a different manner:

> I mention all of this because nothing of the sort seems to have occurred on Buffalo Creek, even for a moment, and this raises a number of important issues. On the more general level, it depends upon the continuance of most of the larger community, so that survivors, digging out from under the masses of debris, can discover that most of the body is still intact and is mobilizing its remaining resources to dress the wound on its flank. In Buffalo Creek this was simply not the case. Most of the work of rescue was done by outsiders following plans and initiatives issued from distant headquarters. They were strangers, many of them in uniform, and they cleaned up the wreckage without consulting the owners, sealed off the residents from their own homes, and generally acted more like an army of occupation than a local disaster team. (P. 201)

While being "shocked" and "numbed" seemed like reasonable reactions to the flood, this was not exactly what had been stated in the depositions. Plaintiffs did describe feelings of shock, numbness, and fear, but plaintiffs who experienced these feelings also described how they helped others or were helped by other Buffalo Creek residents. Some victims did not receive outside assistance until almost two days after the flood. Their needs had to be met by people who were in the hollow.

Disaster research has shown that victims are not typically immobilized by shock and tend to take initiative and help themselves and others, even before outside rescue organizations have reached the impact area (Dynes and Quarantelli 1972). Dynes (1974) also wrote that disasters

result in an "expansion of the citizenship role" where norms emerge almost mandating that citizens do whatever they can to help victims and the community as a whole. "Outbreaks" of situational altruism follow disasters, and while these "outbreaks" are predictable, they are conventionally viewed as being out of the ordinary (Dynes 1994). Paralyzing shock that immobilizes large numbers of disaster victims was described as a "disaster myth" by Dynes and Quarantelli (1972). Acting upon their desire to help victims of the flood, Buffalo Creek residents behaved more like "typical" disaster victims instead of the mass of numbed, immobilized victims described by Erikson (1976).

In my discussion of altruistic behaviors, I have used Dynes and Quarantelli's (1980) definition of helping behaviors, "actions that have as their purpose improving the status of disaster victims and that are not performed as part of a normal occupational role in an everyday social-organizational context" (p. 343). The Buffalo Creek residents who were in the hollow during and following the flood did engage in actions that improved the status of disaster victims. Some acts were dramatic, such as risking one's own life to pull another person out of the floodwaters. Others were less dramatic, such as giving a victim dry clothes or a warm cup of coffee. These acts, which were not isolated acts, were attempts to improve the status of victims.

Erikson (1976) was correct when he recorded that outsiders did most of the cleanup work and did not consult with residents on many cleanup decisions. Outside relief agencies provided help and supplies that Buffalo Creek residents could not obtain for themselves. But this does not mean that the Buffalo Creek residents were completely helpless and apathetic after the flood. They did not wait around, doing nothing, until outside organizations reached them. Assistance provided by friends and relatives is less noticed and less reported than assistance provided by

formal agencies (Quarantelli 1999b).

These conclusions about the post-flood behavior of the Buffalo Creek residents were based on the depositions I read from the Dennis Prince et al. versus The Pittston Company lawsuit. Erikson quoted from these depositions throughout his book, and these documents were "the main source of information for all of my [Erikson's] conclusions" (Ms 81 A, Bk 33 1977:97).

Using these depositions presented a number of problems. While these were the same documents Erikson utilized, using these depositions to make judgements about victims' behavior was not an ideal situation. The deposition process has been described more thoroughly in the next chapter. Depositions are conducted by and for attorneys, not social scientists trying to test a hypothesis. The attorneys' ultimate goals in this case were either to prevent payment of or reduce the amount of money their clients would have to pay in damages (Pittston's attorneys) or to collect as much money as possible in damages for their clients (the plaintiffs' attorneys). This influenced what questions were asked and what information plaintiffs disclosed and did not disclose during their depositions (Ewen 1998; Ewen and Lewis 1999). As Dynes noted in his review of Erikson's book: "Questions designed for effective legal action (the suit was settled for $13.5 million) may not be the ones sociologists might frame" (1978:722).

Also the plaintiffs are not representative of the entire population of Buffalo Creek. They were residents who suffered damages and chose to become involved in a class action lawsuit against the Pittston Company.

Despite these shortcomings, there was still a great deal of useful information contained in these depositions. If the attorneys had asked questions such as "Did you in any way engage in helping others during or following the flood?" and asked plaintiffs to explain their answers, it

would have been helpful to this study. The attorneys' questions, however, revealed useful information. Much information about these helping activities was derived from some of the more open-ended questions asked during the depositions such as "What do you remember about the flood itself, Peggy?" (Ms 81, Vol 272 1973:10) or "Tell me about your involvement in the flood?" (Ms 81, Vol 330 1973:8). While victims described what happened during and after the flood, they revealed information about how they helped, were helped, or observed other Buffalo Creek residents helping others. These sections of the depositions were the basis of my thesis. There were additional stories about residents helping flood victims in Deitz and Mowery's (1992) *Buffalo Creek: Valley of Death,* a book of interviews with people involved in the flood.

In the introduction to *Everything In Its Path,* Erikson (1976) remarked that he did not "give" words to individuals or "tidy up" their verbal remarks when he quoted from their depositions. But Erikson did not always quote directly from their depositions.

> For the record, then: the words represented in this book as having been spoken (or occasionally written) by the people of Buffalo Creek are reproduced here in their original form, the sole exception being that I have sometimes removed material from longer passages in an effort to condense them, and have sometimes strung sentences together that were really uttered at different times in the original interview (P. 15).

There were instances where words placed in the same paragraph by Erikson were spoken pages apart and were responses to different questions. Also, Erikson did not include the questions asked by the attorneys. The reader does not know what kind of question the plaintiff is answering in his or her response. Dynes (1978) commented on this in his review of *Everything In Its Path.* Because of these problems, I chose to quote directly from the depositions, word for word, sometimes, typo for typo. The words of the plaintiffs do not flow as smoothly as they do in

Erikson's book and they may be choppy at times. Sometimes plaintiffs or lawyers interject statements that deviate from what I considered to be the main point of the passage. I am, however, willing to sacrifice the smooth flow of words in order to preserve the context in which they were spoken.

It should be noted that just because Buffalo Creek residents engaged in helping others, it does not in any way diminish their suffering. Even in the worst disasters, victims compare themselves to others and feel somewhat fortunate because things could have been worse. Then they try to help those victims who have been less fortunate (Barton 1969; Dynes and Quarantelli 1972; Dynes 1974). But this does not mean that it hurts any less to lose loved ones or to lose a home and everything in it. Mixed in with these stories of helpfulness were stories of devastating loss. But that is one of the things that made these stories even more amazing. Even when Buffalo Creek residents had suffered devastating losses, many of them tried to relieve the suffering of others. Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) wrote, "The actual lesson of human behavior in disasters is to see the tremendous resilience of individuals under conditions of great adversity, their amazing capacity to cope and innovate, and the persistence and effectiveness of old and new forms of social organization" (p. 22).

Chapter One: The Buffalo Creek Flood and the Lawsuit that Followed

Buffalo Creek is located in Logan County, in the southern coal fields of West Virginia. The hollow is about seventeen miles long. A single two-lane road winds its way up the hollow. It starts in the largest town along Buffalo Creek, Man, and ends in a dirt road. Traveling back down the road, from the head of the hollow to where Buffalo Creek empties into the Guyandotte River, there are seventeen towns: Saunders, Pardee, Lorado, Craneco, Lundale, Stowe, Crites, Latrobe, Robinette, Amherstdale, Becco, Fanco, Braeholm, Accoville, Crown, Kistler, and Man. A number of forks flow into Buffalo Creek, creating several smaller hollows such as Proctor Hollow and Davy Hollow that have roads too, most of which end abruptly into the side of the mountain. Buffalo Creek Hollow is not an urban area. In places, there seems to be just enough room to squeeze in a creek, a railroad track, a road, and a few houses between the two mountains. Along the road, there are houses, trailers, churches, schools, and occasional stores. There are also coal tipples, some in disrepair, others still operating.

Driving through Buffalo Creek Hollow, it is difficult to imagine the horrors faced by its residents on February 26, 1972 when a "dam" built of coal wastes failed and sent a wall of black water and debris rushing down the hollow. The photographs of towns in ruin look very different from the towns today. In a photograph by Tom Hindman, which accompanied a 1999 *Charleston Daily Mail* article, even the dam site looks like a peaceful pond surrounded by cattails (Stirewalt 1999), very different from the mountains of sludge shown in postdisaster photographs of the dams (photographs in Erikson 1976; Deitz and Mowery 1992)

Lorado Coal Company first dumped slate and other mine wastes into Middle Fork in

1947. The water used to wash the coal was dumped directly into Buffalo Creek (Nugent 1973:27; Stern 1976:29-30). As the smoldering gob pile grew, residents who lived in narrow Middle Fork Hollow were forced to move elsewhere (Nugent 1973:27). When state environmental laws restricted the dumping of the filthy water into streams, a dam was started on Middle Fork in early 1960 (Stern 1976:30; Erikson 1976:26). This dam accomplished two functions for Lorado Coal: it provided a place where coal wastes could be dumped and a place where dirty water could be stored and reused without it flowing into Buffalo Creek. The solids in the water settled to the bottom of the dam so the water that seeped out of the dam was cleaner than the water that was being pumped into it. This first dam (Dam 1) was "only a small dike built at the upper end of the existing refuse pile" with a height of six to eight feet and a width of one hundred feet (Stern 1976:30).

As Dam 1 silted up, a second dam was built upstream from it. In 1967, Buffalo Mining Company (which had bought Lorado Coal) started the second, larger dam which would measure 25 feet high, 25 feet long, and 450 feet wide (Ibid.:30-31). In March 1967, Dam 1 failed and sent water down Middle Fork and into Buffalo Creek Hollow. Maggie Rhodes, a Saunders resident remembered:

> I heard someone scream. I ran to the porch. The creek was to its banks and was roaring. It was making so much noise I could not understand what the person was hollering so I hollered back. The only word I heard the person hollering was the word 'dam'(Ibid.:157).

She and her children ran for higher ground. The "fierce" looking water was waist-deep in front of her house and so high that it flowed over a highway bridge (Ibid.:156-157). Despite this dam failure and condemnation from a West Virginia Department of Natural Resources inspector, Dam

2 and eventually Dam 3 were constructed in the same manner (Ibid.:159-161).

Dam 2 also silted up so Buffalo Mining Company (which became a subsidiary of the Pittston Company in 1970) began the construction of the largest of the three dams in 1968. In February 1971, one year before Dam 3 failed catastrophically, one-third to one-half of the face of Dam 3 slumped into Dam 2, but Dam 2 halted the water (Ibid.:161, West Virginia Library Commission n.d.). Despite this setback, Dam 3 continued to grow. In the winter of 1972, five underground mines, two auger mines, and one strip mine emptied about one thousand tons of mine wastes into the Middle Fork dams each day (Erikson 1976:25). Dam 3 had grown to almost sixty feet in height, 400 to 500 feet long, and extended 450 to 600 feet across Middle Fork Hollow (Stern 1976:31). Nugent (1973:28, 31) reported about a half of a mile of water was held behind Dam 3, and people ran motorboats on the "lake."

All three dams were built in the same manner. No engineers had been consulted to design the dams. No calculations had been made, including calculations that would have predicted how much water would flow into the ponds behind the dams (Stern 1976:161). Bethell and McAteer (1972) described the construction of Dam 3:

> Again, no engineering was involved - just truckloads of mine waste, a bulldozer to push them around and *presto!* a dam grew across the hollow, built of nothing but junk, standing on a foundation of slime and silt and dead trees. The trees were there because nobody had bothered to cut them down. It was simpler and faster just to dump on top of them (P. 6-7).

Although the residents of Buffalo Creek generally called these structures "dams," Fred Walker, a civil engineer who worked for the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, wrote in a report that it was inappropriate to refer to these structures as "dams." Nugent (1973) quoted from Walker's report which was commissioned by the Department of the Interior:

> Locally these barriers are called 'dams' but to me this is unacceptable nomenclature. These structures were created by persons completely unfamiliar with dam design, construction, and materials, and by construction methods that are completely unacceptable to engineers specializing in dam design. Although the state of West Virginia requires permits, approval of plans, and inspection during construction for impoundments more than ten feet deep, I was unable to find out that such requirements had ever been complied with (P. 164).

An inspector from the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources testified that he had not only written in his reports, but had also told representatives of the Buffalo Mining Company, that Dam 3 needed an emergency spillway before the dam had failed (Stern 1976:161). According to an article on the West Virginia Library Commission's website (n.d.), the Pittston Company had more than 5,000 safety citations in its mines nationally in 1971. Only $275 of the $1.3 million in fines was paid after the company challenged the violations (Ibid.).

The days leading up to Saturday, February 26, 1972 had been rainy. During the three days before the flood, 3.72 inches of rain had fallen on Buffalo Creek (Nugent 1973:159-160; Stern 1976:254). While this was enough rain to cause flash flood warnings to be issued in a dozen counties, this amount of rain could be expected to fall at least once every two years in southwestern West Virginia (Nugent 1973:19, 160).

At around 8:00 a.m. on February 26, 1972, Dam 3 collapsed sending its black water and sludge onto Dams 2 and 1. These smaller dams could not hold all of it and also collapsed. James Bartley almost drove into the path of the water and sludge.

Q And where were you when the flood happened?
A About 150 feet above where it would come out.
Q And did you see it go out, the water go out?
A Yes, after the smoke died down.
Q Was there smoke before the water went out?
A Yes, sir.
Q Do you know what caused the smoke?

A Yes, sir.
Q What was the cause of the smoke?
A It was fire. It was burning and when the water hit the fire it shot right through the air about 200 feet high, right through the air.
Q The gob pile was burning, is that - -
A Yes.
Q And when the water hit the burning gob pile there was an explosion?
A Yes, sir, it shot through the air. One man was injured in front of me.
Q Just exactly where were you when the dam went out?
A I was coming right into it. I was going right down the road into it (Ms 81, Vol 6 1973:104-105).

The wall of water that tore through Saunders (the closest town to the dams) was thirty to forty feet tall from the creek bed, fifteen to twenty feet high from the flood plain (Erikson 1976:29) and traveled at an estimated speed of 20 feet per second from Saunders downstream to the next town, Pardee (Ward 1997). People in Saunders had no place to go except up the mountainsides. The town of Saunders suffered more destruction than any other town along Buffalo Creek.

> The wave demolished Saunders entirely. It did not crush the village into mounds of rubble, but carried everything away with it - houses, cars, trailers, a church whose white spire had pointed to the slag pile for years - and scraped the ground as cleanly as if a thousand bulldozers had been at work (Erikson 1976:29).

James Bartley testified about the disappearance of the entire town of Saunders:

Q You said a while ago, when you were testifying earlier, that when you went back down there again, after you turned around to go back, you said after the smoke had cleared you couldn't see anything.
A I couldn't see nothing.
Q Now what would you have seen before the flood?
A Houses and churches and all the houses.
Q You would have seen Saunders?
A Yes, I would have seen the whole of Saunders sittin' there.
Q And now you couldn't see Saunders?
A I couldn't see Saunders.
Q Why couldn't you see Saunders?
A It was all washed off. All you could see was a sludge pond where the

> sludge came down and filled up. Dirt was in places fifteen or twenty feet, some of it (Ms 81, Vol 6 1973:150-151).

The black water continued its destructive path down Buffalo Creek Hollow but now it carried people, houses, cars, and anything else that happened to be in the way. It swept through the towns of Pardee, Lorado, Craneco, Lundale, Stowe, Crites, Latrobe, Robinette, Amherstdale, Becco, Fanco, Braeholm, Accoville, Crown, Kistler, and Man. Although the wall of water became smaller and slower as the hollow widened and became less steep, it picked up more and more debris and moved erratically as bridges and other debris would temporarily slow it. Frightened people ran up the mountainsides or drove up several smaller hollows that branched off from the larger Buffalo Creek Hollow. Some people could not escape and were caught in the floodwaters but somehow managed to survive.

While some of the Buffalo Creek residents had heard about the dam's precarious condition the night before the flood, not everyone along Buffalo Creek Hollow had this knowledge. Some people had heard that the dams were going to break for years and considered these warnings to be another incident of "crying wolf." Buffalo Creek residents had different levels of familiarity with the dams. The men who worked on or around the dams were quite familiar with them. Others knew about the dams from seeing them on hunting trips, fishing out of them, or boating on the largest one. One man claimed that he drank out of one of the dams (Ms 81, Vol 29 1973). Leroy Lambert and Kenneth Osborne could see the dams from their homes (Ms 81, Vol 343 1973, Ms 81, Vol 193 1973). Other people who lived along Buffalo Creek did not even know the dams existed until the flood happened (Ms 81, Vol 24 1973; Ms 81, Vol 167 1973; Ms 81, Vol 522 1974; Ms 81, Vol 523 1974).

The warnings people received also varied. For many, February 26, 1972 started as a

normal Saturday morning. The flood interrupted breakfasts, sleeping late, working in the mines, or as Wayne Walls, Jr. remembered, interrupted *Deputy Dog* (Ms 81, Vol 226 1973). Many people remembered drivers honking their horns as warnings when they drove by. Many, like James Hagood of Braeholm, warned others about the approaching flood after they had been warned:

> As we were going down the road we managed to get to Kistler. They had a road block where they were cleaning debris off of the road. And a person from Amherst Coal Company truck came back to me and said he had just heard over his two-way radio that the dam had burst and we immediately turned around and went back to Braeholm. We thought we would - - the post office was just above us and so my wife went in to the post office and she related the same message to the postmistress and she came out and asked me, she said, "I don't believe Mrs. Jordan believes me. You'd better go in."
>
> Meantime, my wife went down to the Jordans house. We lived in the same community there at Braeholm, and upon going down to the Jordans house she awakened the father, who is blind. He just had an accident, I think it was, and had metal in one eye and was partially blind. He had lost the sight of the other eye and that is - - and got his two sons up. Both of them taught at the junior high and he managed to get them out.
>
> And we went to our neighbor's house and practically forced them to leave. We put blankets and water and some food in the car and our neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Robertson, in the car, and then we drove up on the hill (Ms 81, Vol 300 1973:21-22).

Ruth Tomblin was warned about the flood when she overheard a conversation on a party line (Nugent 1973:115). John Glend first found out about the flood when a brick hit him on the head and woke him from his sleep (Ms 81, Vol 545 1974). The warning was so short for some people that they were forced to run out into the cold in their nightclothes. At least one person ran out of his house naked (Ms 81, Vol 221 1973). Official warnings were scant. Nugent (1973) described the scenario in great detail in the first two chapters of *Death at Buffalo Creek: The 1972 West Virginia Flood Disaster.* Stern (1976) also described the situation in chapter thirty of his book.

A small group of Saunders residents who had heard rumors about the dam's precarious condition evacuated their homes the night before the flood and took shelter in the Lorado schoolhouse. The school was located about three miles downstream from Saunders. Maxine Adkins, who was staying in the Lorado schoolhouse, called the sheriff's department at about 3:30 on the morning of the flood and told sheriff to contact the National Guard to evacuate people. Two deputies were dispatched to warn people while the night shift jailer tried (unsuccessfully for a while) to call the National Guard. On their way to warn people, however, Steve Dasovich, vice-president of Buffalo Mining Company, told the deputies they did not need to warn people because the dam was not going to fail. One deputy left the scene and quit warning people while the other deputy warned people in a random, "half-hearted" manner (Nugent 1973:54). Some people in the lower end of the hollow found out about the approaching flood over the radio. Bill Becker of WVOW radio warned people to get out of low-lying areas because the dams had broken, but by this time the wall of water and debris had already reached Lundale (Ibid.:81).

It took the water three hours to travel the seventeen miles from Middle Fork to the mouth of Buffalo Creek Hollow. During these three hours, 125 men, women, children, and infants were killed.[1] Seven victims have never been found. The bodies were covered in black muck and often badly mutilated. Some described the bodies as swollen and others looked like they had been sandblasted by the corrosive black waters. While most of the bodies were found in the Buffalo Creek area, a few bodies floated down the Guyandotte River. The body of a woman from

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[1]This one-hundred twenty-five victims only includes people who died during the flood or shortly after as a result of their injuries. The death toll would be higher if additional people were counted such as the unborn children of the pregnant women who were killed in the flood, miscarriages, people who had heart attacks soon after the flood, and elderly people whose health steadily deteriorated after the flood.

Lundale was found 70 miles down the river in Salt Rock, West Virginia (Deitz and Mowery 1992:92). According to Nugent (1973:146) an estimated 1,000 people suffered physical injuries. Half the homes between Saunders and Man were rendered uninhabitable leaving about 4,000 people homeless. Six hundred automobiles were ruined, and ten highway and railroad bridges were destroyed (Ibid.:146).

After the flood, Buffalo Creek residents did not aimlessly wander around, too shocked and numbed to do anything constructive. They behaved like "typical" disaster victims and engaged in activities to help their families, friends, and the community as a whole. These activities have been described in greater detail in the fourth chapter. "Outside" help arrived in different parts of the hollow at different times. People who lived near the mouth of the hollow, especially in Man, were in contact with authorities almost immediately, while others farther up the hollow had to wait longer.

Erikson (1976) wrote that within hours after the disaster, the National Guard had sealed off the area. Doug Williamson, one of the first National Guardsmen in the area, remembered he was in Man when he heard the dam had broken but had to wait until about 11:00 a.m. when the water had gone down before he could travel up the hollow (Deitz and Mowery 1992:203). Many organizations provided aid to victims and helped clean up Buffalo Creek Hollow. The Red Cross, the Mennonites, the Salvation Army, the State Police, the National Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other organizations along with numerous "ordinary citizens" were involved in the effort. Some of the local coal companies provided equipment and workers to help with the cleanup. Pittston Coal Company helicopters took some of the injured out of the most isolated sections of the hollow.

Despite the help they provided, there was some conflict between residents and this "army of occupation" (Erikson 1976:201). Estella Hampton, a Kistler resident, took refuge from the floodwaters by leaving Buffalo Creek Hollow and driving to the Cliffside Drive-In which was located north of Man (Ms 81, Vol 303 1974). When she tried to get back to her home that evening, "those men - - National Guards or policemen" made her turn her car around and refused to let her to drive up the hollow (Ibid.:44). Several residents who were essentially "locked out" of the hollow went around the roadblocks by climbing over the mountains. Woodrow Chamblee had hitchhiked from Florida to Man after learning of the flood but was blocked from entering the hollow. "Then I started up Buffalo Creek and I got to Man and they stopped me in Man and told me I could not go up the creek. I backtracked and went up the side of the mountain and went up the creek on my own" (Ms 81, Vol 96 1973:19). One mother complained the Red Cross told her that she and her baby was not entitled to any food because they were not staying in a shelter that had been set up in a school. The Salvation Army gave her food, and the Red Cross eventually did, too, after changing their rules (Ms 81, Vol 262 1973). Others, like Josephine Adkins, had better experiences with relief agencies and praised their work. "The Red Cross and the Salvation Army were so helpful in providing food, shelter and clothing for all the Buffalo Creek residents. They were wonderful. They'll never know how much all the people here appreciated their help" (Deitz and Mowery 1992:14-15). The one organization that received more praise than any other was the Mennonites who refused payment for their work and only accepted donations for their organization. Ruth Morris remembered,

> God love their hearts, the Mennonites. I don't know where they came from, but when they all came here to help out, they did a wonderful job and the people of Buffalo Creek will always be grateful to them. We'll never forget them for all they did for us. They had hearts of gold. They gave from their heart and soul. Even

their women were on top of the houses putting roofs on (Ibid.:143).

Not everyone who lost a home along Buffalo Creek was able to rebuild in the same location. Melvin and Emma Workman worked to clean up their house during the weeks following the flood, but it was torn down anyway (Ms 81, Vol 197 1973; Ms 81, Vol 198 1973). Other residents also experienced this frustrating situation. Several residents reported they were told if their houses were not demolished immediately, they would have to pay for someone else to demolish them. After the flood, the state decided to act on plans to build a proposed super highway through Buffalo Creek Hollow into Raleigh County (West Virginia Library Commission n.d.). Because the path of the proposed highway ran through a number of former homesites, many residents discovered they could not rebuild their homes where they used to be and were unable to move back to the towns in which they had lived for years. This created a shortage of land available for rebuilding homes. Twenty-eight years after the flood, the proposed super highway has never been built.

In months following the disaster, the Department of Housing and Urban Development had established trailer camps where the homeless could live rent-free. Erikson (1976) beautifully described the residents' unhappiness with the trailers. Some of the complaints about the trailers were that they were noisy, confining, too close together, hot in the summer, moldy, leaked, fell apart, had bugs, and were furnished with uncomfortable beds and defective ovens. The trailers amplified the sounds of rain, which was especially distressing since many residents had developed a fear of rain and storms. Large families who used to live in houses were split up into different trailers. There was also little privacy. Trailers were assigned on a "first-come-first-serve" basis with no regard to previous residential patterns. People found themselves living among strangers.

Some people, like John Glend, did not criticize the trailers.

> Q How do you like the trailer?
> A I like it all right. It's a million times better than nothing.
> Q Do you like it as well as your home?
> A No, siree, but it's a million times better than nothing. No, I had a real nice home, a beautiful home, a wonderful home, but it's gone and the trailer is mighty nice (Ms 81, Vol 545 1974:73).

Some of the residents formed the Buffalo Creek Citizens Committee within two weeks of the disaster (Stern 1976). Headed by Charlie Cowen, the committee hired the Washington law firm of Arnold and Porter to sue Pittston for property damages, physical injuries, and mental suffering.[2] Some residents who had settled their claims for property damage (and sometimes physical injuries) joined the Dennis Prince et al. versus The Pittston Company lawsuit so they could collect for physical injuries and mental suffering. Although Pittston did not assume fault for the flood, the company did set up three claims offices where flood victims could make settlements releasing Pittston from further liability for property losses and/or physical injuries (Ibid.). Jenny Compton remembered that her brother settled for $500 for the loss of a new house and two cars because ". . . he said he was just too tired to fight anymore" (Deitz and Mowery 1992:76). Residents reported being treated badly by the attorneys representing the coal company. Larry Mosley explained why he did not file any claims at the Buffalo Mining Company's claims offices:

> Q Did you, at any time, make a claim against Buffalo Mining Company?
> A No.
> Q Why not?
> A Well, everybody that went down there told me the attorney that they had working for them didn't bother to - - shouldn't bother to

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[2]The story of this lawsuit (which is the source of the depositions) was told in Gerald Stern's 1976 book *The Buffalo Creek Disaster.* Gerald Stern was one of the attorneys who represented the plaintiffs.

go down and talk to them.

Q I didn't understand that. Everybody told you what?

A Everybody that went down there told me how he was. He tried to tell you you didn't have nothing and didn't need nothing and I didn't - - I just didn't bother to fool with it.

Q Are you speaking about the attorney who represented Buffalo Mining Company?

A Buffalo Mining Company. Staker, I believe, is his name.

Q And you understood that he was doing what?

A Just trying to be hard to get along with and wasn't going to pay people for what they had. I just didn't bother to fool with it (Ms 81, Vol 106 1973:11-12).

Irene Berry testified that one reason she remained in Ohio after the flood was that she was afraid she would sign the wrong papers (Ms 81, Vol 532 1974). The experience of dealing with these legal matters must have been intimidating, especially for people who had very little education. One man admitted that he was unable to read the settlement he had signed for his house and furniture.

More than 600 plaintiffs were involved in this lawsuit. Gleser, Green, and Winget (1981:23-26) calculated the following statistics about the plaintiff group. There were 178 families living in Buffalo Creek Hollow, and most of these families were related. There were 320 females and 291 males. Two hundred seven children ages 2 to 16 and 23 children less than 2 years of age were included in the plaintiff group. Forty-two plaintiffs were over the age of 60. Sixty-five plaintiffs lived in the upper part of the hollow, from Stowe to Saunders. Fifty-six lived in the middle section from Crites through Amherstdale, and 51 lived toward the mouth of the hollow from Braeholm through Man. The mean grade level of education for adults over the age of 16 was 8.7 for males and 9.5 for females. About 41% of the group had an eighth grade education or less. Most of the men worked or had worked in coal mines. Twenty-four point four percent of the men had retired because of disability or age. The racial composition of the group was not

representative of the entire Buffalo Creek population. Twenty-one percent of the plaintiff group was black while approximately 10% of Buffalo Creek's population was black.

But not everyone who suffered losses from the flood was involved in this lawsuit. Although there were more than 600 plaintiffs, thousands of people were left homeless, and there were others who returned to damaged houses. Some of the people that Nugent (1973) interviewed were not involved in the lawsuit. Robert Albright, who lost his wife and a son and almost lost his infant son, felt that too many people, including himself and other miners, were responsible for the disaster. "There wouldn't be a jail big enough to hold all of 'em that's responsible" (Ibid.:189). Another man who had also lost his wife was content to let God deal with those responsible for the disaster:

> "Everybody's gonna be judged," said Oldie Blankenship of Lorado, and "and [*sic*] the guilty's gonna be punished. There's no use anybody trying to take re-vengeance against something like this, because you can't better it no way. The Lord said, 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay thee.' If it was their carelessness that killed the people, then they're gonna have to stand responsible for it with the Lord. No sir, I'm not gonna sue anybody." (Ibid.:186).

Participating in the lawsuit was not easy. Plaintiffs were examined by doctors and psychologists hired by Pittston and hired by their own attorneys. Most of the depositions were taken in the Kanawha Valley Building in Charleston, West Virginia.[3] For some plaintiffs, it was their first trip to Charleston. Stern (1974) described how uncomfortable some of them were in West Virginia's capital city:

> These depositions were even more difficult for the plaintiffs. Many of them felt uneasy going to Charleston to spend the night at a hotel. Some didn't

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[3]A few depositions were taken in Buffalo Mining Company's offices in Lyburn, West Virginia.

> feel that they dressed right or looked right. Often they would not leave their rooms to go out to a restaurant for dinner. They'd order up hamburgers or something else from room service (P. 174).

Besides dealing with an unfamiliar environment, plaintiffs had to answer very personal questions. One young girl found the whole process so intimidating that she did not speak; rather, she put her head down, covered her face, and cried without even taking the oath (Ms 81, Vol 212 1973; Ewen and Lewis 1999). Plaintiffs were asked to recall what happened to them and what they saw during and after the flood. Many people cried during their depositions.

Since some of the plaintiffs were making claims for losing personal property and losing relatives, they were asked to put "values" on these items or people (Ewen and Lewis 1999). For example, Samuel Mullins was a veteran who had lost his Purple Heart, battle stars, and ribbons was asked the following questions: "You have placed here a damage claim for $500 under Column G for the Purple Heart, two or three battle stars, and the ribbons, is that correct?" "These would have no value to anyone other than you, would they?" "That would be a sentimental evaluation." "These can be purchased, can they not, the ribbons and the Purple Heart, in any Army-Navy store, or if you write to the Army in Washington, they will check your record and return those to you if they have been lost or destroyed, won't they?" (Ms 81, Vol 189 1972 [*sic*]:26).[4] Carolyn Looney was asked this question about her mother who had been killed in the flood: "At the time of the flood, Mrs. Looney, did Wanda Trent contribute in any way to the life of you and your husband or your daughter" (Ms 81, Vol 92 1973:48).

Children were asked questions they did not understand or simply could not answer. A

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[4]The date on the deposition is "1972," but the depositions had not even begun by that date. It was most likely in 1973 as the previous and subsequent volume numbers indicate.

first grade boy who was deposed in September of 1973 thought that the flood had happened the previous week (Ms 81, Vol 271 1973:14). William Gannon II was a fifth grader who lost his toys, clothes, and a radio when his home was destroyed. He was asked the following question about the items he had lost: "Do you know what those articles or items were worth? That is, their fair market value between a willing seller and a willing buyer on February 26, 1972?" (Ms 81, Vol 282 1973:11) Sometimes children gave unexpected answers. During one deposition, a girl who had just turned ten was asked, "Do you know of any troubles or complaints which you have that you blame on the flood?" Usually people answered this question with complaints of physical injury, sleeplessness, nervousness, or a variety of other complaints, but this fifth-grader answered, "Yes. Losing my house and my brother and my toys and my bicycle" (Ms 81, Vol 324 1973:9).

Since some of the plaintiffs were suing for medical problems, they had to answer very personal questions about their health. Along with such topics as sleeplessness, nightmares, nervousness, depression, ulcers, hypertension, weight gain or loss, back injuries, diabetes, and black lung, plaintiffs also answered questions about bowel movements, lack of sexual desire, impotence, ejaculation, miscarriages, menstrual periods, and vaginal discharges. Women often had to discuss these topics in front of male attorneys. The questions were very callous at times. One woman was asked if she had induced a miscarriage she had had since the flood. Another man was asked, "I believe there is a diagnosis made of inherited or congenital syphilis in 1940, is that right?"[5] Since some plaintiffs had complained of losing their desire to have sex since the flood, the attorneys pried into the most personal parts of the plaintiffs' lives. One man who complained

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[5]The name and volume number for this deposition and some of the other depositions from which I have quoted will not be provided since such disclosures could cause embarrassment for these individuals or their families.

of losing his desire for sex with his wife was asked, "Have you had any other women since the flood?" When he indicated that he had, the attorney probed further. "How many times?" "How many different women?" "Did you ever have sexual intercourse with other women before the flood, say within the last two or three years before the flood?" "How long have you been having intercourse with her?" "Does your wife know about this?" "Is it generally known in the community about your relationship with _____?" After he established that an affair had been and was still taking place, the attorney also wanted to know the woman's name, marital status, where she lived, and whether or not she was a plaintiff in the same lawsuit. During this questioning he also uncovered the fact that the plaintiff was not only having sexual difficulties with his wife, but with his girlfriend, too (Ewen and Lewis 1999).

Not all of the depositions, however, were outright confrontational. During one deposition, the attorney representing Pittston almost seemed to comfort one of the plaintiffs.

> BY MR. KELLY:
> Q Mrs. Hagood, you aren't the first and you won't be the last lady or man or child who cries in this room.
> A I tried so hard not to.
> Q Whether you believe it or not, we are not cynical in this office and we keep a supply of Kleenex on hand because it happens and nobody intends to, at least nobody I have seen yet (Ms 81, Vol 301 1973:15).

Dennis Prince, for whom the lawsuit was named, was caught in the floodwaters with his wife. Stern tape-recorded Prince's moving narrative in which he described his unsuccessful attempts to rescue his wife (Stern 1976:105-112). Unlike most of the other plaintiffs, he was not asked to describe the upsetting events that happened during the flood (Ms 81, Vol 367 1973; Ms 81, Vol 367A 1974). Stern's description of a request from Pittston's counsel's could explain why the attorney representing Pittston chose not to ask those questions.

> These questions were upsetting to the plaintiffs. Often they would break into tears, and become hysterical, as they retold their stories of the disaster. Pittston's counsel soon became embarrassed by this and asked us off the record, to indicate to them when they were getting into a touchy area so they could desist from asking any upsetting questions. We refused. We felt that Pittston's counsel should sit through this emotional trauma. Let them cringe and feel how difficult it would be for them if they took this case to trial. If Pittston's lawyers were having trouble listening to these stories, they might begin to imagine how a jury would react. (Stern 1976:177-178).

In June 1974 the lawsuit was settled out of court for $13.5 million, half of Pittston's reported profits for 1972 (Ibid.; Dale 1997). Plaintiffs received settlement payments ranging from just over $125,500 for those who had lost the most to around $8,400 for the least affected (Dale 1997). Even though the plaintiffs had achieved a victory of sorts, the money could not replace what they had lost and Nugent's (1973) statement about what it would have taken to prevent the disaster is still disheartening:

> Perhaps the saddest finding to emerge from all these investigations was the one advanced from a government engineer, who estimated that The Pittston Company could have built a safe, stable dam at Three Forks [Saunders] for less than $200,000. Had the corporate giant been willing to sacrifice one-half of one percent of its 1971 profit, the horror of Buffalo Creek might never have happened (P. 184).

Chapter Two: Stuck in the Initial Stage of the Disaster Syndrome

Dr. Kai Erikson wrote *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* as a result of his research for the Prince et al. lawsuit. The law firm of Arnold and Porter hired Erikson as a consultant and expert witness whose sociological expertise would qualify him to testify about the individual and collective trauma that the Buffalo Creek residents had suffered because of the flood. His research was funded by the law firm and his testimony was sought to enhance the claims of the plaintiffs.

Erikson's research methods were different from that of most sociologists studying disasters or other social phenomena. In a deposition for another class action lawsuit filed by Buffalo Creek survivors,[1] he testified that his previous research involved reading the plaintiffs' depositions, conducting 31 interviews, and distributing 370 questionnaires. The interviews were never transcribed and the answers of the 326 questionnaires that were returned were never tabulated (Ms 81A, Bk 33 1977; Ewen and Lewis 1999). It is Erikson's reliance upon depositions that made his sociological research out of the ordinary. Most of the quotations he attributed to Buffalo Creek residents throughout his book came from plaintiffs' depositions. In his own deposition Erikson answered:

> The conclusions I drew, depended on a lot of different sorts of information, and I would say the main one, the main source of information for all of my conclusions would be the depositions that has something to do with just the sheer bulk of them and the amount of information that's available in them. I don't think there is any single conclusion that I can describe as coming from one set of information - -

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[1]Teresa Lynn Justice et al. versus The Pittston Company was a class action lawsuit filed on behalf of 348 Buffalo Creek juveniles who were not involved in the Dennis Prince et al. versus The Pittston Company lawsuit (Dale 1997). Although Kai Erikson was never deposed for the Prince et al. lawsuit, he was deposed for the second lawsuit filed on behalf of the children.

from one set of documents (Ms 81A, Bk 33 1977:97).

In Part One of *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, Erikson described the flood and included a number of eyewitness accounts taken from the depositions. The period immediately following the flood was described as follows:

> When the last of the black water finally melted into the Guyandotte, an aching silence fell over the hollow. The survivors were huddled together all over the hillsides, numb with shock, afraid to move. "We were like a litter of puppies," said one, "wet and cold, with no place to go." No one could believe that the worst was really over, and when rumors of a second dam rupture spread up and down the hollow, people accepted the news as if it were somehow inevitable. And as they waited, soft flakes of snow curled into the valley, as if to accentuate the blackness below and to mock their misery.
>
> But soon people began to drift around in slow dazed circles, looking for missing relatives, seeking shelter, picking through the damaged stores for food and blankets and shoes, and trying to comprehend the sheer enormity of what had happened. A man of seventy, himself spared the worst of the flood, tried to convey the futility of that afternoon: "Well, the day of the flood we just milled around to see what we could find. Just drifted around. Nobody knowed what to do or what they was looking for." And a girl of fifteen said afterward:
>
> *Everybody was wandering around and asking if you had seen so-and-so, and I never saw a time like it. People would just stop to go to the bathroom right beside the railroad because there wasn't anywhere to go, and dogs that had been washed down and weren't dead were running up to you and they were wet. We walked up to the bridge at Proctor* [above Amherstdale] *and a bulldozer was starting to clear the debris from the bridge there. The bulldozer picked a little girl up, and when he saw he had her on, he dropped her off because it cut her back and her back was still pink. Her face was tore up so bad they couldn't tell who it was. Then we saw a hand under her, sticking up through the debris.*
>
> Bit by bit, in whispers, people heard that a spouse or a child had been washed ashore some distance downstream or that a loved one feared dead was somehow alive and safe, although many of the living bore the marks of death. A combat veteran of Vietnam having just heard that his wife's whole family had been washed away, was surprised to encounter his father-in-law on the edge of the hillside. "He was in a shape where I could not recognize him, you know. He had to speak before I could recognize the man. He had silt all over his body and he looked like he was half frozen to death, you know. He just looked like a walking piece of

dirt."

> In the lower part of the valley, where most of the houses were more or less intact, people came down off the hillsides to survey the damage and begin the exhausting job of restoring a little order to their lives. In the upper half of the valley, however, where the devastation had been almost complete, survivors had no choice but to remain on the hillsides, crowding around campfires or wandering disconsolately among the ruins. There were those who could scarcely recall what had happened to them or where they lived, those who muttered vaguely or stared off into the distance with vacant eyes, those who jumped to their feet and started off on desperate errands only to forget what the urgency had been. For the most part, though, it was quiet. As morning turned to afternoon and the winter light faded early, most people did nothing at all.
>
> *There wasn't anything to do but just sit there. We looked out over that dark hollow down there and it just looked so lonesome. It just looked like it was God forsaken. Dark. That was the lonesomest, saddest place that anybody ever looked at* (Erikson 1976:41-42).

After this description Erikson wrote about the National Guard, mobile medical units, the Civil Defense, Red Cross, and Salvation Army coming to Buffalo Creek and helping the flood victims. What Erikson left out of his description was any mention of Buffalo Creek residents doing anything helpful. Survivors only sought shelter, nothing was mentioned about if and how shelter was ever received. Survivors only picked through stores for food and blankets and shoes, it was not clear if they ever found those items or if those items had been given to them or if they just happened to those items them in the ruins. In the lower half of Buffalo Creek Hollow, survivors only surveyed the damage and tried to restore a little order to their own lives. In the upper half of the valley, people wandered around or crowded around campfires. But as Erikson wrote "most people did nothing at all" (Ibid.:42). It was as though people waited on the hillsides to be rescued by and receive direction from outside organizations.

Later in the book Erikson (1976) compared the Buffalo Creek disaster to other disasters.

He wrote that virtually every disaster induces a state of dazed shock and numbness in victims, the first stage of the disaster syndrome. The main reason for this state of numbness, which appears in the injured and noninjured, is that the sight of the annihilated community is often consciously or unconsciously interpreted as the destruction of the entire world (Wallace 1956:127). Victims regress "to an almost infantile level of adaptive behavior" (Ibid.:128). The community, or possibly the rest of the world, can no longer provide the support it once did. Victims also mourn the loss of their familiar surroundings and do not know what to do in its absence. Erikson wrote that victims have lost "their navigational equipment, as it were, both their inner compasses and their outer maps" (Erikson 1976:200). As a result, "Some people simply sit or stand motionless, or wander aimlessly, or "putter about" at inconsequential tasks" (Wallace 1957:23).

Wallace (1956, 1957) wrote that individuals tend not to emerge from this "cocoon of apathy" until outside rescue personnel reach them. When they do emerge, they are very docile and are very dependent upon these rescue workers. Uninjured survivors may then begin to help with the rescue operations. Then the survivors go through a stage marked by fervent community spirit and eagerly clean up the community and put aside predisaster social barriers and old grudges. During this stage, community members may become distrustful of outside relief agencies. Wallace (1956:128) suggested that survivors return to their predisaster state in about two weeks to a month.

Erikson (1976) reported that the stage of euphoria has been found by other disaster researchers and called by different names. For example, S. H. Prince described it as a "city of comrades," R. I. Kutak a "democracy of distress," Charles Fritz a "community of sufferers," Martha Wolfenstein a "post-disaster utopia," and Allen Barton an "altruistic community"

(Ibid.:200-201). Wallace attributed the stage of euphoria to the survivors' discovery that the general community has not been completely destroyed. It is at this point that survivors pursue rescue operations, cooperate with neighbors, and exude community spirit to celebrate the rebirth of the community they thought had died (Ibid.:201; Wallace 1956, 1957). Even though Erikson (1976) reported this pattern had been observed in numerous disasters, the Buffalo Creek disaster was different because its survivors never experienced a stage of euphoria.

> I mention all of this because nothing of the sort seems to have occurred on Buffalo Creek, even for a moment, and this raises a number of important issues. On the more general level, it depends upon the continuance of most of the larger community, so that survivors, digging out from under the masses of debris, can discover that most of the body is still intact and is mobilizing its remaining resources to dress the wound on its flank. In Buffalo Creek this was simply not the case. Most of the work of rescue was done by outsiders following plans and initiatives issued from distant headquarters. They were strangers, many of them in uniform, and they cleaned up the wreckage without consulting the owners, sealed off the residents from their own homes, and generally acted more like an army of occupation than a local disaster team. No wonder the suspicion of looting was so widespread.
>
> The work of those outsiders restored order on Buffalo Creek, and most of the survivors were glad to acknowledge the help:
>
> *The first couple of days there didn't seem to be any organization at all. You know, people running around, not knowing what to do. Then the National Guard came in and started taking people back out across the mountain. Things were beginning to take on a little organization then. Up to then, it seemed dark and unreal.*
>
> But the feeling was general, nonetheless, that the people of the hollow had lost control of their own home territory, and this could only add to the perception that the immediate community had disappeared (Ibid.:201-202).

Thus, the survivors of the Buffalo Creek flood were stuck in the initial stage of the disaster syndrome, allegedly unable to progress beyond it. They were numbed, dazed, shocked, apathetic, and waited to be taken care of by outside agencies. By not recovering from this initial

stage of the disaster syndrome, they could not begin to help themselves, the community, or the rescue workers who came into the hollow. Erikson (1976) suggested that one reason for this lack of recovery was that victims outnumbered non-victims to the point where "the community itself had to be counted as a casualty" (p. 202).

It was this loss of a meaningful community base that was so devastating to the residents of Buffalo Creek (Ibid.). Although Erikson's treatment of Appalachian culture has been criticized (Billings and Maggard 1978; Stark 1978; Ewen 1998; Ewen and Lewis 1999), his contention that kinship and neighborliness were very important to Appalachian people can be validated by scholars who have studied Appalachian culture (Jones 1994). While these scholars may not agree that these ties are as suffocating as Erikson (1976) and Weller (1966) (who provided Erikson an analytical framework about Appalachia) believed, kinship and neighborliness were still very important. Jones (1994) wrote that family loyalty ran deep and did not just extend to immediate family members but grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and in-laws too. Although Jones's (1994) *Appalachian Values* was not about disasters, he did write, "Family members gather when there is sickness, death, or a disaster" (p. 75). Neighborliness and hospitality toward one's neighbors were also features of Appalachian culture (Ibid.:69). Indeed the plaintiffs testified about strong ties to their old communities:

Q How long have you lived in Saunders?
A All my life.
Q You were born and raised there?
A Born and raised there.
Q That's how many years, if I could ask a sensitive question.
A Forty-three.
Q Forty-three years in Saunders?
A Uh-huh.
Q I imagine you liked it there?

A Yes.
Q Can you tell me what it was like living in Saunders?
A We had a nice community up there. It is sort of like everybody knows everybody else's business, but everybody got along good. We had good people that lived up there.
Q What do you miss about your community?
A I miss my friends. I miss my home, but really I think I miss my friends the most (Ms 81, Vol 344 1973:75-76).

Q Mrs. Hagood, can you tell me what it was like living at Braeholm before the disaster?
A Before the disaster, the neighbors next door, we could look out and tell when one another needed help or when one was sick or something was disturbing that person. We could tell from the lights. If the lights was on late at night, an unusual time, we knew that something unusual was going on and we would go over or they would come over and we enjoyed our back yard picnics together. The Fourth of July or New Year's Eve they would come over and listen to the stereo, Christmas music. We would enjoy just going by and hollering and waving at the neighbors.
If we would go away and the clothes were hanging on the line you didn't have to worry about it. Sometimes I'd come in from school on a cold day and my neighbor would have a pot of soup for me and I wouldn't have to cook in the evenings.
If the lawn needed mowing one of the neighbors would mow the lawn. There was just things you wouldn't even think about that people wouldn't do nowadays that they did. We shared graduations and birthday parties. School children would come by. When I was hurt the kids would come by and tell me all the news of school. All that's gone.
You would look forward to going to the post office. If your car wouldn't start you didn't have to worry because you knew your neighbor - - you would have a ride. There was no transportation otherwise. If my car wouldn't start all I'd have to do is call my neighbor and say, "I can't get started," and they would take me to school. If I was there by myself or something, if Jim was out late, the neighbor would come over and check and see if everything was okay, if I was there alone.
So it was just a rare thing. It was just a certain type of relationship that you just know from people growing up and sharing the same experiences (Ms 81, Vol 301 1973:54-55).

Before the disaster, it was common for neighbors to help neighbors and kin to help kin. Erikson (1976) wrote, "On the eve of the disaster, then, Buffalo Creek was home for a close

nucleus of people, held together by a common occupation, a common sense of the past, a common community, and a common feeling of belonging to, being a part of, a defined place" (p. 131). There was a high degree of social integration among the people who lived along Buffalo Creek Hollow. According to Erikson, however, these neighbors and kin who had once been so involved in each other's lives never emerged from the apathy and shock that characterized the initial stage of the disaster syndrome.

By the time Erikson's book was released, researchers had begun to doubt the existence of a widespread disaster syndrome. In a 1972 preliminary paper, Dynes and Quarantelli wrote that the disaster syndrome does not appear in great numbers of survivors and appears to be limited to the most sudden and traumatic disasters. The disaster syndrome has only been reported in certain cultural settings and is generally short-lived. Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) cited a study of an extensive tornado to show that the disaster syndrome is not widespread. Only 14% of victims, who were surveyed using an area probability sample, manifested some aspects of the first stages of the disaster syndrome (Ibid.:7). They also cited a study of a hurricane that struck Louisiana. Hurricane Audrey killed 8.4% of the residents of a Louisiana parish, "an unusually high figure for an American disaster" (Ibid.:8). Even the Buffalo Creek flood did not produce a casualty rate that high. One-hundred twenty-five people were killed, but more than 4,000 were left homeless. Despite the devastation caused by Hurricane Audrey, the residents of the Louisiana parish functioned well in their recovery efforts even though victims reported being more "nervous" and more sensitive to weather cues (Ibid.:8). Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) wrote that "Even in a community with a large number of 'victims,' their losses do not necessarily have a cumulative effect in lowering morale" (p. 14).

Dynes (1974) also wrote that disasters do not cause victims to become docile and childlike, expecting to be cared for by some protective organization as described in the disaster syndrome. Instead, people commonly help themselves and others after a disaster.

More recent research has also cast doubt on the existence of a widespread disaster syndrome as described by Wallace. Drabek (1986) wrote the concept of the disaster syndrome "got used - maybe a bit abused - in the literature of the 1960s" (p. 147). Most disaster victims experience differing degrees of short term "upset," but few, if any, victims in the worst disasters studied have exhibited the types of "zombie" states described by earlier researchers (Ibid.:148).

Lindell and Perry (1992:129-130) also wrote that the disaster syndrome was transient and only occurred in a relatively small proportion of victims when the disaster event had a sudden onset with little forewarning and caused widespread destruction. Although shock does occur among disaster victims, it is rare and does not typify the population as a whole. Disaster victims do show stress reactions, such as anxiety and sleep disruptions, but they do not interfere with the victims' ability to act responsibly.

Although Erikson cited Dynes and Quarantelli's *Images of Disaster Behavior: Myths and Consequences* (1972), he only quoted one sentence from the entire paper: "Disasters do not generally have disabling emotional consequences or leave numbing mental health problems among any large numbers of their victims" (Erikson 1976:202; Dynes and Quarantelli 1972:8). There was evidence that many Buffalo Creek victims did experience emotional disturbances. Erikson was not the only person studying Buffalo Creek to make these claims. Numerous plaintiffs reported such problems in their depositions, and Gleser, Green, and Winget (1981), Stern (1976), Titchener and Kapp (1976), and Newman (1976) all reported widespread psychopathology among

Buffalo Creek survivors. Gleser et al. (1981) also found these problems in survivors who were not plaintiffs in the Prince et al. versus The Pittston Company lawsuit. Even the experts hired by the Pittston Company found a high rate of psychopathology, even though it was against their best interests to uncover such widespread problems (Erikson 1976; Stern 1976; Gleser et al. 1981). Quarantelli and Dynes (1977) wrote in a later publication: "At least Erikson's (1977) brilliant sociological analysis of the destruction of the community fabric in the Buffalo Creek dam disaster suggests that a qualification might be added to the now widely accepted generalization that mental illness does not eventuate from disasters" (p. 43). Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) did report that a majority of disaster victims will display different levels of stress reactions such as sleep disturbance and appetite loss. "However, what is important is that such reactions do not basically affect the willingness and ability of people to take the initiative and to respond well in the recovery effort. This is true even when the disaster has been a major one" (Ibid.:8). Even though Buffalo Creek residents did suffer from widespread psychopathology, they still helped themselves and others in the time period immediately following the disaster.

Erikson sent a copy of his third draft of *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* to Dr. E. L. Quarantelli and asked for his input (Ms 81A, Bk. 33 1977:154-155). Quarantelli responded with several comments on how Erikson's findings fit into the general disaster literature. Although Erikson described some changes he made to his draft because of Quarantelli's comments, knowing exactly what those changes were was impossible because I did not have a copy of Quarantelli's letter or a copy of Erikson's third draft. Erikson testified that Quarantelli expressed "some suspicion because the evidence that I'm using was developed by lawyers, and I think by "lawyers," I assume he means - - it would mean Arnold &

Porter lawyers, and I recall saying to him that most of the evidence that I used was developed by Pittston lawyers" (Ms 81A, Bk 35 1977:386).

Erikson's use of depositions also worried Dynes (1978) when he reviewed *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood.* Dynes (1978:721) called the book "interesting," "well-written," and "troublesome." He was troubled by Erikson's findings and the methodological approach Erikson used. Erikson's claim that 93% of the plaintiffs had suffered an identifiable psychiatric disorder disturbed him. Dynes (1978) suggested two reasons for this. The first possible reason was that the Buffalo Creek disaster was so unique that the effects of it could only have limited generalization to other disasters. The crushing damage from the Buffalo Creek flood was limited to one hollow. Usually the damage from a disaster is more scattered and widespread. Dynes (1978) wrote that "Most disasters, after an initial disorganization, strengthen a community" (p. 712). Erikson did not reach that conclusion about Buffalo Creek. Dynes' second proposed reason for Erikson's findings being so different from other disaster studies was the fact that Erikson's research was funded by a law firm seeking to collect money for the plaintiffs' suffering. He praised Erikson for chronicling the plaintiffs' answers, but criticized him for not providing the questions being answered or the context of the answers. Dynes also wrote: "Questions designed for effective legal action (the suit was settled for $13.5 million) may not be the ones sociologists might frame. How good is our sociology when the legal profession structures the questions and provides most of our answers?" (Ibid.:713).

The next chapter is about "typical" behaviors in disasters and is based on research by social scientists who have studied numerous disasters. Although the flood was a unique event in the lives of Buffalo Creek residents, disasters in general are not so uncommon. From 1953 to

1974, more than 250 disaster declarations were made by the President of the United States (Dynes 1974:3) and even more disasters have struck the United States since then. Still more disasters have occurred throughout the world. Since disasters can be described as "a usual human experience," common elements of these events can and have been studied (Ibid.). The manner in which some researchers, especially Dynes, Quarantelli, and Barton, have characterized victim behavior following a disaster differ from Erikson's descriptions of victim behavior following the Buffalo Creek flood.

Chapter Three: "Typical" Disaster Behavior

Erikson (1976) identified Dr. Russell Dynes and Dr. E. L. Quarantelli as "two of the most experienced students of human disasters" (p. 202). As former Co-Directors and current Research Professors at the Disaster Research Center, these two prolific writers on the topic of the sociology of disasters continue to live up to Erikson's label twenty-four years later. It is their analysis of what happens in times of disaster that I have relied upon so heavily in this chapter. In particular, Russell Dynes's (1974) *Organized Behavior in Disaster,* has been an invaluable resource. In the introduction, Dynes (1974) wrote that his book should not be treated as a compilation of what is definitely known about disaster conditions, but should be considered to be hypothetical. His work, however, was "based on the observations of many people in a wide variety of disaster conditions and supplemented by the observations of the Disaster Research Center" (Dynes 1974:13). Because this thesis deals with the altruistic behaviors of Buffalo Creek residents, Allen Barton's (1969) *Communities in Disaster: A Sociological Analysis of Collective Stress Situations* was another invaluable resource. Barton set forth a theoretical model to explain and predict the development of the postdisaster "therapeutic community" utilizing seventy-one propositions. Dynes' (1974) work was helpful in condensing and clarifying Barton's very intricate and very thorough theoretical model.

In 1972, Dynes and Quarantelli wrote a paper in which they debunked six commonly held beliefs about how people react in times of disaster. Of the six "disaster myths, it is part of the second "disaster myth" that is relevant to how Erikson claimed Buffalo Creek residents reacted after the disaster: "Those who do not act irrationally are often immobilized by major

emergencies. Thus, disaster impacts leave large numbers of persons dazed, shocked and unable to cope with the new realities of the situation" (Dynes and Quarantelli 1972:1). Barton (1969) also wrote that rates of maladaptive behaviors, such as shock, are low following a disaster. Even the most devastating events do not immobilize people and strip them of all initiative (Dynes and Quarantelli 1972). Instead of being passive and dependent on outsiders to provide aid, they "react in an active manner" and "show considerable personal initiative and a pattern of self and informal mutual help" (Ibid.:7). There is a hierarchy of assistance seeking where people first seek help from family and intimates, then look to larger membership groups to which they belong such as churches, then they seek help from other individuals in the community. Then, if they cannot get help otherwise, they turn to organizations such as the police, and last of all, they seek help from disaster-specific organizations such as the Red Cross (Ibid.). Victims do not always take the advice given by agencies and public authorities. On Buffalo Creek, people climbed the mountains to get around the roadblocks. If shelter is needed, victims tend to go to the homes of relatives, friends, and neighbors instead of going to emergency shelters. This pattern was evident on Buffalo Creek and will be discussed more thoroughly in the fourth chapter.

Providing shelter is not the only help that residents of a disaster-stricken area provide. Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) wrote: "In one community emergency after another, victims repeatedly show an ability to cope with most immediate disaster problems except those necessitating special equipment or highly specialized skills as might be involved in some kinds of medical treatment" (p. 7). To illustrate this point, Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) described a study of the 1953 Flint-Beecher tornado. Form and Nosow (1958:112) found that most of the rescue activities performed in the first two or three hours after the tornado had been performed by the

actual tornado victims. Victims and rescuers both agreed that Beecher residents helped themselves a great deal before any outside groups came into the area (Ibid.). Barton (1969) cited Marks and Fritz's 1954 study of an Arkansas tornado that showed that most of the rescue, first aid, and immediate relief were provided by persons in the impact area or individuals who reached the impact area before outside organizations did. Fritz (1957) wrote:

> On the contrary, we have found that the greater share of the immediate rescue and relief work is undertaken by persons or agencies in the stricken community, often before the arrival of outside aid. This informal relief work usually consists of thousands of small, spontaneous acts, which in summation, are of major importance in coping with the emergency (P. 9).

Lindell and Perry (1992) also reported that victims often initiate activities such as search and rescue and first aid themselves instead of waiting for authorities. Drabek (1986:143) cited a study he had done with others that found that 59% of the noninjured victims of a tornado in Wichita Falls, Texas had given aid to another person within minutes of the tornado's impact. One of the most significant dimensions of the disaster response is the intense desire to help others (Ibid.). Dynes (1974) wrote that the fact that the first rescue work is performed by individuals in the impact area is one of the most consistent findings in disaster literature. There is also a pattern to these helping behaviors (Ibid.). The uninjured people in the impact area tend to first help specific individuals, particularly those who are most important to them, such as family members. After they find out that family members, friends, and neighbors are unhurt or have been taken care of, they begin to look for victims they may or may not know. The "informal mass assault" was the label Barton (1969) gave to the "aggregate of primary-group activities to help their own members and community-oriented behavior of individuals and small groups" (p. 132).

Many problems caused by disasters, such as the need for rescue, shelter, and clearing

debris, are apparent and the actions needed to solve these problems are generally obvious (Dynes and Quarantelli 1972; Dynes 1974). Attempting to solve these problems leads to an immediate payoff for those who help. Disasters give people a way to participate in activities they know will benefit the community. All community members, regardless of their predisaster status, can evaluate their own contributions and see how they have helped others. Adaptation and innovation are valued in dealing with disaster-related problems. People are given a wide latitude in choosing what to do and how it should be done. Having such freedom to work to achieve community-supported values (such as preserving life) can be very different from the repetitious, seemingly meaningless actions many people do on an everyday basis. Disasters provide the opportunity for people to make a difference. Disasters also promote a "present orientation" in community members (Dynes 1974). They deal with the present and tend to put aside worries about the future or past conflicts. Kutak (1938) wrote that a crisis situation can create a "holiday spirit" as immediate needs become paramount, the formalities and inhibitions of everyday social life vanish, and people are permitted to have close contact with many types of individuals.

Dynes (1974) believed that disasters create unity rather than disorganization in communities:

> The consequence of a disaster event on a locality is in the direction of the creation of community, not its disorganization, because during the emergency period a consensus on the priority of values within a community emerges; a set of norms which encourages and reinforces community members to act in an altruistic fashion develops; also, a disaster minimizes conflict which may have divided the community prior to the disaster event (P. 84).

Dynes (1974) began his explanation of the development of an emergency consensus by presenting communities as problem-solving entities. He cited Warren (1951) to show that in nondisaster

times, American communities tend to be organized around the following five functions: production-distribution-consumption, socialization, social participation, social control, and mutual support. In everyday activities, communities try to achieve a number of different values, and these values are seldom ranked according to importance. When a disaster occurs, not all of the community's values can be achieved so choices must be made and some values become more important than others (Dynes 1974). As community members become aware of the threat of a disaster, values ranked as more relevant to the community's survival receive a greater appropriation of the community's resources. Behaviors directly connected with highly ranked values are encouraged while behaviors associated with lower ranked values are considered inappropriate. The somewhat automatically established community priorities for which there is widespread support is called the "emergency consensus" (Ibid.:86).

The highest priority after a disaster is caring for victims (Ibid.). Trapped individuals are rescued and victims are given medical attention. After this is accomplished, the search for unknown victims is undertaken. Then basic necessities for people in the impact area are obtained and are generally given free of charge. Temporary shelter may be provided in large public buildings such as churches or schools. Less critical medical care is also provided with particular attention given to the needs of babies and small children.

Dynes (1974) also described "second level activities" which support the core value of the emergency consensus, caring for victims. The restoration of utilities, transportation paths, and communication facilities are given high priority, especially if the problems have occurred around facilities most directly related to preserving human life, such as hospitals. All relevant community resources are considered when providing care for victims. Property norms change in times of

disaster so that if private property is needed for the good of the community, it will be taken. Taking private property for one's own use after a disaster (looting), however, would be deemed inappropriate. (Dynes 1974; Dynes and Quarantelli 1972; Dynes and Quarantelli 1970; Wenger 1978). Maintaining public order by directing traffic, patrolling dangerous areas, and guarding property against looters are also second level activities. The mass media generally takes the lead in another second level activity, maintaining public morale (Dynes 1974). Politicians and community leaders who make appearances to discuss the disaster often emphasize that "we" acted heroically and that "we" will rebuild and have a better future. Terms such as "we," "us," and "our" are frequently used by the mass media to comfort community members and give them a sense of unity. Reuniting families and assuring other relatives that their loved ones are safe are other aspects of maintaining public morale.

Dynes (1974) also explained how each of Warren's community functions changed when a disaster occurred. Production is generally shut down except the production of essential commodities. Since much of the food is provided free of cost and some needed goods are redistributed without permission, the normal volume of distribution and marketing is reduced. Socialization activities are cut to a minimum. Schools are closed, but their resources are used to provide shelter and food. The mass media provides less entertainment and more information about the disaster and disaster-related topics such as where shelters have been established. It also assumes the task of maintaining public morale. Major social and cultural events are canceled. Clubs and associations may become involved in carrying out disaster-related tasks instead of their regular activities. Social control also changes. Minor violations such as illegal parking are ignored, while other violations such as looting are severely condemned. The community function

of mutual support suddenly takes on great importance. Dynes (1974) quoted Charles Fritz's 1961 article "Disaster":

> The widespread sharing of danger, loss, and deprivation produces an intimate, primary group solidarity among the survivors, which overcomes social isolation and provides a channel for intimate communication and expression and a major source of physical and emotional support and reassurance (P. 90).

Natural disasters or disasters such as the one on Buffalo Creek elicit high rates of support and sympathy for the victims. Community members do not always help others who are less fortunate. Certain types of suffering, such as slavery and urban poverty, have not typically elicited widespread efforts to eliminate such suffering (Dynes 1974, Barton 1969). Barton (1969) developed a series of propositions that connect the development of altruistic norms of behavior with characteristics of the disaster event and characteristics of the community. He examined how various factors such as the number of victims, feelings of deprivation among those affected, and opportunities to help influence how many community members perceive helping victims as the community norm and actually help victims.[1]

Barton's (1969) first two propositions are seemingly obvious: "The greater the severity of the impact, the greater the number of victims and the higher the average loss" and "The greater the number of victims within a community, the more likely an individual is to have personal contact with a victim" (p. 218). The third proposition dealt with the social randomness of the impact: "The more socially random the deprivation, the more likely an individual is to have personal contact with a victim" (Ibid.:218). Dynes (1974) explained that if members of all social

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[1]Drabek (1986:142) wrote that Taylor and others have indicated that the line between "victim" and "non-victim" is not always obvious. The concept of relative deprivation of victims will be explained later in this chapter.

groups were affected by the disaster agent, it would create more awareness of the disaster than if only one segment of the population was affected, for example, only people who were poor or black or lived in one section of town. For the people along Buffalo Creek, the flood was very socially random affecting practically everyone who lived along the creek. People not directly in the path of the floodwaters knew people who were affected. They also had no heat, water, electricity, and phone services even if their houses were untouched by the waters. "The closer an individual is to the location of the impact, the more likely he is to have direct contact with the victims" (Barton 1969:218). This proposition seems obvious. On Buffalo Creek, people who lived at higher elevations, lived up the forks, or had just escaped the waters themselves would have had the first direct contact with victims.

"The more primary group ties an individual has, the more likely he is to have direct contact with victims" (Ibid.:218-219). "The more heterogeneous an individual's primary group ties, the more likely he is to have direct contact with victims" (Ibid.:219). The heterogeneity of an individual's primary group ties interacts with the social randomness of the impact. A person who has limited primary group ties would have contact with victims if the impact were socially random. This interaction also allows a person with heterogeneous ties to have contact with victims even if the impact were socially concentrated. Dynes (1974) summarized these propositions by writing that some communities are more socially integrated than others and that the greater the social integration, the greater the amount of information community members will have about the suffering. Since the communities along Buffalo Creek had high degrees of social integration, practically everyone was in contact with a victim. Dynes (1974) also wrote that the more a person identifies with a community or with groups within the community, the more

motivated that person will be to seek information about the suffering. There also tends to be more communication about victims' needs when the victims are considered to be blameless for what has happened to them.

Dynes (1974) summarized several more of Barton's propositions dealing with factors influencing communication about victims' losses into the following statement: "The higher the proportion of victims and the average loss, the more communication and knowledge there will be about the losses suffered by the victims" (p. 90). People are more interested in hearing about larger, more dramatic disasters. Related to this is another statement made by Dynes (1974) condensing more of Barton's propositions: "The more sudden the change for the worse, the more communication and knowledge about it there will be" (p. 91). Sudden suffering attracts attention while long-term suffering allows people to become unsensitized gradually. Communication about suffering can be suppressed, however, if vested interests have caused the suffering. Barton (1969) and Dynes (1974) wrote that coverage of sudden widespread suffering tends to be free of such censorship. The Buffalo Creek disaster was unique. The sudden suffering was caused by the failure of an unsafe dam owned by a large coal company. While coverage of the disaster was not altogether stopped, there were some limitations. Governor Arch Moore temporarily barred journalists from the area to stop "irresponsible reporting." Nugent (1973) reported this story about the media blackout:

> The ongoing brouhaha prompted an amusing, if apocryphal story: a TV news reporter approaches a tall West Virginia state trooper at the mouth of Buffalo Creek Hollow. He is denied permission to enter.
> "Look," the reporter argues, "Walter Cronkite sent me here to get a story. What do I go back to New York and tell Mr. Cronkite?"
> The trooper replies, "You tell Walter Cronkite that Corporal Garrett said 'No!'"
> (P. 115)

But for those people who were on Buffalo Creek during and immediately after the flood, their source of information about victims' needs was not the media. As Barton (1969) wrote: "A severe impact may literally tear down the walls that normally provide privacy and expose the victims to the view of passers-by and potential helpers. People are driven into the streets and other public places" (p. 233). Barton (1969) called direct, firsthand perception of a victim's need and suffering "the most potent means of arousing sympathy" (p. 243). For those present during and immediately after the flood, the needs were relatively easy to discern.

Barton (1969) also wrote some propositions about factors that influence the saliency of victims as a reference group which Dynes (1974) summarized. Strong informal social connections within a population will make the victims more salient as a reference group. It is easier to compare oneself and identify with people that one knows personally or hears about through personal contact. Therefore, close-knit communities, such as the communities along Buffalo Creek, would respond differently to residents' suffering than would more larger, more highly stratified communities. Sudden impact causes sufferers to be more salient as a reference group. It is easy to remember what conditions were like just before impact and compare those conditions with the conditions after impact. More gradual change allows potential sympathizers and sufferers to adjust their expectations. The social randomness of the impact also creates more "kinds" of victims. This allows more people to find someone with whom they can identify. Identifying with children as victims is especially easy. The more people hear about the victims, the more likely they are to identify with them.

Since the media tends to cover the most unfortunate cases, this permits other sufferers to use others who are suffering more as a reference group (Ibid.). A saturation point can be reached

between the resources available and the number of victims. If the number of victims is increased and the amount of available resources is not, the victims will become less salient as a reference group. Dynes (1974) used this example to illustrate his point: in a famine, those who are not starving cannot give all of their food away because if they did, they would also starve. Once this saturation point is reached, the reaction of potential sympathizers may become withdrawal, fear, helplessness, or hostility.

Dynes (1974) also summarized Barton's (1969) propositions about factors that influenced the beliefs about the causes of victims' suffering. The social randomness of the impact influences what people believe about what caused the suffering. Dynes (1974) wrote:

> It is more difficult to stereotype sufferers if they come from all social categories and if they include some of one's own friends and relatives. Large-scale suffering limited to the lower class or to an ethnic group can easily be stereotyped and the victims more easily blamed (P. 92).

The people who were on Buffalo Creek during and immediately after the flood saw their own families, friends, relatives, and people they knew suffering making it difficult to blame the victims for their own suffering. Blaming the victims would have been especially difficult for people who had just barely escaped the flood themselves. For someone who lived outside the area and could not identify with the group of mostly coal miners and their families, blaming the victims would be easier. The following statement appeared in an article in the March 13, 1972 issue of *Time*: "The people of Buffalo Creek say that they have known for years that the slag pile was dangerous. And yet, in the face of a peril so imminent, they continued to live in the threatened valley because it was the only life they knew" (p. 27).

Dynes (1974) continued to summarize Barton (1969) by writing that values and

ideologies, for example, believing disasters to be God's punishment for sins, influence beliefs about the causes of suffering. The mass media also influences beliefs about the causes of victims' suffering. While victims of natural disasters are generally considered blameless for their own suffering, if the suffering can be linked to the elite group, the suffering is downplayed or the blame is shifted elsewhere.

Some of the most important of Barton's (1969) propositions to this thesis are his propositions dealing with factors influencing feelings of deprivation. Dynes (1974) summarized these propositions into three parts. First, the higher the proportion of victims and the greater the average loss, the higher the proportion of those who feel they are severely deprived. Second, the more information there is about community members' losses, the smaller the proportion of community members who will feel severely deprived. Third, the greater the saliency of the sufferers as a reference group, the smaller the proportion of people who feel severely deprived. Barton (1969) further discussed relative deprivation:

> The community member's sense of being relatively non-deprived is intensified by the fact that people generally compare themselves with those who suffered the most extreme deprivations - with those who were killed or who lost a family member. Even for those with severe property losses and personal injury, the gap between their suffering and that of people who lost loved ones, or the fate of those who were killed, is so great that they feel relatively lucky. The fate of a few who suffered extreme losses permits most of the other victims to feel relatively well off, and to feel responsibility to help others or to let others be helped first (P. 247).

Gleandell Waller, a college student from Braeholm, demonstrated the concept of relative deprivation when she said:

> Like every day is really bad because you don't know what you're going to do. The house is falling down. The ceiling, underpinning. You know exactly the house is going to go down to nothing and we don't have any money or anything to build up a house because for thirty-some years Daddy had been scrapping trying to

> get what we have, you know, and in a matter of seconds, biff, everything's gone. Well, material things really don't mean that much but they are good to have. But I still can say we're lucky. Everybody in the family didn't get killed so that's a good thing to have (Ms 81 Vol 216 1973:45).

Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) wrote individual victims judge their suffering in terms of what other victims are experiencing. "With only one exception, there are always others who are worse off" (Ibid.:14). Wolfenstein (1957) described victims of disasters who said they felt lucky even though they had suffered great losses. She described one woman whose mother died and everything she owned was lost but still felt fortunate because things could have been worse and more of her family members could have been killed (Ibid.:182). Wolfenstein (1957) noted: "There is a feeling that one does not have the 'right' to complain if others have suffered so much more"(p. 184). Dynes (1974) explained that the greater the number of community members who feel severely deprived, the fewer community members there are to feel sympathetic toward others. The more people who feel relatively better off than others, however, the more people there will be who will feel sympathetic toward those less fortunate.

Dynes (1974) also summarized Barton's propositions about factors influencing the proportion of community members feeling sympathy toward victims. More communication about victims' losses leads to more people feeling sympathy toward the victims. The greater the saliency of the victims as a reference group, the greater the number of people who will feel sympathetic toward them. When victims are thought to be responsible for their own suffering, there is less sympathy for them. The greater the number of those who feel relatively well-off compared to the victims, the greater the number of people who will feel sympathy toward them. People who feel more severely deprived and less fortunate than other victims tend to be mainly

concerned about their own problems.

In order to help disaster victims, there must be opportunities to help. Dynes (1974) wrote about Barton's (1969) propositions about factors that influence the opportunities to help victims. The greater the informal social connectedness of the community, the more people will have opportunities to help victims. Close-knit communities, like the communities along Buffalo Creek, have more preestablished social relationships that can facilitate the flow of help. The more knowledge there is about victims' suffering, the more opportunities there will be for people to help victims. As the number of victims rises, the more opportunities there are for people to help them. As the number of victims rises, however, the fewer people there are available to provide help. There are also factors that influence the proportion of community members who feel an obligation to provide help (Dynes 1974; Barton 1969). Various values and ideologies influence the norms regarding giving help to victims. Beliefs about the causes of the suffering also influence giving aid. For example, those who feel the victims have caused their own suffering or are unworthy of aid, will not feel obligated to help. The greater the number of community members who identify with the victims, the greater the proportion of community members who will hold a normative standard compelling them to provide help. Identifying oneself as a member of a family or a community or other group usually involves accepting the responsibilities toward other members of the group. The more people who perceive "helping the victims" as a community norm, the greater the number of people who will adopt that normative standard.

Two factors influence the proportion of community members who perceive "helping the victim" as a community norm (Dynes 1974, Barton 1969). The higher the proportion who hold a normative standard requiring aid for victims, the more people will perceive this as a norm of the

community. The higher the proportion of people who actually help the victims, the more people will perceive this as a community norm. Overt behavior, regardless of the motives, may be construed as indicating that those who are helping the victims hold a normative standard compelling them to do so.

Dynes (1974) listed a summary of Barton's (1969) propositions which set forth the factors that influence the proportion of community members who actually help victims. The more people there are who are sympathetic toward the victims, the more people there will be who provide aid to the victims. The more people who have opportunities to help victims, the more people there will be who provide help. Failure to help victims may be the result of a lack of opportunity rather than an unwillingness to help. The more people who hold a normative standard obligating them to provide help, the more people there will be who actually provide help. The greater the number of people who believe that the community norm is to "help the victim," the more people there will be to actually help the victims. People who do not want to help victims or do not feel obligated to do so may be motivated to help because they fear social sanctions from the community if they do not help. Dynes (1974) condensed many of these propositions into these two sentences:

> . . . if the impact is sudden and creates socially random damage, this tends to make for greater saliency of the sufferers as a reference group and creates the conditions for relative deprivation. All of these tend to combine to create obligations to help and to perceive helping as a community norm (P. 96).

The Buffalo Creek disaster had many of the characteristics that give rise to altruistic behaviors. The communities along the creek were close-knit and had high degrees of social integration. The impact was socially random so there were many different "kinds" of victims making it easy for community members to identify with victims. For many victims, finding

another victim who was worse off and more deprived than they were was easy. These factors did create obligations to help and did establish helping others as a community norm. Examples of specific acts of helping victims will be presented in the next chapter.

Dynes (1974:96) translated Barton's propositions into more direct behavioral consequences, the "expansion of the citizenship role." The creation of altruistic norms within the community creates a redefinition and expansion of the citizenship role. An individual can occupy many roles. Certain roles become more important than others during the emergency period, just as certain values become more important than others. Dynes (1974) wrote that in times of nondisaster, obligations attached to the citizenship role are minimal. A citizen is expected to obey laws, maintain a certain level of sanitation, and abide by the "housekeeping" norms of the community. A second level of requirements for being a good citizen might be to vote in community elections. Citizens may also be expected to exhibit positive attitudes toward the community by becoming involved in various activities to improve the community or by promoting the community as "a good place to live." If the community is large enough, some citizens can make a career out of community boosterism or by becoming involved in community government. Communities may honor people with "outstanding citizen" awards to recognize extraordinary fulfillment of the citizenship role, but this outstanding performance is not expected from all citizens.

Following a disaster, the role of the citizen expands because normative requirements now compel the citizen to do anything he or she can to help the community (Ibid.). Many areas of community life that had previously been restricted are suddenly opened up to a wide variety of people. Not only is participation in helping the community encouraged, it is practically required.

This expansion of the citizenship role creates a pool of volunteers who can help existing community organizations (such as the police) or possibly become a problem to them. Role conflict may result from the expansion of the citizenship role. An example provided by Dynes (1974) was that of a police officer who stops on his way to official duty because he feels obligated to help someone along the way. Drabek (1986), however, cited a chapter written by Dynes and Quarantelli in 1976 that indicated:

> In our experience over the years, in over 100 disasters and in the course of interviewing over 2,500 different organizational officials, we found that role conflict was *not* a serious problem which creates a significant loss of manpower. . . . In fact, we have had difficulty in finding any illustrations of the phenomena, let alone documenting the pervasiveness of it (P. 145).

Dynes (1974) acknowledged there are differences in the predisaster citizenship roles in different communities. Rural areas may expect citizens not only to obey the law and vote, but also to participate in the volunteer fire department or other such community activities. For them, the difference between pre- and postdisaster citizenship role expectations is not as dramatic and results in less role conflict. In urban areas, the specialization of functions can be a cause and an effect of apathy among citizens. The urban citizen may find it more difficult to perform his or her new role responsibilities because of the anonymity of the urban setting. They usually carry out their new role responsibilities as individuals who happen to be near the impact zone at that time or they can assist existing organizations with their efforts to help victims. While the expansion of the citizenship role creates a pool of willing volunteers which usually cannot be predicted from predisaster community obligations, existing organizations seldom create opportunities to use these individuals effectively.

Disasters have a tendency to intensify community identification and reduce conflict within

the community by creating a common, dramatic event in the life of the community, supporting primary groups, and providing extensive opportunities to participate in activities to help the community as a whole (Ibid.). Dynes (1974) again quoted Fritz:

> The breakdown of culturally prescribed barriers to intimate communication and interaction provides for some major gratifications to survivors. People are able to confirm the fact that others are basically like themselves. That people respond in like manner to the fears, dangers, deprivations, and anxieties posed by the disaster, largely regardless of previous station in life, is greatly reassuring - especially for those who have previously felt marginal, detached, isolated, or uncomfortably different from others. The "outsider" becomes an "insider"; the "marginal man" a "central man." People are able to perceive with a clarity never before possible, a set of underlying basic values to which all people subscribe. They come to see that collective action is necessary for these values to be maintained. Individual and group goals and means become merged inextricably. This merging of individual and societal needs provides a feeling of belongingness and a sense of unity rarely achieved under normal circumstances (P. 99-100).

Since community members can evaluate their own helping activities and see their own contribution to the "good of the community," this strengthens each person's identification with the community. While this has a positive effect on morale, this increase in solidarity can cause hostility toward outsiders. Outsiders, even those providing aid, may become the target of community hostility if they do not seem to share the sentiments of the community members. This unity among community members does not always last. Dynes (1974) reported that researchers have found that old conflicts eventually resurface and sometimes new ones emerge.

Community variables, such as degrees of familism, degrees of integration, organizational complexity, and adequacy of key organizations all effect the response of the community to the disaster. Dynes (1974) wrote that "Familism means that a greater part of a person's life is controlled and directed by the extended kinship unit" (p.102). There was a high degree of familism on Buffalo Creek. Relatives lived close to each other. An unfortunate consequence of

this high degree of familism was some families suffered great losses during the flood. Atla Osborne and her son, Kenneth Osborne, lost twenty-seven relatives in one day (Ms 81, Vol 199 1973; Ms 81, Vol 193 1973). A positive consequence of a high degree of familism, however, would be having relatives close by to provide temporary shelter. Although there are no exact numbers, many people along Buffalo Creek sought shelter with relatives. Thirty-seven people stayed in Herman Stiltner's house (Stern 1976). Many of these were his relatives.

Communities can also differ in the degree that they have one organization that is the focal coordinating point for community action. Dynes (1974) described a tornado that struck a Mennonite community. Afterwards the community members gathered at the church and organized their activities. There was no single focal coordinating point for the Buffalo Creek residents, but the destruction took place over seventeen miles of the hollow making it difficult for people to go to any one place even if they had wanted. Gathering points after the flood were stores, schools, homes still standing, and coal company buildings. Another variation in communities is the degree of population homogeneity. In disasters, certain groups, such as blacks or poor people, may become isolated and be overlooked in receiving aid. Since the Buffalo Creek flood's impact was socially random and followed a path down the hollow, it was difficult to miss groups of victims, especially since there was a high degree of social integration among the hollow residents.

Communities also vary by degrees of organizational complexity (Ibid.). Larger communities tend to have a higher number and variety of organizations that can perform disaster-related tasks although there is not a perfectly linear relationship between the two variables. If existing organizations cannot meet the demands brought on by the disaster then organizations

from outside the community must become involved. This creates new problems in coordinating the activities of the community and extra-community organizations. Dynes (1974) wrote that research indicates that residents of rural areas develop more self-help and thus more of the total relief activity is self-help. In urban areas, self-help may be evident during the immediate rescue operations, first aid, and relief activity, but organizations quickly become involved.

Individual helping behaviors take place within a social-organizational context, especially after the initial impact period when helping becomes more closely connected with other more organized community activities (Dynes and Quarantelli 1980). Individual acts are carried out alongside responses from small groups, such as families and search and rescue groups, and community disaster organizations, such as the police and hospitals. Dynes and Quarantelli (1980) distinguished between four different types of disaster volunteering with an emphasis on behavior rather than individuals because an individual could fall under more than one category. Organizational volunteers participate in an organization that has emergency responsibilities and has developed a plan to bring in additional personnel when needed. Most traditional emergency organizations, such as fire departments, hospitals, Salvation Army units, and local Red Cross chapters, have such plans. This type of volunteering follows enduring norms and is part of an established relationship. The group volunteer is a member of an organization that has no particular emergency-related purpose. While there is an established social relationship among group members, new norms emerge that make the group's activities disaster-related. Boy Scout troops and church groups who help out are examples of this type of volunteer. The organization volunteers, not each particular member. With this type of volunteering, there are preestablished relationships, but emergent norms. The third type of volunteering is volunteers in expanded roles.

The volunteer takes on roles similar but not identical to some predisaster role or one that incorporates training not currently in use. For example, a doctor in private practice may go to a hospital and offer to provide emergency medical care. These "walk-ons" may cause problems for organizations because they do not have previous ties to the formal emergency organizations. Dynes and Quarantelli (1980) extended this analysis of formal and occupational roles to more informal roles such as relative, friend, and even the role of community member. For example, people who provide shelter to those without may do so because they feel obliged to help relatives and close friends. Normative obligations for these volunteers are already in existence, even if they have been latent, and this role expansion is the basis for helping actions. The fourth type of volunteering is volunteers in emergent roles. This type is the rarest. These volunteers create new roles for themselves. Dynes and Quarantelli (1980) gave an example of this type of volunteering when 800 people who were stranded in a restaurant during a snowstorm created a division of labor to deal with the needs of the large group confined in a small space. The following diagram shows how the four types of volunteers are related to enduring norms and established relationships:

	Established relationships	Emergent relationships
Enduring norms	1. Organizational volunteers	3. Volunteers in expanded roles
Emergent norms	2. Group volunteers	4. Volunteers in new roles

(Dynes and Quarantelli 1980:348).

Dynes and Quarantelli (1980; also Dynes 1974) discussed four types of organizations that

are the consequences of helping behaviors. The first type (Type I) is existing organizations that carry out activities for which they have trained and planned. Examples of this type of organization would be the police and fire departments. Type II organizations are expanding organizations. Full time staff members of an organization like the Salvation Army may run soup kitchens or assist unwed mothers on a daily basis. In a disaster situation, full time staff members may become a minority, but they coordinate the activities of people who join their efforts. Type III organizations are called extending organizations. Some organizations are not involved in disaster-related activities on a daily basis but may become involved as a group. An example of this would be a Boy Scout troop whose members act as messengers at disaster headquarters or a construction crew that uses its personnel and equipment to move debris during a rescue operation. After the Buffalo Creek flood, several coal companies used their workers and heavy equipment in clearing roads and moving debris. Type IV organizations are emergent groups. They develop "from scratch" in emergency situations and emerge when obvious needs are not being met by existing organized efforts. Sometimes they emerge because people are isolated from other organizations. They can also emerge when certain activities must be carried out immediately such as search and rescue. According to Dynes (1974), a great deal of the initial rescue activities is carried out by individuals seeking specific people and then turning to more generalized rescue activities. These individuals are soon joined by others and a rescue group is created. They may come together because they happen to be working in a particular location. Although members of the emergent group may have personal ties before the disaster, such as co-workers or community members, they have not previously operated together as a group. Emergent groups have a loose structure. While a member of an extending or expanding member could say that they were acting

as a member of the Red Cross or Boy Scouts, emergent groups often do not have a name. Along Buffalo Creek these emergent groups initiated many of the search and rescue activities and made the first attempts to meet the needs of victims. Wenger (1978) wrote: "At first, these tasks [search and rescue and casualty care] are carried out by individuals and emergent groups. Soon, however, established organizations begin to perform disaster-related tasks" (p. 35). Quarantelli and Dynes (1980:352) created this diagram to illustrate the relationships between the types of organizations and norms and social relationships:

	Established relationships	Emergent relationships
Enduring norms	1. Existing organizations	3. Expanded organizations
Emergent norms	2. Extended organizations	4. Emergent groups

Dynes (1974:138) created the following diagram to illustrate the relationships between the types of organizations and types of tasks and structures:

	TASKS	
	Regular	Nonregular
STRUCTURES		
Old	Type I (Established)	Type III (Extending)
New	Type II (Expanding)	Type IV (Emergent)

Even though Dynes and Quarantelli (1980) designated extending organizations as number "2" and expanding organizations as number "3" in the first diagram, the designation of expanding organizations as Type II and extending organizations as Type III has not only been used by

Quarantelli (1999a) but has also been used by other authors utilizing this typology (Stallings 1978; Drabek 1986).

This chapter has described patterns of behavior observed by researchers (especially Barton, Dynes, and Quarantelli) following numerous disasters. Specific examples of helping behaviors among Buffalo Creek residents are described in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Stories of Helping Behaviors on Buffalo Creek

While Erikson (1976) did not write about Buffalo Creek residents helping others, other writers had noticed some of these altruistic acts. Stern (1976:49) described undamaged houses whose owners opened them up to the injured, cold, and homeless. Samuel Baisden's deposition was quoted in which he described getting some railroad ties to put on an elderly man's fire on the hillside (Ibid.:50). Despite these descriptions, Stern emphasized the aimless wandering of the survivors. Nugent (1973) described the helping activities of a few people such as Ossie Adkins inviting people into his undamaged home, residents digging the "Miracle Baby" out of the muck, and residents caring for an injured woman as they waited for emergency vehicles. He also recounted Billy Aldridge's "Paul Revere-like" ride in which he honked his horn and shouted at people while trying to outrun the waters in his car. When he reached his home, not only did he warn his own family about the approaching flood but also warned several neighbors and helped a wheelchair-bound man get out of the way of the floodwaters. Then he helped the residents of Lorado for the next several days (Ibid.:82-87).

Psychiatrists who were investigating the psychological effects of the flood found helping activities to be beneficial, not only for those victims receiving the help, but also for those who were giving the help. Tichener and Kapp (1976) reported, "One of the actual heroes of Buffalo Creek, who had been extraordinarily effective in mobilizing and leading rescue efforts, was able to fend off depression and anxiety in the first four weeks after the flood while he worked relentlessly to help others" (p. 297). Gleser, Green, and Winget (1981:94-95) noted that men who gave personal help to others and began to restore their homes were less emotionally disturbed two

years later than those who did not. For women, the relationship between emotional disturbance and self-help activities was less significant. Gleser et al. (1981) attributed this to women having fewer opportunities to engage in such activities because they were taking care of the children while their husbands and older sons went out into the community. There was no significant correlation for men or women between psychopathology and participating in organized activities, such as assisting the Red Cross. Gleser et al. (1981) were surprised by the variety of activities survivors engaged in immediately after the flood, noting that the interviewers assumed ". . . that for all survivors the period was a confused blur of cold, dirt, debris, the discovery of bodies, and searching for relatives . . . " (p. 94).

Lindell and Perry (1992:130-131) wrote that one reason the myth of widespread panic in disasters is perpetuated is the way that the victims' statements are reported. They gave the example of a tornado victim who said, "When I saw the funnel cloud, I panicked." The part of her statement that was rational and prosocial, ". . . so, I grabbed the baby out of the upstairs bedroom and ran down to the basement just before the house collapsed" was ignored (Ibid.:130). Victims frequently identify their immediate reaction to the situation as "panic" when interviewed after the impact. Although Lindell and Perry (1992) did not include "shock" in this analysis, this could also be applied to people reporting their feelings of "shock." Over and over again, people described themselves as being "shocked" or "in shock" during and after the flood, and it seems very reasonable that people would be shocked when a twenty-foot wall of water and debris cascaded toward them and destroyed their towns. But they also described acting in a very rational and prosocial manner. They tried to escape the water by running up the hillsides or driving out of harm's way, often warning and/or helping others along the way. Even those caught

in the floodwaters acted rationally, for example they hung onto loved ones, climbed onto their roofs, held floating debris, or grabbed for tree limbs to survive. A good example of someone who said that he and others were "stunned" and "in a daze" but still helped the community was Jesse Albright:

> A After that - - a few minutes after that, it wasn't too long, the water went down - - we came down out of the hollow. My ex-father-in-law, he lived up at Amherst Camp. I went up there to find out if they got out all right. When I found out he got out all right, I was kind of searching around, looking around, seeing what had happened. Everybody was still stunned.
> Q You say "we", Mr. Albright. Who?
> A Mr. Albright and myself and a few other neighbors there. His son saw a body over next to the railroad tracks under some railroad cars. We picked the body up - - it was the body of a woman - - and put her in one of those shops over at the side of the hill.
> Q One of those what?
> A Shops, working shops. And we put her in the shop and we started searching around there trying to help each other out as much as we could, the ones that was in the mud. We tried to get messages to Island Creek to let people know we was all right and try to find out what we could find out. It seemed like everybody was walking around in a daze or didn't know actually what they was doing or what to do (Ms 81, Vol 2 1973:48-49).

Ida Moore, a widow from Lundale, also said she was numb, even though she was helping others.

> Well, I was just numb. I couldn't even cry. I was just running around trying to console everybody. I was trying to help people, you know, but I'm still numb, and I think, well, I never thought a thing about my brothers and my sister (Ms 81, Vol 379 1973:14).

Dynes and Quarantelli (1972) wrote that even in the worst disasters, victims take initiative and exhibit patterns of self-help and informal mutual help. Even those who suffer varying degrees of stress reactions respond well in recovery efforts.

After the flood, one of the most urgent needs was rescuing people. Dynes (1974) wrote that extricating trapped individuals and caring for the injured were the activities given the highest

priority following a disaster. Although some of these stories of rescue took place after the floodwaters had passed, some of them took place during the flood's impact so those doing the rescuing were actually risking their lives to help others.

Tilda Miller's father was bedridden and could not talk (Ms 81, Vol 167 1973). He required tube feedings, suctioning, and had to be turned over during the night because he could not do so on his own. Tilda Miller's husband, James, remembered how he tried to save his father-in-law.

> I might add that my concern was whether or not or how soon to remove Mr. Brunty from the home and I decided at that time that it was time to move him out. And I went back to the house and told my wife and her mother to leave the house and I hollered for someone to help me take Mr. Brunty out.
>
> Q At that point were you hollering at anybody in particular or just anybody you could get?
>
> A I was hollering at Richard Frazier who lived next door and I told him to get someone else to help and one of the water company employees volunteered to help. I asked Richard if he would take Mr. Brunty to the hospital in the State truck that he drove on the job. And Richard and this water company employee came to the house to help me.
>
> At about the same time I heard people hollering "It's broke open." Of course, at this time I didn't know how the water was coming and I ran to my dining room or kitchen and looked through the window toward the creek and I could see the creek coming up out of its banks. In other words, it was at road level, highway level.
>
> By the time I got back to the living room then the water was coming down the road, down the back road, the back alley where I lived, and was filling up the ditch between the railroad and the road leading to Braeholm hill and was coming into my yard.
>
> The two men that came to help me get Mr. Brunty out broke and ran. They ran for higher ground. One of them was knocked down in the front yard by the water and he managed to gain his footing and escaped to the road.
>
> Would you like me to continue on?
>
> Q Yes, sir. I don't really like it any more than you do, but it is necessary to both of us.
>
> Do you want to take a break for a while and get some coffee or something?

A No, just a minute.
It occurred to me at that time that my wife may try to get back into the house. I kept screaming something at them across the road to stay there, that I would stay with him. I don't know if they ever heard me or knew what was happening or what. I heard later that my wife's mother had been knocked down in the water and my oldest boy had pulled her out, but I didn't see any of that happen. I was too busy in the house.
I went back to Mr. Brunty and began gathering up all the cushions and pillows and anything I could find in the house to get him up on and began putting them between him and the bed, in other words to prop him up as high as I could without building up something that would topple over with him. I did that in the hopes that I could remain in the house with the bed and keep him afloat.
I propped him as high as I could and pulled the restraining strap that was on the bed across him and fastened it on the bed to hold him on the bed in case there was a lot of movement in there. The water was raising up pretty deep in the house at that time and I hadn't yet felt the house shift or move. I got to the back door and opened the back door and also the front door in hopes that I could let the water current through the house and not wad it up and if I could get a stream going through there it wouldn't fill up in the house and then burst out or float the house. At that time other houses and debris began to bang against my house and the appliances started turning over in the floors and the beds were floating and the couch and chairs were floating and things were being knocked off the wall. I could feel the house begin to move, begin to move off the foundation, and at that time I decided it was time for me to get someplace besides in the house. The couch had floated in front of the front door and I jumped on the couch and over top of it on the front porch. I turned and looked back at Mr. Brunty. I said, "I'll see you later, Papaw" (Ms 81, Vol 172 1973:34-36).

Anthony Lambert, a Vietnam veteran who lived in Saunders, remembered pulling his mother to safety.

So we went - - my father was driving the car and he drove the car across the railroad tracks and into another slate dump right there at the side of the mountain a nd [*sic*] we all jumped out and started up the side of the slate dump. My mother, she didn't get two or three steps - - she crossed the railroad tracks and about the second or third step she hit up on the slate dump she just sunk down on her hands and knees and I stood there screaming at her, hollering for her to get up and she didn't even move. She had her head turned sideways, looking back toward the water and she couldn't talk or move or nothing and I started dragging her the best I

> could, trying to get her out of there. And my brother was up above us and he was trying to help dad up.
> And I finally got him to come back down and he started helping me drag her out and the water got up around her and I was trying to get her out and I turned around and looked and this neighbor's trailer was floating right straight at us. It was coming in at us and I didn't know how to get her out of there. My brother gave her a hard jerk and we finally got my mother up to the top of the slate dump and I thought she was going to die there. She turned white and couldn't breathe or nothing (Ms 81, Vol 345 1973:17).

Ozzie Adkins, whose house was undamaged, invited the Lamberts to his house. Anthony Lambert helped carry his mother to the Adkins' house.

> Q Did you have to carry your mother?
> A When we got up to the mountainside they brought a rocking chair down there to us and we tried carrying her up the side of the mountain like that. You see, we had to go up the side of the mountain at the upper end to get into the man's house and we tried carrying her in that rocking chair and we couldn't do it. So, there was about four of us, I would say, got together on her and took her up the side of the mountain. Sometimes, she would take maybe 10 or 15 steps and then she would - - her legs would just give way on her and we would have to try to carry her or someway get her along the best we could.
> Q Have you any idea how long it took you to take your mother from the slag pile or slate pile up to the house that you have been describing?
> A I would say 30 minutes or longer, because she was without shoes. She didn't have any shoes on. I took my socks off and put on her because the water - - that water was cold. She didn't have any shoes on and my dad was on that one crutch and we had to stop and rest on the way up two or three times (Ibid.:26-27).

Billy Aldridge gave an interview in which he recounted how he warned people from a half mile below the dams to Middle Lorado by honking his horn and yelling at them. When he reached his own home, he did not stop helping others.

> I then ran from house to house, knocking on doors and telling people to get out. One woman, Deloris Spears, hollered and told me to warn her parents, the Hunters, who lived across the road. Time passed so quickly, but I'd say it was about 4-5 minutes that I had to warn the people once I got back home. The water was coming now. We could all see it.

I told my wife we had to go, but she wanted to go get the car, but I told her there wasn't time. We left the house to get to higher ground, and my wife said, "I'll bet that Charlene and the kids are still in bed asleep. We have to warn them."

Charlene Doczi and her two sons, Andy and Todd, and her daughter, Jackie, lived in the last house in Lorado.

I told my wife to take the truck to Craneco to warn her parents, Wayne and Opal Brumfield, and I'd go wake Charlene.

When I got there, I found the door unlocked, so I went inside and got them up and told Charlene she had to get out quick because the dams had already broken. She wanted to dress the kids but I told her there wasn't time for that. I grabbed one and she grabbed the others and when we got outside, the water was already taking the community of Little Italy.

As the water hit the houses, they began to explode. There was a rock cliff directly behind Charlene's house, and there was no way we could climb it. The Doczi's ran and got to safety.

I looked and saw Edith Bucy trying to push her husband, Charles, in a wheelchair, to try to get away from the water. I ran to them and I stooped down in front of his wheelchair and he got on my back and I tried to carry him but I got about 200 feet and fell. Mr. Bucy was over 200 pounds, and the water was already rising fast around us. I just couldn't carry him, and I knew it was either leave him there or try to drag him and perhaps die with him. Just then, his son came along and helped me drag him to the hillside. When we finally stopped and turned around, we watched the water go by, taking everything with it (Deitz and Mowery 1992:21-22).

Chassie Bowens, who was fifteen at the time of the flood, described how she was rescued from the floodwaters:

Q On the way to the hill did anyone help you?
A There was a guy there because I got trapped between a fence post and some ties, and he was standing there on the hill, and he helped me.
Q You say you were trapped between a fence post or some fence posts and some ties?
A A fence post. I was holding onto the fence post and my leg got caught between the fence post and the ties.
Q And this man on the hill came down and helped?
A He was already standing there.
Q Was he in the water too?
A Not at that time.
Q Did he get into the water and help you?
A Where he was there wasn't any water at all.

Q Did he just reach his hand out and help you?
A Yes.
Q And you, at that time, were in the water?
A Yes.
Q How high up on your body was the water at that time?
A It was up, up in here (indicating). And before I got out, it got up to my shoulders (Ms 81, Vol 265 1973:8-9).

Peggy Davis, a twenty-three-year-old who lived in Crites, was rescued from the floodwaters along with her family.

A And we were standing there on the porch and - - my mother is paralyzed on the left side, and me and my sister can't swim. I started hollering - - there were two boys we knew jumped in the water and swam over to where we were at and one got Patty [her sister] and Doug got me, and another boy helped carry my mother.
We jumped in the water.
Q All right. Go ahead.
A Mom got hit by a tie or something in the water. The water was really dirty and there was all kinds of stuff in it. Paddle lost his grip on Patty, but he managed to get her back, and we took Mommy up as far as we could in the hills and set her down (Ms 81, Vol 272 1973:10-11).

"Some people" helped Frankie Farley's husband get his family to safety.

A Well, I got up that marning [*sic*] and got out of bed and I stepped out in water. I woke my husband up. He tried to get the door opened and the porch had fell on the door.
He took a chair and broke a window out and put the baby in the sink and got out in the water. He got the little boy halfway through the water and went down with him, under a truck. He put the boy in the back end of the truck and come back and got the little girl.
He got her across, over to some people over on the bank and come back and got the little boy and got him across. I stood there hanging to the house with the water running down.
Q How long did it take for the water to run down?
A About ten minutes.
Q What happened to you after that?
A Some man come and got me and took me over on the bank (Ms 81, Vol 330 1973:8-9).

Carolyn Looney recalled being helped out of the water and debris after her house, with her

and her family inside, had floated about 200 yards.

> A He [her husband] said, "Come on," again, so I took off after him again and we went across all this wood and stuff. We went to this house - - this house stopped. It was a two-story house and it was sticking up out of all that stuff and we got on that someway.
> Three of his friends were waiting on us, and he threw the baby to one of them and then I jumped and one of them caught me and then he jumped. They took us up - - we had to walk all the way back up through there to where everybody else was at (Ms 81, Vol 92 1973:17).

Although the men tended to do more of the physically demanding rescue work, Kathern Bowens rescued a number of children from the water. She recalled how she rescued other people's children while somebody else rescued her own children.

Q When you climbed up on the hillside, what did you then do?
A We looked back to see if there was anybody else we could help out of the water.
Q And did you or your family help anybody else out of the water?
A Yes.
Q Who do you remember did you help out or did you know the name or names of the persons that your family helped out of the water?
A Well, there's a Davis that I helped out.
Q A Davis. Do you know the Davis person's first name?
A No, he was just about this high.
Q It was a child then?
A Yes.
Q Was it a boy or girl?
A It was a boy.
Q Besides the Davis boy, did your family help anyone else out of the water?
A Yes, that's how come George to get hit.
Q Was George helping someone out of the water when he was hit?
A Yes, Dora Ann Cantrell and she's got nine kids, and we helped get the kids out because - - don't ask me the kids because I don't know.
Q But you helped get the Cantrell family out?
A Cantrell.
Q Cantrell - - you helped get the Cantrell family out of the water. Is that right?
A Yes.
Q And you say the Cantrells have nine children?
A Yes.

Q Were any of them lost in the flood?
A No, but there was plenty of them - - there was two of them, three of them, four of them, and her that I know of that was in under the water.
Q And your family helped get the Cantrells out of the water, as I understand you?
A Yes, and there's Adkins that helped get mine out.
Q The Adkins family helped get yours out. Is that what you said?
A Well, we just helped one and other, and to call all the names that helped to get us, I can't do it, but I can tell you the names that lived in the bottom (Ms 81 Vol. 262 1973:22-23).

Even after the floodwaters went down, people still needed to be rescued and the injured needed first aid. Bertha Glend, an elderly woman who lived in Lorado, was trapped in her house as it washed five lots downstream and came to rest against a school. She recounted how she and her husband were helped after the flood:

Q How long would you say after the flood struck your home was it until you were taken out of your home?
A I don't know.
Q Do you think as much as ten or fifteen minutes?
A I don't know. I read in the paper - - I'm going by the paper now, understand that - - in twenty minutes after that water broke loose from the dam and hit these houses, it had fell twenty minutes later enough for people to wade through. Now that was in the Logan Banner. Whether it's true or not, I don't know.
But I know when they brought me out of that house water was up here (indicating), I know.
Q Have you any idea how long it was after the flood hit your house before you were taken out of your house?
A It had to be a short time because those men was going around there just like I say, as soon as the water fell enough they was going around to everybody's house trying to get the people out. So I didn't have no time, you know, to just give you direct time.
Q Have you got any idea how long it was after the flood hit your house until you were taken out? Would you say it was as much as thirty minutes?
A It could have been now. I wouldn't say that it was. But it was after the water had began to fall, whatever time the water had got down low enough for the men to come and get people out.
Q Was it as much as an hour, do you think?
A No, it wasn't no hour, I don't believe.

Q Something less than an hour - -
A Yeah.
Q - - after the flood hit your house until you were taken out?
A Yeah.
Q And who did you say took you out? Some of the neighbors?
A You know, just people coming in. I call them neighbors, white and colored all. There wasn't too many colored because the colored, you know, there wasn't too many up there, but they helped until the National Guards got in.
Q But you don't recall the name of any person or persons who took you out of your house?
A I couldn't say just who because when I knowed anything they just had me carrying me.
Q When you were taken out was your husband also taken out?
A Yeah, he was taken out.
Q After you and your husband were taken out of the house what happened to you? Were you then taken to the hospital?
A They couldn't get in there, no way to get in there until they got a helicopter, I think from Huntington.
Q Where were you and your husband taken then when you were taken out of your house?
A We was taken across over to a house across from where the flood didn't hit - - well, it hit it but I mean it didn't carry the house away. It was full of mud and water and everything. So they taken us over to the Walkers' house (Ms 81 Vol. 546 1974:15-18).

Perhaps the most famous story of rescuing and giving first aid to a flood victim is the story of the "Miracle Baby." Edna Vanover remembered how her husband and son found the baby in the mud.

> After the water went down, we came down off of the mountain, and our son, Frank and my husband started down toward Lundale to where Frank's wife and little girl were. When they got to the crossing, there was a trailer washed up against some things, and also a car that had washed up and lodged there, and as they walked by, Frank said, "Dad, I hear a baby crying." My husband said, "No, son, that's probably just a dog or a cat." They decided to go back and look, and when they got there, they saw the baby's arm sticking up out of the mud. They dug the baby out and took him over to Katherine Gent's house. She was a nurse. I don't know how she got to the hospital because the roads and bridges were washed out, but she somehow got the baby there and he lived. His name is Kerry Albright, and everyone called him the "Miracle Baby." His father, Robert, lives right below us now (Deitz and Mowery 1992:199).

Robert Albright described his reunion with his infant son and how his son was helped by other Buffalo Creek residents.

> While there on the hill, someone told me that the baby had been found and it was still alive. They had taken him to Catherine Gent's house. Catherine was a nurse. When I got there, they were working with him to get that black, oily sludge out of his throat. His leg was cut to the bone. He had been found face-down in the mud by Ernest Vanover and his son. When I picked him up he began to cry.
>
> It took us four hours to make our way to the hospital, and I stayed with him day and night for three days (Deitz and Mowery 1992:18).

Willard Kilgore, a resident of Lundale, was very involved in rescuing people after the flood.

Q Were you in a position to see the flood as it came down through your area?
A I saw the most of it.
Q What did it look like?
A I don't know, I couldn't describe it. There was cars and houses and everything else. One house went down by and a man and his wife and sister standing on top of it waving and hollering. I couldn't hear them hollering, but I know they were, for the way they was waving and all. And they went on by and there wasn't nothing nobody could do for them at that time, but later on, why, they washed in against the railroad down there. It had turned some railroad cars around and turned them over and that house washed in against them and lodged, and when the water got to waist deep, why we walked in, waded in, and carried them out, me and Charlie Mays.
Q What were their names?
A I believe it was a Lusk boy from up at Lorado. They came from Lorado. How they got out of their house, on top of it, I don't know. It was him and his wife and his sister. I don't know them too well, personally.
Q How long do you estimate the flood lasted?
A Thirty to forty minutes.
Q Now, after you and Charlie Mays got these Lusk people off the roof, what did you do next?
A There was seven people trapped in their car there that had been caught in it and the water was plumb over top of it. We got them out, they were all alive, they didn't none get killed in it. And then there was two old widow women that had washed in there in another house that we got out and got them on the hill where it was dry.

Q By we, are you talking about you and Charlie Mays?
A Well, me and Charlie Mays and just anybody that was around there that could help. Everybody was doing everything that they could to help anybody else that needed it (Ms 81, Vol 505 1974:15-16).

Charles Mays, another Lundale resident, helped Willard Kilgore rescue the trapped people.

Q And you received only skin scratches?
A Yes, just where I waded through the woods in the water and mud and stuff, helping people.
Q Now, how long did you and your family remain up on the hill?
A I don't know exactly. Not too long, until she went down into one of the houses there. You see, we were there and a house came down with three people on top of it, and they were hollering for help, and me and Kilgore and Julius Maynard, we went to get them out, and we come up on a car and there were seven people in it, and the car was sitting something similar to this right here. There was a flatcar here, railroad company flatcar, and the car had rushed up against it and a deep freeze was laying right up on the hood of the car.
And we was going to the house, and we found the people in it - - Jack Ferrell and his family and his wife and four kids and his wife's mother.
And we helped them over on dry ground and hollered for help to come and to get them to the house there.
And Jack Ferrell told me, he said, "Charles, there's two old widow women in a house. I know they're in there." And we went, and the house had busted up about half of a window, and he crawled in there and got one of them and handed her out to me, and I carried her I'd say about 100 foot or further through the stuff. She just about had me wore plum down. Her legs were hurt, and I laid her on top of a car top and hollered for a man over on dry ground there - - standing there, to come over and help.
And Willard Kilgore and Julius Maynard got the other old lady out and brought her over there, and they took her over on the hill, took all of her clothes off and washed them up and wrapped her in a blanket, and then we got the three people off from the top of the house and carried them out of it. They had just about drowned.
Q Now, did everybody that you worked with, after you started working in the flood waters to help people, survive?
A Yes, sir. Yes, sir (Ms 81, Vol 23 1973:39-41).

Oscar McComas mentioned his rescue activities when he was answering a question about

his son.

Q And did you find him?

A Yes, sir. I'd say around about 40 minutes or later, because I was helping to get people out of their houses where their houses were jammed up. I was helping getting them out, and I found some dead people and pulled them out of the ditch and like that.

Q When you got to Thomas, you found, of course, that Thomas had likewise escaped and survived.

A He was the only one in the community where he lived. Him and his wife and mother-in-law and four children got out. There was 27 that was killed - - that was drowned there where he lived. He was the only one (Ms 81 Vol. 163 1973:85-86).

Roland Staten's deposition contained a moving description of how he lost his pregnant wife and his son in the flood (Ms 81 Vol. 429 1973). As he, his wife, and his son struggled in the debris-filled waters he remembered: "When I looked back and saw her she said, 'Take care of my baby.' And by that time I was gone. That's all I heard. That's the last time I saw her" (Ibid.:25). He lost his grip on his son and was swept downstream from Lundale to Robinette. Staten grabbed the spindle of an overturned car and pulled himself to safety. He described what happened after he grabbed the car and how he was cared for by people in the area.

A As I was going by I grabbed a spindle of that car, you know, where the wheels fits on, where it was turned over, and I held on and I just couldn't breathe at all. I was just barely getting my breath. I was really worn out. I was just worn out. I was holding on with everything I had. I finally managed to get on the bottom side of the car - - the way it was turned over, I was on the bottom side of the car, and I got over there and I knew I couldn't stay there because I didn't know how much water was coming. I didn't know what was going to happen. And I just flopped off the other side of the car on that red dog pile and climbed up about four feet, on up to the top of that red dog pile, four or five or six. I don't know. I was just going up. I don't know how far I went really. And I laid there and I was laying and I felt my arms and body and I couldn't feel a thing, I was so cold, and while I was fighting my way to that car body I noticed this stick that was in me. I knew something was sticking in my side here (indicating). There was so much wood and everything there that it just

kept pressing and it just kept going and I couldn't get it out, you know, and I just jerked it out to the side (indicating), and when I did that it left quite a hole there.

Q Was this a piece of wood?

A Wood, yes, sir, as far as I know it was wood. I laid on that red dog pile until somebody - - I don't know how long I laid there, I don't have any idea, but some people came and got me and wrapped me up in a blanket and took me to the church up on the hill at Robinette.

Q What church was that?

A The Church of God. And I stayed there and they kept me wrapped up in blankets and I knew a lot of people were there because they were talking, but I couldn't understand what anybody was saying, but they poured coffee down me and asked me anything I wanted, anything they could do, and I just didn't have an answer. It just seemed - - it just didn't seem real. And I stayed there and they got me warm and everything and my feeling started coming back, you know, where I was so cold, and I started showing them places where I would hurt, you know, and they started doctoring on me the best they could, what they had to doctor with.

I Finally the state police come up there and some men went out, to my understanding, and was trying to get somebody up there to get me to a hospital, because everything was blocked. Finally the state police got there and they took me from the church - - they carried me from the church down the hollow to a jeep, and they put me in the jeep and they took me down on the main road toward one of Amherst Coal Company's payloaders down there trying to clean up some of the highway, and they put me in the scoop of that payloader and took me to the bottom of what they call Kelly Mountain, and that's where the state police said, "Just take him on to Madison." And I don't know who the people were, but they put me in a car and took me to Madison Hospital.
And by something till three that evening - - close to three o'clock was when I was admitted to the hospital. (Ibid.:28-30).

Goldie Sipples suffered for hours, choking on black water before she passed away.

Everett Nester, Jr. described how he and some others took care of her after the flood.

Q Where did you first see her?

A We found her down this side of the tipple, No. 2 tipple.

Q What condition was she in when you found her?

A She was laying down and hollering for help, and we propped her up into the old car we had and took her up to my uncle's house.

Q Do you know if she'd been in the water?

A Yes, the way she looked and had coal black all over her and stuff.

Q What happened to her at your uncle's house?
A I don't know. We just took her in there and put her to bed - - laid her in bed, and after we laid her in bed we just walked out and the women took care of her (Ms 81, Vol 291 1973:39-40).

His wife, Armilda Nester, also recalled seeing Mrs. Sipples.

Q Did you see anybody who was in the water or had been in the water?
A Yes, I did. I saw Sipples. He was alive and his wife and - - father and brother - - she was laying up on the slate dump, and they helped get her out, and I seen her and was with her.
Q When were you with her?
A Well, in the car they stopped and she looked at us, and she asked us to help keep her warm because she was cold. And they took her on up to my uncle's house, and I was with her then.

After people were extricated from the debris and water, many of them needed first aid. Even some of the people who pulled themselves out of the debris needed medical attention. Some of the following stories describe how Buffalo Creek residents tried to meet these needs with little or no equipment.

John King remembered how he helped give first aid to some of the flood victims.

And then there was a lady that got out of the water. She had washed from the upper end of Lundale somehow and hung onto pieces of her house, she told us, and when their house, the part they was hanging onto broke up, both of them - - her and her husband both - - she said she saw him going and they went under the water, and I don't know how she got out, but she come up the bank and she was so black that we couldn't recognize her hardly, and she had a finger hurt and later I think they amputated it. I'm not sure. And she was in shock.
And also there was a little boy there with a leg broken that somebody had got out of the water. And we put him in the car and found a board and put a splint on his leg. And so this - - Mrs. Griffith was this woman's name. She was a teacher (Ms 81, Vol 321 1973:62-63).

Mrs. Griffith and her husband survived the flood. Years later she had not forgotten how people had helped her after the flood. Pauline Haga interviewed Mrs. Griffith and this interview was included in Deitz and Mowery's (1992) book.

When Mrs. Griffith came to her senses she said people began helping other people and "although I was almost unrecognizable there were a few who did know me." She said, "Someone picked me up and took me to a car. It was so cold. I was covered in the black murky sediment from the refuse pond which broke loose from the mountain and carried us all away." She said, "I can still feel the cold - cold, so cold" (Deitz and Mowery 1992:86).

One of those was a close friend of Mrs. Griffith's husband. "I'll never forget that kind gentleman. His name was Buddy Doss." She said, "I had never met him before but I knew he worked with my husband at the Amherstdale mine and they were close friends."

Doss had come across the mountain and he was looking for the Griffiths personally. Mrs. Griffith said, "I recall him going through asking if anyone knew us and I spoke up and told him, I was Goldie." At that time she said, "I didn't know if Virgil [her husband] was alive or dead; no one else knew."

She said, "Doss had to cross some high water with me to get to a path up the mountain." She said, "I recall him picking me up and trying to carry me through that rapid water and I just knew we were not going to make it because he was having a difficult time getting across." But, she said "he made it finally." There was a Jeep waiting to take Mrs. Griffith to the hospital at Man (Ibid.:87).

After Anthony Lambert's mother was pulled up the slag pile, she needed medical attention and somewhere to get out of the cold. Easter Lambert's sister, Ethel Sparks described how the Lambert family was helped by the Adkins family who lived up Lee Fork. Lee Fork was located beside Middle Fork, where the dams were located. Although the Adkins family lived very close to the dams, the flood shot past Lee Fork and traveled down Buffalo Creek Hollow.

A We sat there, I don't know - - time - - we don't remember the time, how long we stayed there until Ozzie Adkins came down around the mountain, which that is a small hollow from where the dam was at called Lee Fork and the water missed him.

Q Did you ever get any floodwaters on you?

A No. Only what I waded getting to this man's house, Ozzie Adkins' house. We had to wade then. When he come down there - - he's an old-timey man and he said, "Folks, you can go to my house." We went down. We finally got Easter on her feet and she made it up the road to his house, which I would say would be - - Lord, I don't know distances, people, but it's quite a piece to his house.

> We got her in bed. We had to scrape - - Mrs. Adkins and me scraped the mud, sludge that had caked on her hips. We put a clean gown on her and put her to bed. She's sort of a heavy lady. She'd weigh a little better than 200 pounds.
> Every 15 minutes I'd have to get her out of the bed for the bathroom, which I couldn't get her to the bathroom. We had to use a coffee can - - I'll come right out and say that. I'd put her back in the bed and it wouldn't be too long until she'd get back up again. That was getting to me. About 20 had got to that house (Ms 81 Vol 241 1973:19).

When outside help did reach Lee Fork, Mrs. Sparks made sure that her sister got the help she needed.

> The helicopter come by and I ran down through the garden with a pillow case, waving the pillow case because I knew Easter needed attention and needed it bad. The helicopter came down into the garden and I asked him would he take Easter to the hospital and he said, "No, lady, we can't take nobody out."
> I said, "Why can't you take her out?" He said, "We can't haul her in this helicopter." I said, "You'd better take her out. She needs a doctor and she needs him now. I mean get her out of here." So they finally decided then, instead of hearing my mouth, they'll take her out, and they did (Ibid.:20).

Herbert Trent, who lived between Saunders and Pardee, was the only person in his household to survive the flood (Ms 81, Vol 91 1973). He lost his mother, grandmother, and three uncles. While being swept downstream in the back of a pickup truck, he escaped by jumping up from the truck and grabbing onto a tree branch. Not only did he receive first aid, but he was also given dry clothes, was kept warm in a car with a blanket, and got to take a shower in somebody's trailer.

> A Well right behind the tree where the water washed all these boards in level - - they backed up behind the trees and stuff - - I went across on the boards and got on the hill.
> I got up on this tram road and started to go back up to the house but I didn't. I came down on this tram road that goes to Lorado, to the Lorado Camp, and I walked down that tram road, you know.
> It was real cold and everything. I was walking down that tram road and got down there and these people had their car parked up on the tram road.

They took me, took all my clothes off, and put a blanket around me and put me in the car. They had the car running and had the heater running.

Q Who were these people?

A The Baisdens.

Q Where had they lived at the time of the flood?

A Down at Lorado Camp, down at Lorado.

Q How long would you estimate you stayed there in the car?

A I'd say 10 or 15 minutes.

Q What did you do next?

A Well they said they was going down to the camp or something like that, so I got out of the car - - and I had a blanket around me, you know - - I got out of the car and walked down to the camp.

Q Which camp?

A Lorado camp. And there was this guy - - there was this guy Heck Clay and he called me in his house and he gave me a pair of underwear and a pair of pants to put on.

And he was about two times bigger than I was and I wore those down through the camp there and talked to some of my buddies.

Q You talked to them, you say?

A Yes. This guy, Shorty, took me to his trailer. It didn't get washed off, you know. He put me in his trailer and told me to take a shower and I took a shower for about a half-hour, I guess.

That stuff was so sticky you couldn't hardly get it off. Then one of my buddies came by and he went and bought me a pair of shoes at the store over there. Then he took me up to his house.

His house just about pushed in against the hill. It's about four houses up above the store. He took me up there; and he's about my size.

Q What was his name?

A James Osborne, and he gave me a pair of pants to put on. We come back down there and he had to go back up in the hollow and stay up there in the house - - and he had to go back up there and see his wife.

After he left, you know, one of my other buddies there, Tommy Bailey, me and him went walking down the road there and we walked down where, you know, my girl friend lived (Ibid.:37-39).

Mr. Trent added these statements later in the deposition to describe the help he received when he went to the place his girlfriend was staying:

A I talked to her and everything, you know. We was sitting around there - - before that the first time I was at my girl friend's, they put a lot of stuff on my legs, mercurochrome and stuff like that. That was before I went to my sisters.

Then when I come back there - - and my back, they put some on my back - - and then when I come back we sat around there a long time, I think.

Q This is back at your girl friend's house?

A Not my girl friend's house. Where she was staying up in a hollow there (Ibid.:46-47).

The residents of Buffalo Creek had another problem besides rescuing people and helping the injured. The disaster occurred in late February when rain sometimes changed into snow. People were homeless and needed to stay warm. While Erikson wrote fires were built along the hillsides, he did not write about the people who opened their homes to their relatives or even to people they did not know. Sometimes the guests stayed for days or even weeks. Charles Frazier said that even though his own house was damaged, he gave people shelter because "They didn't have anywhere to go and naturally we wouldn't turn anybody away at a time like that" (Ms 81, Vol 298 1973:32). Blankets and clothes were also given to those who were suffering from the cold.

Callie Brunty remembered being taken into a warm house and receiving dry clothes.

A I don't recall seeing that water. I just know I fell in the water and I was wet.

Q After you had gone up on the hill with your son-in-law's people, if I understand you, you stayed there for some time?

A Yeah, for a while.

Q About how long did you stay up on the hill?

A Well, there were some people that come and got us that lived up on the hill and took us in their house and put dry clothes on me.

Q Who were these people?

A I don't know. I couldn't tell you. They just come and got us and took us up there and put some dry clothes on me.

Q I take it that they were neighbors of your son-in-law's?

A They must have been.

Q But you don't know their names?

A No, I couldn't tell you their names.

Q How long would you say that you stayed in these people [*sic*] house?

A I'd say about an hour, something like that.

Q How long would you say that was after the flood that you got dry clothes?
A Well, now it was two cars I was in, I'd say an hour and a half or two hours (Ms 81, Vol 473 1973:16-17).

After James Miller attempted to save his father-in-law, the Caserta family helped him clean up and get warm after he had been in the frigid waters.

A After I was reunited with my family, my wife and one of Lance Caserta's daughters, an older daughter that was there for some reason - - I don't know that - - they took me upstairs and I was wet all over, my clothing was soaked. I was saturated with sludge, oil, the things - - the elements that were in the water.
They took me upstairs and gathered what warm water they could from the water tank. The water had cooled off but they got what warm water they could and cleaned me up the best they could and put some dry clothes on me and put me in bed. I had a very bad case of the shakes and I was nearly froze and I mean that's a figure of speech. I wasn't in any danger of being frozen to death, I don't guess, but I was real cold (Ms 81, Vol 172 1973:44-45).

Mary Ann Osborne reported she was upset and "carrying on" because she thought her son had been killed. She lost her house and was helped when she was taken to a place where she could stay warm.

THE WITNESS: I went kind of "off", carrying on. They got me to this place and got me put in a bed and tried to take care of me. And Kenny [her husband] got warmed up and then he went and left me there. They took care of me. I was carrying on, wanting my boy (Ms 81, Vol 374 1973:55).

Freda Linville and her baby were also given shelter from the cold.

A So, we didn't know what to do up there. The people, Mrs. Bailey lives up there. She came out and got us to come in her house there. Of course, she did not have any heat or anything, but we stayed in out of the weather. I got the baby in out of the weather to keep her from being so wet and everything (Ms 81, Vol 386 1973:9).

John Canterbury remembered staying at his mother's house after the flood.

Q Your mother's house, where you went after the disaster?

A There was four rooms.
Q Who was there after the disaster?
A The Farley family and my family.
Q The Farley family?
A Yes.
Q How many people in the Farley family, or about how many?
A Well, there was 17 of us all together.
Q 17 in the house?
A 17.
Q How many beds were there in the house?
A Three.
Q Where did all the people sleep?
A Well, after they filled the beds up, the rest of them laid down on the floor.
Q About how many, would you say, slept on the floor, then?
A Well, just about all of the children.
Q Was there heat and water and light in the house?
A We had coal heat.
Q What about water?
A Yes, we had water.
Q And how long did you stay in this house.
A Approximately two months (Ms 81, Vol 26 1973:205-206).

Lucille Smith was taken to a neighbor's sister in Taplin.

Q Where did you stay from the Saturday of the flood until the following Saturday?
A A neighbor was in the flood, lived there; there's one house between me and her and she was up on the hill, too, where we went to on this mountain and she kept telling me, "You can go down to my sister's." That was at Taplin, West Virginia. She said, "Where I go, you go."
Q Did you go to Taplin?
A So we went down there, yes. She has nine rooms and just her and her husband (Ms 81, Vol 372 1973:75-76).

Ida Moore of Lundale was invited into a neighbor's house, but she spent the night at the home of her son-in-law's father.

> And so we took off the hill, and there was a woman that lived right up above where we lived, and the water didn't wash her house away, and she said we could come up to her house. Well, we all went up there, and we wasn't up there long till somebody come and said there was a second dam going to break. Well, we didn't even take time to go down to the road to go up to the mines, we took up the hill.

You know, we roughed it, briers, rocks, what have you, and I grabbed Ruth's baby again, you know, here I went with her, and when I'd climb, I think when I stepped I'd think, well, I know I can't make another step, and I'd say, "Lord, help me." And I didn't have nothing on but old slick houseshoes, plastic kind, you know, stepping on them mossy rocks, why I was just slipping and sliding, and I don't know why I didn't fall, and me with that baby. And I got to a place where it was so steep I couldn't go no farther, so we just transferred her from woman to woman, you know, till we got where we could walk, without having to do that. So, when we got up on the road, we had about a mile to walk, you see, we was up farther on the hill, farther away from the office than we was where we lived, so I thought I never was going to get there. It was raining, and the mud and sludge, and Ruth's little girl had on an old woman's coat and she was falling and I'm picking her up and I'm as muddy as a hog, and, well, we got around there - - finally we got around there, and it was so cold. By that time the heat had gone off and we was froze to death. We were so cold.
Well, I don't know how long we stayed around there that time. I couldn't tell you, but, anyway, after a while my son-in-law's daddy come up. They kind of got the stuff cleaned up so he could get up there. He brought his truck up, and we all got in his truck, and we went to his house that night. His house didn't wash away, but it was damaged an awful lot. So - - see, we had what they call a stoker, electric stove. He has a coal stove, and when I entered that door, buddy, it was like heaven. I was so cold, and we stayed there that night (Ms 81, Vol 379 1973:15-16).

Raymond Holt stayed at Charlie Walls' house in Latrobe Hollow for several days.

A I don't know. We was there three, four, five, or six days, we stayed in that hollow and we carried our drinking water, got it up the hollow. We carried it down in buckets and he had a bath and we carried water out of the creek to flush the commodes and he didn't have a cook stove, he just had a - - I never seen nothing to beat it in my life - - it was a round stove, about that big around (indicating) and you could put a little coal in it or burn wood either one and the top raised up and that's what we cooked on, if we fixed anything to eat (Ms 81, Vol 29 1973:71).

Anthony Lambert described staying at Ozzie Adkins' house on the Saturday night after the flood.

Q Where then did you spend the night?
A We stayed there with all the Adkins in that house.
Q With who?
A Ozzie Adkins.

Q As I understand, there were a number of people stayed at the Adkins' house?
A There was, I guess, around 20.
Q Did you have a place to sleep?
A They had either four of five beds and all them were taken up and people on the couch and a bunch laying in the floor.
Q Did you have anything to eat?
A Yes, they fed everyone.
Q The Adkins had some food?
A Right.
Q How about heat; was there any heat in the house?
A It was in a grate, coal heat.
Q I understand the electricity was off.
A Right.
Q When did the electricity come back on?
A I don't really know (Ms 81, Vol 345 1973:29-30).

James Morgan described staying at his daughter's house:

Q Again, you told Mr. Kelly at one point, as I recall, that you spent sometime at your daughter's home, and you indicated something to the effect ten people were piled up in a four-room house.
A Right.
Q When was this?
A That was from that Sunday evening after the flood for 25 days. Then I went to the hospital and stayed five days over there and my wife moved out the day before I come back from the hospital. That was in March.
Q What did you mean when you said there was "Ten people piled up in four rooms?"
A All right. Here's what I mean. We had a couch to sleep on. We had three of them little-bitty rollaway beds with enough room on it for just one person and we had three of them pushed up against the couch and my whole family slept on it. Now that's piled up, isn't it? We had it pushed up against the couch and me and my wife and my five sons slept on it. It was that way until I got that old house (Ms 81, Vol 182 1973:78-79).

Carolyn Looney and her husband and baby stayed at Grant Gamble's house.

Q Who's house was this?
A Grant Gamble's.
Q About how many people would you estimate were in the house at that time?
A I'd say there was close to 100, but my husband said there was about 50,

but I say there was more.
Q How long were you there at the Gamble's house?
A We stayed all day Saturday till Sunday morning (Ms 81, Vol 92 1973:20).

Dynes (1974) wrote that people found it easy to identify with children who were victims of a disaster. Charlotte Goff recalled that some miners gave their lunches to her children.

A We met coal miners. I don't know their names, but they gave us their lunches for the children because we had not had time to get the children anything to eat. They said the children would need the food more than they would (Ms 81, Vol 41 1973:38).

Dennis Compton remembered some of the children who were in the hollow that day.

THE WITNESS: After the water went down I told you we walked to Latrobe to try to find my sister. There was different people - - children would come up to me and ask if I had seen their mommy or their daddy and they would be crying and some of them just had their pajamas on or half clothed. They didn't have their clothes on that early in the morning.
You couldn't help but to feel sorry for them. I wanted to take them all with me if I could have done it. But there was no way I could have done it. I would try to send them somewhere where I knew there was people in a house who might know the whereabouts of their parents or their brothers or sisters or whatever question they would ask me (Ms 81, Vol 258 1973:48-49).

A woman in South Man got a blanket for Carolyn Looney's baby and talked her out of taking the baby with her to the morgue.

A Yes. I told them, "I'm not hungry, I want to see if I can find out about any of my people." They just sat down. So me and my husband and the baby - - I told them I was going to the morgue if I had to go by myself. So I took off and then my husband came and he had the baby and we was going towards the morgue.
And there was this lady who lived in South Man and she come out and asked me if it would be all right if she gave me a blanket to wrap around the baby, and I told her I didn't care. Then she asked me if I was going to the morgue, and I told her yes - - my husband told her yes. She said why don't you let me keep the baby here, you don't want to take it down there. So we let her keep it - - you know keep the baby (Ms 81, Vol 92 1973:22-23).

If anyone should have been immobilized by shock, it would have been Atla Osborne. She was a fifty-four-year-old housewife who lived in Saunders and lost twenty-seven relatives in one day (Ms 81, Vol 199 1973). Even though she did not lose her husband or any of her six children or grandchildren, she did lose a sister, an uncle, an aunt, three nephews, a niece, and many first, second, and third cousins. She was able to name every relative she lost and exactly how they were related to her. Besides losing so many relatives, she lost many friends and neighbors. The home that she had lived in for twenty-eight years was destroyed. The Saunders Freewill Baptist Church, which she attended every Sunday and Wednesday, was also destroyed. Mrs. Osborne also injured her back and leg when she fell running from the wall of water and debris. She was still limping when she went to her deposition over a year later. Despite all these problems and losses, Mrs. Osborne tried to help other flood victims.

Q Okay. Did you see any person or persons on the day of the disaster who had been killed or injured in the disaster?

A Danny Hoosier. I was the one that dressed his leg and tried to take care of him. And I treated the Dempsey kid. When they came down, I cleaned the little girl's arm and dressed it for her. I tore my gown off of me. When I got up, I didn't have nothing just my gown and top and a pair of pants and I tore this part off, and I kept my bra on, to tie the wound up on Danny and the little girl.

Straight over from me Juanita was a laying. I didn't know it was her at the time. I kept seeing the men going and looking at her, and then I seen them cover her over, but I just seen what they was doing to her. I saw them get the little boy down out of the tree straight over from my house, Jason's little boy. And then I don't know what happened. I was carrying on because I thought Kenny [her son] and his whole family was gone.

Q You mentioned Danny Hoosier's leg. Can you tell me what happened to him?

A He got it nearly cut off in the water someway. When the water threw him out on the bank and we pulled him out, and Ralphie - - and if I'm not mistaken, there was another one of the Dempsey younguns - - and it was cut up this way through here (indicating) off to the bone, and this knee looked like something went through it (indicating). And, so, after we got

> the fire built and got him over where we was at, took him across the hollow over to where we was, that's when I dressed his leg (Ibid:103-104).

Another problem of the disaster was dealing with the bodies. While some were frightened by the sight of the bodies and became very upset, others moved them and/or covered them. Although a prompt mass burial would have resolved the problem of deteriorating bodies becoming a health risk to the living, other values tend to be given more priority than the value of efficiency (Drabek 1986:189). Drabek (1986) cited a 1979 study by E. L. Quarantelli in which he observed that Americans have a strong need to bury a person, not an object. Dennis Wenger reported that Americans value the practice that each body should be named, buried separately, and have some type of ceremony before burial (Ibid.). Some survivors of the flood visited the morgue day after day hoping to find the bodies of their loved ones so they could have a funeral for them.

James Bartley remembered recovering the bodies.

Q Did you observe any people in the creek after the flood, after the dam broke?
A Yes, sir. After I got down there I seen plenty of them and helped get plenty of them.
Q When you say "helped get plenty of them" what do you mean?
A People. Dead people.
Q You mean you pulled them out of the creek and out of the floodwaters?
A Out from under houses and out from under things, ditch lines, side roads.
Q Were they dead?
A They were dead.
Q How many would you say that you pulled out of the water?
A We got nine that one evening (Ms 81, Vol 6 1973:111).

Dennis Compton also helped recover bodies. "Well, the number of bodies - - I kept count of them - - from the day of the flood to the day I quit working on it, I helped recover 22 bodies" (Ms 81, Vol 258 1973:82).

James Hagood of Braeholm described what happened when a body was found by his house.

A We came off the hill and the state police called us over where a body had washed up on the highway right beside our house. Our house was right beside the highway. One of the boys had gone into the house and gotten a sheet to put over this body of this lady and they wanted to see if anybody could identify her, and they called us over. I could not identify her at all. I didn't know her (Ms 81, Vol 300 1973:25).

Ruby Reynolds, who lived in Proctor Bottom, thought she had seen a doll.

A That was just as I come off the hill, and I was going to make a turn to go up the side of a ditch and, as I made the turn to go, I was fixing to step over something, and I looked down, and I first thought - - I said, "Ooh". I said, "That looks like a doll." And a friend of mine says, "Huh-uh, that's not a doll. That's a child." And so he moved the plank and it was a boy. He looked to be about five or six years old, but they had - - you see these dolls with the big legs. His legs was - - looked like that. And I caught myself like this (indicating) and grabbed my whole body and hugged myself together (indicating).

MR. BUTLER: When you say you caught yourself like this, you mean you put your hand over your mouth?

THE WITNESS: I began to cry then. And then he says, "I'm going to get a blanket and wrap the child up." I said, "Okay," because I couldn't stand it anymore. I went and walked on away from it, and they wrapped him up and took him to the school until someone claimed him (Ms 81, Vol 370).

Although Raymond Holt did not touch any of the bodies, he observed them being recovered. He said this after he described where he had seen two bodies, one of which was in his back yard:

A But there was some people who come around getting stuff off of them and putting stuff over them and marking a place for a helicopter to come in and pick them up and there was Dick Wiley and his wife washed away, they found them.

Q Did you find them or did somebody else?

A No, somebody else found them. I didn't see them.

Q The only two people you saw were the two Hatfields?

A No. I seen more than that. I couldn't recognize them and just below me at

> the Scout camp, there was between 18, 24, maybe 26-year old woman in the breeze (Ms 81, Vol 29 1973:66).

Mr. Holt continued to describe how bodies, some mutilated, were recovered from tree branches and debris piles.

Charles Mays remembered what some people were doing to a body on the day of the flood before outside organizations had arrived. "I saw one body. They found a man and brought him over and put him over the tipple there at Lundale and covered him up (Ms 81, Vol 23 1973:41).

Leroy Deese, who lived in Stowe Bottom, recovered three bodies. "I helped pick up three bodies afterwards" (Ms 81, Vol 512 1973:120).

Thomas McComas saw bodies covered in sheets on his way to get some groceries.

> So as we was going up through there you could look on the side of the road and see bodies laying there.
> Well, at that time, somebody had already come through and put sheets and stuff over them, and I wouldn't take the sheets off to try to identify any of them at that time, because the National Guard or nobody had made it (Ms 81, Vol 378 1973:11-12).

Clearing debris was another important task. Without cleared roads, the only way to get the injured out of the hollow was by helicopter. Fortunately for the people who lived along Buffalo Creek, there were a lot of men who had worked in the mines and knew how to use heavy equipment.

At first Dennis Compton worked with an emergent group recovering bodies in the community. On Monday he worked as a member of an extending organization as his employer, Island Creek Coal Company, asked him to use their equipment and his skills to run a dozer in the recovery efforts.

Q When did you go to work at, you called it at "reclaiming". Did you say on

Tuesday you started that?
A Yes.
Q When did you get called?
A There was me and some friends there in the community were helping recover bodies there in the community.
Q When?
A The day of the flood.
Q That was on Saturday?
A Yes. We worked there in the community that day and then the following day the company - - no, the following day we went to Lundale with the McCarty's to get their two daughters up there and their grandson and it must have been on Monday they asked me to run the dozer for reclaiming.
Q Who asked you?
A Jennings Maynard. He was my supervisor on the job I worked on.
Q With Island Creek?
A Yes, sir.
Q And who did he say you'd be working for?
A For Island Creek. He said if I felt like working and if I would help him they would go ahead and pay me my regular salary just like my regular wages. You know, on my regular job.
Q Yes.
A We had to build a temporary road out of Proctor Bottom, Cook Addition across the railroad tracks at the tipple. That was mainly what he wanted me to do to start off with, you know.
Q When did you start on that?
A That was Sunday, because there was no way people could get out except to walk.
Q I thought you said you went to Lundale on Sunday?
A I did.
Q And you started Sunday afternoon?
A Sunday evening with the endloader. We started that over there.
Q And you were working for Island Creek at that time. Is that correct?
A Yes. And it must have been on Monday then they asked me if I would run the dozer and they had me at the Lundale bridge site up there and I worked that out up there (Ms 81, Vol 258 1973:42-43).

Larry Mosley helped Island Creek Coal with their cleanup attempts until that Monday when the National Guard took over the recovery efforts. Although he said he helped Island Creek Coal Company, the group was an emergent group rather than an extending organization because he and some men from Amherst Coal were also in the group.

A And I went over to the shop and got an end loader and helped Island Creek - - helped clean them up and get the roads cleaned up.
Q Where was this shop located?
A Straight across from the house.
Q About how far?
A Five or six hundred feet. Just across the road. Across the creek.
Q And you had an end loader there?
A Yes.
Q What did you do with it first?
A The first place we went and started up the road, there was a bridge and a bunch of houses and everything clogging it up.
Q You said we started up. Who do you mean?
A The fellow that was riding with me and helping me a little bit, name's Jessie Albright. We went up there and tried to get the water turned off the road so you could see where it was so they could get trucks and ambulances and things up through there. Amherst had a bunch of men come in there, and we all just pitched in and worked together.
Q Were you operating the end loader all this time?
A All day Saturday, Saturday night, and Sunday. I operated till about 9:00 o'clock Sunday night we had a flat on it and no way to fix it.
Q You were on it from Saturday morning until Sunday night?
A Yes, sir.
Q About what time?
A About 9:00 o'clock.
Q Did you stop to sleep at any time during that period?
A No (Ms 81, Vol 106 1973:38-40).

Q How many of you were working in this area?
A I couldn't say. There was plenty of them.
Q Pardon?
A There was a bunch in there. I just couldn't say how many there was. Everybody could that - - everybody did that could - - that did.
Q Was the National Guard in there during this period?
A They hadn't got there yet.
Q When did they get there?
A The first ones I saw was Monday.
Q Where did you spend Sunday night?
A Home.
Q Who else was there?
A I don't know for sure. Mom and Dad and brother was there, and all sorts of people.
Q Did these people stay all night?
A Yes. I think they stayed up until they got the bridge fixed up Braeholm so

they could get down to the high school.

Q And when was this bridge fixed so that it was passable?

A I don't remember - - Tuesday - - I believe it was Tuesday.

Q What did you do Monday morning?

A Well, Monday morning I got up and put some work clothes on and I intended to go back up and help, and they done got their people, the Army.

Q Done what?

A The governor had done sent his own people in there. So, I just couldn't do anything else. I went down to the place. We'd just put a new roof on it, and I started tearing the paper off of it (Ibid.:40-42).

Stanley "Red" Morris also cleared roads. Although he was employed by Buffalo Mining Company, the general manager of Amherst Coal Company asked for his help. Because people not employed by Amherst were brought into this group that cleared debris, the group was an emergent group rather than an extending organization.

Q What reason existed at the time for your nonevacuation?

A I was asked by the general manager of Amherst Coal Company to run a piece of heavy equipment to cut a road through the mountains to get sick people out. At that time I took the dozer and went on the roads to clean roads, cleaned them all night, up till early morning of the next day, which was Sunday.

Q Who was that person that asked you?

A Bill Beddow. Now he was the one that sent a foreman after me to do this. The foreman hisself told me this.

Q Who was the foreman?

A I can't think of his name.

Q Where did you go to pick up the dozer?

A I went out on top of the mountain at No. 2 Lundale. One of the foremans that rode me across the mountain was a Smith, Charles Smith. He was not the one that come after me to start with. I can't think of the gentleman's name at the time.

Q And you say you operated a bulldozer all Saturday night and part of Sunday?

A Yes, sir, cutting slides and getting Mr. Dasovich a road to get him out of there to go the hospital where he had gone into hysterical fits. The sick people, to get them out. I maintained the road with the help of Calvin Tomlin holding a light on one side while I held the light on the other side in order to clean the road with two handlights (Ms 81, Vol 102 1973:72-73).

Later in his deposition, Mr. Morris talked more about clearing debris.

Q Now you have indicated also that immediately after the disaster on February 26, 1972 you went to work on, I believe you referred to it as a dozer, helping to clean and clear out debris in the Buffalo Creek area, is that correct?

A I first started out on it making a road to get the sick people out. Then I used it to move debris, fill roads back into bridges that - - what few was still there, so we could make passable traffic in the hollow to check on the injuries.

Q How long did you work at this continuously before you - -

A Before I stopped? I would say it was on Tuesday before I completely stopped for rest at all. What little rest I had was when I would sit around, maybe three of four would sit around and I would talk to them a little bit (Ibid.:126-127).

Jesse Albright helped the Army Corps of Engineers and even helped some National Guard units get out of the mud in which they were stuck.

A The Island Creek Store. And then, what I could do for anybody that needed something done for them - - that evening it seems like - - the Corps of Engineers moved in and the Army guys and I started helping with cleanup.

Q Where?

A We were trying to get a road through at Robinette to get up the creek to find out what really happened at the creek. We worked there for awhile. We went up there and the National Guard had their units stuck up in the mud up there. They couldn't get through so we helped to get them out of the mud, to get moving again.

Q About what time of day did this occur?

A I guess it was getting close to the mid-part of the day because they brought heavy equipment off the hill from the strip mines to try to get some work done and just about everything that hit Robinette would stick up.

Q In the mud?

A In the mud, yes. And we worked up there until about evening and late in the night we was working up there. They sent word up there for us to come down and put a bridge in at Braeholm.
So we went down and started helping with that bridge, leveling red dog off and putting boards on the bridge to build a bridge is what they were doing; and we worked there until late in the morning and then the State Police, and I took it to be the Corps of Engineers, come down the hollow and was yelling to everybody another dam was fixing to break (Ms 81, Vol 2

1973:50-51).

Jimmy Cook took part in an extending organization when he and other Jaycees gathered needed items for the flood victims.

> Of course, I at that time didn't know exactly what to do. We were all confused. My father-in-law's house of course, had water in it and about an hour or so later my father came up, which he walked from Man to Kistler which is roughly two or three miles, to see about us. And I got him to take the children to his house and my wife left and went to the clinic. I met with a couple of our local Jaycee members that came down the road and made the suggestion that maybe there was something we could help with. So, we left the house and went to the fieldhouse to help with their beds, linen and help gather up clothing and the necessary items that we pretty well knew that was going to be necessary, because the reports had been that there were several dead and that there were several missing and then you know there were a lot of houses that were missing because I could see them floating down the stream after we went on the hill (Ms 81, Vol 10 1973:9-10).

Property norms change in times of disaster. If private property is needed for the good of the community or to help disaster victims, it will be taken. Taking private property for one's own use (looting) would be deemed inappropriate. (Dynes 1974; Dynes and Quarantelli 1972; Dynes and Quarantelli 1970; Wenger 1978). Property norms changed along Buffalo Creek following this disaster. The clearest example of this change was at the Lundale Store which was managed by Paul Black. Louise Gunnels recalled,

> Some of the men went down to the store at Lundale for supplies. Our neighbor, Paul Black, was the manager there, and he told the men to get what they needed. They brought back diapers and bottles, for there were three babies in the group and there was only one bottle so the mothers took turns feeding their babies from the same bottle. They also brought back some food and cigarettes (Deitz and Mowery 1992:90).

Chassie Bowens also remembered the man who ran the Lundale store.

> The Lundale store, it was up above where we were staying, and the guy that owned it said we could get anything that we needed. And so he got my brother, George, and my Father, Bob, and he went and he got some food and some shoes

for the ones that didn't have shoes (Ms 81, Vol 265 1973:10-11).

The scenario at the Lorado supermarket was similar, according to Thomas McComas.

> We went to the Lorado supermarket. Mr. Herman told us to get anything you could find in there to fit your children, and as much groceries as you want, you go ahead and get them. So we got groceries and the clothes that we could find for the children, and we went back down to the house, to daddy's house (Ms 81, Vol 378 1973:12).

Debbie Mays remembered when the pop machine in the mine office on the hill suddenly became communal property.

> Another thing I remember is there was a pop machine in the office. Everyone was wanting some pop, but the man at the office insisted we put money in the machine. We all had barely gotten out of our houses alive, and there was no time to get anything, including money. One man left and a little while later he came back with something like an ax and he chopped up the whole front of the pop machine and then turned to everyone and said, "Now, you people get what you want" (Deitz and Mowery 1992:120).

Mrs. Mays also remembered a woman who had gotten some boots out of a miner's locker.

> My sisters, Carol and Vicki and I were all there together. We noticed this one lady who was sitting there in a pink negligee. She had gotten into some man's locker and had gotten out his mining boots. She looked so funny sitting there in a pick negligee and mining boots (Ibid.:120).

In addition to private property being used for the good of the community, resources of public education programs, which have been temporarily canceled, can be used to help disaster victims (Dynes 1974:89). Arthur Reynolds, who lived in Proctor Bottom and had just lost his house and everything in it, sought shelter in a school.

> Q And then as I understand you, after the flood, you and your wife and your daughter went to the schoolhouse?
> A That's right, everybody in that bottom.
> Q About how long after the flood would you say it was before you went to the schoolhouse?
> A Well, we went down there as soon as the water went down. We waded in

the mud and went down when the janitor opened the school and hollered for us to come on down there. I'd say, oh, about 15 minutes, I guess, after the water went down where we could get to the school and he could get there and open the door.

Q Did the flood waters ever get into the school?

A It got in there some, but not much.

Q What did you all have to do? Did you have to clean the school, the waters out of the school?

A Well, there wasn't that much in there, didn't that much get in. That big school split that water. If it hadn't had, I believe it would have washed everything out of there, and they had a big Wesley house up there too that split it down there.

Q And at the school, did you have any heat?

A No. It's an all electric school. No, sir. When it knocked out that power station up there, we didn't have no heat, no lights or nothing in Proctor Bottom.

Q And how long did you and your family stay in the school?

A Three weeks, until we got a trailer.

Q I suppose there were no cots the first night?

A The first two or three nights the Salvation Army brought in cots.

Q Do you remember how long after the flood it was until the cots were brought in?

A No, I don't. I really not could say because I might tell a tale. I don't know exactly, but I know we found a little oil heater and it had oil in it down there. Sissler Grant - - her house didn't get washed away - - she brought it in there and we all just huddled up around that heater and the school - - they had the gym stuff in there, and we'd lay the children on that, on the floor and the grown people just huddled around the heater.

Q Were there some pads in the gymnasium?

A That's right (Ms 81, Vol 369 1973:33-35).

Q And do you recall how long it was before you got food?

A Well, we used the schools' food until the National Guard got in there. You see, they had supplies in the school.

Q There was some food, then, at the schools that had been used to give lunches to the children?

A That's right. That's what they used, and our wives cooked that. My wife was one of the cooks in there that helped cook it.

Q And what did you cook it on for the first couple of days? Did you have any sort of fire to cook on?

A Well, we made a fire right there on the outside. We didn't have no electric. Mostly we used canned foods, just something like that, that you could go ahead and eat until they got the electric restored because it was an all

electric school.

Q And until you got the electric power operating again, you simply built a fire outside the school and cooked the food on the open fire?

A Well, we used mostly canned food, to tell you the truth, and we didn't have no way to take no bath or nothing. I stayed in that school for three weeks and had two baths.

Q They didn't have any showers in the school?

A Oh, no, they didn't have none in that school. Well, even if they had, it wouldn't have done no good, because, you see, we didn't have no water lines. We didn't have no water strength.

Q Were the water lines ever turned back on while you were staying at the school?

A Not in the school, but they was working on them, but they hadn't completed them. They was working to put them on all up through that bottom.

Q Have you any idea how many people were staying at the school?

A Well, just about everybody in the bottom started staying there, but as soon as they could get - - as soon as the National Guard came in, they transferred some of them out of that school to Man school in a big truck, high big trucks, you know. They transferred them down there, and I think it was around about - - I don't know - - it was around 20 or 30 of us stayed on up there at that school. We wouldn't go to Man because there was too many down there, so we just stayed on at that school and then when the National Guard came in, they come to us. They done got the electric restored and everything. They come to us and asked if we mind if their cook just goes ahead and cooks for all of us, them and us too, and we would all eat together, as one big happy family, and we told them that we appreciated it and we did.

Q And about how long was that after the flood when the National Guard began to furnish this food and you ate together with the National Guard?

A That was two or three days. You see, they was already on the way there (Ibid.:35-38).

These are a mere sampling of helping behaviors on Buffalo Creek. They are a small number of the helping stories contained in the Dennis Prince et al. versus The Pittston Company plaintiff depositions and Deitz and Mowery's (1992) book of interviews. What I have shown is that there was a great deal of helping by the flood victims. Not everybody engaged in altruistic behaviors. Some were hysterical or dazed and could not bring themselves to do much of

anything. But these individuals were a minority. There were even a few reports of looting. Although Dynes and Quarantelli (1972, 1970) wrote that looting is rare, there were at least two people who claimed to have seen looting taking place. One woman took a painting away from a boy who was carrying it off (Ms 81, Vol 207 1973:36-37). While not everybody engaged in helping behaviors, even if they were physically able to do so and had the opportunity to do so, many Buffalo Creek residents helped other victims in many ways.

Even the people who Erikson (1976) quoted[1] to support his description of how residents behaved after the flood described helping other residents, being helped themselves, or witnessing the helping behaviors of others.

For example, Erikson (1976) quoted from David Allen Mullins's deposition in which he said:

> *The first couple of days there didn't seem to be any organization at all. You know, people running around, not knowing what to do. Then the National Guard came in and started taking people back out across the mountain. Things were beginning to take on a little organization then. Up to then, it seemed dark and unreal* (P. 201-202; Ms 81, Vol 181 1973:47)[2]

Earlier in the deposition, Mr. Mullins described what he and his father and brother saw on the day of the disaster: "The day of the disaster on the 26th, my father, myself, and my brother, Gary, we were going down the hollow to get a place to cross the mountain. There was one body

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[1]Erikson did not use any of the residents' names in his book. In Erikson's deposition (Ms 81A Bk 34 1977:207-226) he identified the source of many, but not all, of the quotations he used in his book.

[2]Erikson's quotation from this deposition was almost identical to the original deposition. The only differences are that Erikson combined two of the sentences into one and changed "people running around, didn't know what to do." from the deposition into "people running around not knowing what to do."

laying in a ditch covered by a blanket" (Ms 81, Vol 181 1973:45-46). Mr. Mullins, a resident of Lorado, later testified that the National Guard did not come in until after "the first couple of days." On the day of the flood, during this period of disorganization, somebody had covered the body with a blanket. Since the National Guard, and other relief agencies had not reached Lorado yet, the only people who could have covered up the body were people who lived along Buffalo Creek.

Erikson (1976) quoted from Henry Brown's deposition in which he said, "Well, the day of the flood we just milled around to see what we could find. Just drifted around. Nobody knowed what to do or what they was looking for" (p. 41). Brown described how he found his family a place to spend the night (Ms 81, Vol 485 1974). The Brookses, neighbors who lived on a hill, took in his family for two days. The women spent the night in the house. There wasn't enough room for the men so they built campfires on the hillside. It was the next day that Brown said that people milled around: "Well, the day after the flood we just milled around to see what we could find, to see if we could miss some of our neighbors. We just milled around or drifted around. Nobody knowed what to do or what they was looking for" (Ibid.:20).

In his description of the conditions after the flood, Erikson (1976) wrote the following:

> And a girl of fifteen said afterward:
> *Everybody was wandering around and asking if you had seen so-and-so, and I never saw a time like it. People would just stop to go to the bathroom right beside the railroad because there wasn't anywhere to go, and dogs that had been washed down and weren't dead were running up to you and they were wet. We walked up to the bridge at Proctor* [above Amherstdale] *and a bulldozer was starting to clear the debris from the bridge there. The bulldozer picked a little girl up, and when he saw he had her on, he dropped her off because it cut her back and her back was still pink. Her face was tore up so bad they couldn't tell who it was. Then we saw a hand under her, sticking up through the debris* (P. 41).

Loraine Chamblee's deposition was the source of this quotation. Mrs. Chamblee, a fifty-four-year-old mother of nine children, remembered that she was warned about the flood because she heard one of her neighbors screaming (Ms 81, Vol 236 1973). This neighbor sent one of her children to Mrs. Chamblee's house to bang on the door. This "little boy named Danny" told her "Mommy said get out of here because they said the dam had broken" (Ibid.:16). Not much later, "Mrs. Bailey's son" came off Proctor Mountain (where he would have been out of the way of the flood) to tell people what he had heard on a two-way radio. "Loraine, you'd better hurry because they say everything up at Lorado is gone" (Ibid.:16). She drove from her home in Riley to Man where she watched the flood go under the bridge and into the Guyandotte River.

After the water went down, she tried to drive back home, but the State Police would not let her drive up the hollow. She described what she saw on the way back to her home:

> A I think it is about - - between five and six miles. Like I said, we were on the railroad and it was washed out underneath a lot and there was trees in it. We had to climb over stuff and I fell once and hit my knee. Everybody was wandering around and asking if you had seen so-and-so, and I never saw a time like it because we even - - people would just stop to used the bathroom right beside the railroad because there wasn't anywhere to go and dogs had washed down and weren't dead, were running up to you and they were wet and - -
>
> Q Did you see any dead bodies on that trip?
>
> A Not on that trip, but we saw them that afternoon or evening. Like I say, everybody was still wandering around and we walked up to the bridge at Proctor and the bulldozer was starting to clear the debris from the bridge there and the bulldozer picked a girl up and when he saw he had her on it he dropped her off because it cut her back and her back was still pink, but they picked her up - - we saw them pick her up and I thought it was a girl because her hair was so long, but she was real slim and then Charles Vance that lives at Amherstdale came over and told us after they put her in the truck that they looked and it was a girl but her face was tore up so bad they couldn't tell who it was (Ibid.:18-19).

While it is not clear if Charles Vance, a resident of Amherstdale, actually helped load the body

into the truck or not, he did volunteer to try to identify the body. Mrs. Chamblee did not specify who was running the bulldozers. Larry Mosley, another Buffalo Creek resident, described how he and some other men operated bulldozers between Braeholm and Robinette from Saturday, the day of the flood, until Sunday night (Ms 81, Vol 106 1973). Amherstdale and Proctor are located between Braeholm and Robinette. Mr. Mosley testified that he did not see any National Guardsmen in the area until Monday. These bulldozer operators could very well have been Buffalo Creek residents.

Berdene Hopson's deposition was quoted by Erikson to illustrate how survivors just sat around the flood happened: *"There wasn't anything to do but just sit there. We looked out over that dark hollow down there and it just looked so lonesome. It just looked like it was God forsaken. Dark. That was the lonesomest, saddest place that anybody ever looked at"* (Erikson 1976:42). While Mrs. Hopson had said most of those words, Erikson did not provide the context in which those words were spoken. Mrs. Hopson was not sitting outside on the side of a mountain. She, and some other people who had lost their homes, had found shelter at the McComas' house which was located on a hill. She stayed with them from the time of the flood until Monday evening. During this section of her deposition, she described comforting her son who had lost his two-year-old and eighteen-month-old daughters in the flood. The following is the section of the deposition that Erikson quoted with the sentences that occurred before and after the part he chose to quote:

> So Check come on back up there and Dewey, he crawled across a railroad trestle or something and went over there to check on Danny, you know, to see. And so Check he came on back to the house and he told me they had lost one of the kids and so later that evening my son, well my two sons rather and daughter-in-law and little grandson came on up, because, you see, her mother lived just

> down below Jack and so they came on up there. And Danny came on up there and when he come in, he put his arms around me. He said, "Mom, they're gone, they're gone." Said, "They will never be back." He went on in and sat down and just sat there, more on [*sic*] less. There wasn't anything to do but just sit there.
>
> And we'd look out over that dark hollow down there and it just looked so lonesome. Just looked like it was God-saken is what I call it. Dark.
>
> And that night, that was the lonesomest, saddest-looking place that anybody ever looked at. Because where we sat, see, you could see right down into the valley because we was up on that hill. And there wasn't any lights down there. And I mean that was something. I mean you'd just really have to be there and experience it to really know how a person feels inside (Ms 81, Vol 84 1973:17).

Although Mrs. Hopson described how dark and lonesome the hollow looked that night, she also described a number of helping activities that went on during the day.

> Q Was there anything to eat at the McComas' home?
>
> A Well, yes, they had gone down - - see, Amherst store - - I don't know. Someone brought the food up there. I don't know. I wasn't down there at the time. But they went down there and the store was left open someway or another. See, maybe the people had ran, you know, when they knew the water was coming. And people went in there and got the food because they knowed, you know, they didn't know how long it would be before someone would get in there, because it was such a mess. And they took some food up there. Canned stuff and stuff to make sandwiches out of, which, you know was up where it wasn't down in the water and there was quite a bit of food up there but there wasn't anybody felt like eating. They didn't care.
>
> There wasn't any way to really cook because there wasn't any power. And we had to - - Jack had his fireplace, you know, bricked up, and he had to tear that out and build a fire, you know, in the grate and we was in this living room - - well, it was a big house and it was very cold and he took blankets and put up over this big opening something like a bar-like (indicating) - - blankets up there and over the bedroom and they brought a mattress in for the kids to sleep on because it was too cold in the back rooms, you know. And all the kids were piled up on the mattress and that night I didn't sleep any. Of course, if I had laid down I couldn't sleep anyway (Ibid.:18-19).
>
> Q Did the McComas furnish you some clothing?
>
> A Yes. Anywhere we could find anything - - well, she gave - - somebody brought up a big box of tennis shoes. I don't know where they came from, but I got Tammy a pair of tennis shoes out of it and new - - she give me a

pair of bobby socks and I just kept on the little T.V. shoes because unfortunately nobody had no shoes that I could get my feet in, and I couldn't find any pants big enough to get in and Mrs. McComas is real small. And Jack give Dewey a big coat because Check took his, you know, that he had gotten out in, and Jack, he give Dewey a big coat to put on. He didn't have any shirt on.
And she gave Tammy a pair of pants and some kind of a little top. I've still got it down there. And, well Check had on his clothes, you know, pants and shirt. And some lady sent me up there a pair of pants that I could get in and I just kept my housecoat on over it, because at that time I didn't have anything so there wasn't any use to care how I was dressed (Ibid.:21).

Conclusion

These stories of Buffalo Creek residents helping each other after the flood are very different from how Erikson characterized the period immediately following the flood. Erikson (1976) described flood victims as being stuck in the initial stage of the "disaster syndrome," too numb and shocked to do anything to help themselves or anyone else. The Buffalo Creek disaster had many of the characteristics described by Barton (1969) and Dynes (1974) that give rise to altruistic behaviors. The impact was sudden and resulted in socially random damage. The social randomness of the impact created different "types" of victims, making the victims more salient as a reference group. The high degree of social integration and familism along Buffalo Creek also contributed to the saliency of the victims as a reference group. Since residents who could give aid identified with victims, were sympathetic toward victims, and did not blame victims for their suffering, they felt an obligation to help. As more and more residents acted on this obligation to help, other community members perceived "helping the victim" as a community norm and provided additional help. Many residents along Buffalo Creek experienced an expansion of their citizenship roles as they not only helped relatives and friends, but other community members as well. Erikson (1976) acknowledged that being a "neighbor" on Buffalo Creek meant much more than being a neighbor in other areas of the country. Using quotations from depositions and interviews, he described how neighbors helped each other and were involved in each other's lives before the flood. Instead of continuing to be "neighborly" after the flood, Erikson maintained the flood suddenly washed away their desire to help their neighbors and even fulfill their previous citizenship role obligations. Buffalo Creek residents were described as remaining apathetic and

numb, unable to cope with their own losses and the losses of the community. The testimony and interviews of Buffalo Creek residents do not reflect this apathy, even though many said they felt "numb" or "in shock." Just as they would take a neighbor's laundry down before the rain or give somebody a ride to work before the flood, Buffalo Creek residents who saw their neighbors in need after the flood continued their tradition of helping each other.

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Ms 81, Vol 6. Deposition of James Bartley taken June 13, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 7. Deposition of Lester Bartley taken June 13, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 10. Deposition of Jimmy Cook taken June 14, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 23. Deposition of Charles Mays taken June 20, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 24. Deposition of Toni Mays taken June 20, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 26. Deposition of John Canterbury taken June 21, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 29. Deposition of Raymond Holt taken June 22, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 41. Deposition of Charlotte Goff taken June 27, 1973.

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Ms 81, Vol 91. Deposition of Herbert Trent taken July 18, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 92. Deposition of Carolyn Looney taken July 18, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 96. Deposition of Woodrow Chamblee taken July 19, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 102. Deposition of Stanley "Red" Morris taken July 23, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 106. Deposition of Larry Mosley taken July 24, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 163. Deposition of Oscar McComas taken August 14, 1973

Ms 81, Vol 167. Deposition of Tilda Miller taken August 15, 1973.

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Ms 81, Vol 181. Deposition of David Mullins taken August 21, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 182. Deposition of James Morgan taken August 21, 1973.

Ms 81, Vol 189. Deposition of Samuel Mullins taken August 23, 1972 [*sic*].

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Ms 81 A, Bk 34. Deposition of Kai Erikson taken October 12, 1977.

Ms 81 A, Bk 35. Deposition of Kai Erikson taken October 13, 1977.

Appendix: Map of Buffalo Creek Hollow

"Logan County" map researched, compiled,
and designed by C. J. Puetz in
West Virginia County Maps (n.d.:62-63).