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Valorie Childers Oral History Interview

Kayla Kroder, Interviewer

Collinsville, Illinois

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Kayla Kroder (KK): This is Kayla Kroder and I will be interviewing Valorie Childers. The interview is taking place at her home in Collinsville, Illinois. Valorie lived in West Alton, Missouri during the 1993 flood. She is now working as a Home Healthcare Aid. Thank you Valorie, for doing this interview with me. So the first question is: Where were you born, and what was it like growing up?

Valorie Childers (VC): I was born at Missouri Baptist in St. Louis. What was the other question?

KK: What was it like growing up?

VC: I had a really good childhood. My parents were really good to me. I liked where we lived before we lived – before we moved to West Alton.

KK: Where was that?

VC: I lived over off 367, over in North County. And, the reason we moved was Dad got a letter stating I a - I was going to be bussed to the inner-city schools, to go to school, and he said, "Nope. Not sending my daughter to a city school." That's when we moved to West Alton, when I was twelve. A big change for me because I had a bunch of friends in North County; then I didn't have nobody I knew in West Alton.

KK: Whenever you moved to West Alton, what was it like? What were your initial thoughts since you were twelve?

VC: My initial thoughts was I don't know what my parents were thinking. [laughs] Moving me to hill-billy hicksville, if you want to say so. I hated it. There were no stores around, all you seen was farmland and houses. And the bus ride to school, was alone, was at least thirty-five minutes. We were out in the middle of nowhere as far as I was concerned as a twelve-year old.

KK: Where were the schools located?

VC: In St. Charles. So it was like a thirty-minute ride up there, and a thirty-minute ride back. And, to top it off, the bus ride wasn't very good cause I didn't get along with my bus driver. I couldn't stand her.

KK: Why?

VC: She was a smartass. Pardon my French. But any time I could be mean to her, I did it. I admit. I shouldn't have. But that was my way of, I guess kind of dealing with the fact that I was moved somewhere I didn't want to move to. So, I hated it there. Hated it. It wasn't until I got a little bit older, I

guess, when my brother, Danny, was little. I guess he was about three or four, and I finally started meeting some friends, and I actually really adjusted to it okay. I met some friends and, met my best friend out in West Alton. Best friend. She's not here no more, but I was thankful to meet her. Changed my life. So West Alton was, I dunno, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. Until...we had a lot of scares with the flood before then. People'd have to move everything. Move in and move out. And there's a lot of time you get water around you that you didn't get water in your house. I think I was, oh, fourteen at the time. We had water all around us but we could still, you know, people on 94 had water, and there was water on several different spots on our street where traffic couldn't get in and out. But you could still live in your house cuz we had no water there. And we had to walk across the field, and down the railroad tracks, through town to catch the bus at Pit Stop off of Highway 94. And it took us at least 35 minutes to walk that. And then an hour ride to school, round about. Then a walk back home. You know, and we did this when I was a kids several times. Cause the water had come up. But I dealt with it. Because that's what my parents...I guess in a way it was a good place to raise your kids cause you was just like -you wasn't in the city loop-we're being raised, for the lack of a better words, being raised better than they are in the city schools. Or in schools period, these days. Cause people, neighbors cared about neighbors out there. Whereas in the city they could care less. So, I don't know. Just a different time in my life.

KK: So whenever you're talking about walking through the fields and on the train-tracks and the water. I mean like how ... whenever you had to do that how deep was the water, if you had to guess? And how many days did the roads get closed when that happened?

VC: I know we had to walk the railroad tracks at least a couple of weeks for the water to recede. How deep was the water? In some spots, depending on how low the houses sit, some – where we lived there was a little...I guess I called it a little gully in between...it sat lower than the rest of the houses did. When the flood water come up, that was the first spot that got water. Right down there by mama ... It came back through the field and go into that gully and then it would spread out from there. And go into mom and dad's yard, and the Schroder's yard, and then it would eventually go across and filled the ditches, and the fields across. But we was always pretty much out of, out of that area before it started getting that deep. Like I said, there was a couple of times they'd had floods before, but never got as bad as '93. '93 was, in '93 when we had the '93 flood, I lived in town about, oh I guess, two-miles from mom and dad's. Maybe a mile-and-a-half. Me and my daughter, Cassie, lived in town. And, the Missouri and the Mississippi were both coming up and the Army Corps of Engineers said for everybody in town to put their stuff up 4 feet. What you weren't moving out or taking with you, to put it up at least 4 feet. So, I went and got me a bunch of little milk crates and put my furniture, what I couldn't take with me, on milk crates. My refrigerator, my stove, my washer and dryer, and my couch. Stuff like that, I put up at least four feet. I had a lot of milk crates. But, they said we shouldn't get no more than maybe four feet. Maybe not even that. But the gentleman down off of highway 94 decided to bust the levee. And when he bust the levee, it flooded town too. So I was caught between this river and this river, and, when the water first started coming in, I remember standing on the railroad tracks, right there in the front of town, and mom was standing on one side of me, and Cassie was in the middle of us. And were holding her hands, and that water was just meeting, and just rushing and rolling underneath that, what you call a train track trussle? That's what we called it. And that water's just rolling and hitting these stop signs and moving stuff all through town. Logs, trees, just...and I could see the water coming up. And going into my apartment. And I'm thinking to myself, "There's no way I'm going to get four feet in this apartment." I lost what I had left behind. And then, come to find out, the Army Corp of Engineers had said that everybody in town, I

talked to one of them, he said that people....I asked him about my specific home, because I lived lower level from someone else, and he said, not only did it fill my apartment, but it got four feet above me. And this like a town home, so it filled the apartment downstairs and got four feet upstairs. So that water was really deep. I don't know. It just changed things for me. Everyone moved back to West Alton. So...anymore questions?

KK: Yes. Whenever you were describing the water rushing underneath the trussles, whenever you saw the logs and timber being picked up. Did you see any houses or anything?

VC: I didn't see any houses. I seen trees, I seen cars. Never seen a - I didn't see houses come under the trussles, but, on farther down, you could see some of the roofs. And there was one house, in particular, on the other side of the railroad track that wasn't coming through town, but it was rolling, like right in front of the trussles, right in the field there, and the house was just rolling. And it was going under, and the roof coming back up. Going under, and the roof coming back up. So all you could see was the bottom of the house, then the roof, as it tumbled.

KK: That would be very, very scary.

VC: Yeah. So like I said, when the flood waters went down, I went out with my mom and dad, the first time the waters came up and went down, they went out there. The Army Corps of Engineers took them out there. And the floors had caved in. They said, "Okay. I can fix this." Flood waters come back up again. Water went down, dad went out, ceiling caved in. Dad said, "Okay. I can still do this, I can still rebuild." Water went back down. You see, it went up and down for awhile. Even after that. After the big rush of flood, it went up and down for awhile. Flood waters went down, tornado come through there, tore the whole back of the house off. Dad went back out there, after the water went down and everything settled, took a look at the house, and said, "Alright. Alright, Lord. I got your...I got what you want me to do. I'm not coming back." You know, because it was just, I think it was a sign. I think it's time for you to move on, to bigger and better things (laughs.) Yeah it was scary. Because I'm really scared of water. Getting in over my head. And standing on those trussles, when I was younger, with my daughter in my hand, I had a tight grip on her, I'm just thinking, "That water's gonna come up over that trussle and take me and mom and Cassie with it." It was scary.

KK: Whenever the water was coming up, and people were staring to you know evacuate, and what have you: Did you still stay in contact with those people? Did the come out and help one another? How did all of that work?.

VC: There was several people that I knew out that way that I have talked to. I guess are you trying to say if we kept in touch? Is that what you're trying to ask?

KK: Well yeah, that.

VC: Or help move?

KK: That, and when the waters were coming up, and everything. Did you help one another as well?

VC: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Neighbors always went to...what was his name...Jimmy and Carol Grimwald.

They were our neighbors across the street. And when the flood water come up and hit and went back down, that time, and everything was said and done in the flood of '93, Jimmy asked mom and dad, when he seen what happened....Mom and dad's house was basically just a shell. You know, there wasn't hardly nothing to... It was like having a hundred-thousand dollar house be destroyed a tornado, and a flood....when that back...the brick. The back of the house was just a brick wall. And when that was gone, you could look you could just see two-by-fours in the back of the house. And you could look straight through the house. It took out picture...Mom had a real pretty picture window in the front. All the windows were gone. The doors were floating. No one knows the doors or the windows went. But it was just like something had went through. I don't know quite how to explain it. Instead of just the water, the water had come through, true. But it also the tornado in itself. It'd go down, it'd come back up, it'd go down, and come back up. So, as to make sure it had destroyed the house. To where he'd have to gut the house, and know it completely down to redo it. And that was just something my dad wasn't wanting to do anymore. And that's when...he moved to Blackjack for a couple of months. And then we ended up, he ended up moving in over here. And I ended up moving in with them. I've went different places, but I've always come back here.

KK: Whenever the flood waters had finally receded, and you were able to go back into your house, can you describe that for me?

VC: Oh, my apartment? Yeah. Flood waters had went down and we had.... I rented the apartment and the.. my landlord asked me to meet the adjustor there, because he couldn't meet him. I went in and I looked all around the apartment. I wouldn't go in. Something couldn't bring me to go into the apartment. So I stood outside and looked inside all my windows and went around and looked through all of them. And the adjustor showed up and said, "Okay." And I had boots on and he said, "Okay, would you like to walk through the apartment with me?" And I said, "No." I said, "What I just seen in that window there, I do not want to walk through that apartment. You can walk through it by yourself." And he said, "Why don't you want to walk through it with me?" And I said, "I just seen a snake slither through the living room into the hallway, into the kitchen." I said, "You can go in there by yourself." Yeah, no, not going in there where the snake's at. It was an experience.

KK: Did you ... Was there a lot of mud?

VC: I guess there was about, I know at least half a foot, to a foot of mud in there. If not more. So, it was...it stank. Oh, awful smelled so bad. And there was nothing left of my apartment. I mean I had my washer and dryer, you know I put everything up on those milk crates, but it didn't help anything. The water was too strong for the crates to hold anything. It just knocked everything through the apartment. Knocked out walls, and windows, and doors. And somebody asked me one time, after this, if I would do this again. And I said, "Would I move back to West Alton?" And they said, "Yeah." And I said, "Nope. Couldn't pay me enough." I wasn't going through that again. No.

KK: Cassie, you said that she was a child. Really little.

VC: Yes. And she was, I guess after seeing the water run through under the trussles, and...I mean the water wasn't there any more, but I think that the thought run through her head. Her being so little, when it happened, she was scared to even walk into that apartment. Or to even go near mom and dad's house. For

thinking that, okay, if she turns around, that water's gonna be right there coming at her again. But I thought for years, that after she went through the flood of '93, that this child would be scared of water. She was for a while. She's not any more. I am, still. [laughs] My mom one time, before the flood hit, they were talking about a flood, and she went down the street, down the road to Red Schoolhouse Road, which is a street that kind of joined, connected with Salle road, where we lived. And the water was already up over there. And she said, "Lord, just how much water are we looking at?" And she said, everything just went black. So she said she went back to tell dad, and you know, that. You know, that she asked, "How much water are we looking at, and she went black." And they talked to our neighbor, Ray, they all thought my mom was crazy. We...the first time the water come up there at mom and dad's house, I remember her telling me that, when they went out to see the house. They went out with the Army Corps of Engineers by boat to see their house after the water had settled, started to receded, all they could see on their house was the top part of their house, and it was black. So. That just, to me, I...when she told me all she seen was black, and I asked, well what do you think that means? She said, "I don't know what it means. But I know it's going to be bad." I don't think anybody, honestly, I don't think anybody thought it was going to be as bad- even the Army Corp of Engineers, I don't think they thought it was going to be as bad as it was. I mean why would they tell you to only put things up four feet, if that's all they expected? You know? I do know that the guy that busted the levee, out in West Alton, to save his property, ended up taking refuge at the Salvation Army, in downtown St. Louis with Harbor Light. And the reason I know this is because, I guess about three or four years later, I married my husband, and he worked for the place, and I remember his boss telling me about a guy that, you know, had ruptured the levee in West Alton to save his house. And he was taking refuge up in the church there, where the police couldn't come and get him, and nobody else would come and get him. I don't know even know what happened to him. If they ever caught him, if they ever did anything to him. I just know that he was up there in the church, and that was the last I heard anything of that man. I don't even know if he ever got caught for doing what he did. Cause, when he ruptured that levee where he lived, that caused the town to flood. The town in West Alton wasn't supposed to flood. Only people out in like West Alton, or people out off Salle Road, highway 94, Red Schoolhouse Road, those were the ones that were in jeopardy of getting water. Town wasn't supposed to get it. Until he ruptured the levee in town, down where he lived. And when he ruptured that levee to save his house, the town flooded. So where I was at in West Alton, we were getting it from the Missouri River and the Mississippi River all at once. Mom and dad had already pretty much got flooded. I hadn't even got flooded at the time, yet. So I thought I could just stay where I was at, you know? They said four feet. Ah, I'll move out for a little bit and that'll be it. I thought, I'll be able to go back. We'll paint the walls and pull up the carpet, and I'll help my landlord do all this. Cuz my landlord was a older gentleman, you know, him and his wife were...and they were very good to me and my daughter. And I thought, well I'll just help him repaint and do what has to be done to get the house back, the apartment back in order. I'll move in. After that happened, I wanted no part of it. I didn't want to go back.

KK: When you were talking about the man who busted the levee to save his house. Did he save his house? Or did it end up going underwater as well?

VC: No. He lost his house too. Turn about, I guess, is fair play. He lost his too. He thought he was going to save his property, and his neighbor's properties by busting the levee. He took a boat too. He ran a boat into the levee. Which ruptured the levee. But I remember standing there talking to one of the Army Corp of Engineers, when I got flooded out, and he said, had the guy....basically what he was saying was, whether he ruptured the levee or not, we were looking to get quite a bit of water in town, anyway. He was

just, relieving the stress. Because...he didn't come right out and say it, but he said the levees out in West Alton wasn't the best levees to have. You know? They weren't really strong enough to hold on to something like that. 'Course now, they've redone them. They're better levees than what they were before. I know, as rough as it sounds, being through the flood and all, if it wasn't for the Salvation Army, and Goodwill, and some churches and stuff...which brought me and my daughter, you know, clothes, stuff like that that we needed. I'd be in a lot worse shape than what I was. I mean, that's when the Salvation Army, Red Cross, they come through for people with disasters.

KK: So during the flood you and Cassie, your daughter were living in the apartment. And your mom and dad were still taking care of the boys. From an older sibling perspective, how were the boys doing? Were they scared? Nervous? Dan was probably a teenager. But Tim and Kevin were young.

VC: Kevin was a baby, so I don't think. He's only.... my daughter's only fifteen months younger than my younger brother. My baby brother. So him and Cassie were both really kind of young to understand what was going on around them. They were both scared, but I believe the one that

was most scared out of all of that was my brother Tim. He was, how old was Tim? I can't really remember how old Tim was. What was he, five or six? And he, I think he honestly thought, when the flood water come in, that no matter where he went, this water was going to get him. Where it was going to follow him no matter where he went. To this day, I don't think he talks too much about it. I know, I haven't given it much thought for several year. But it's always in the back of your mind when you go through something like that. You don't quite know how you're going to deal with something when it happens. I did a lot of crying. My mom did a lot of crying. We did a lot of praying. Cuz we didn't know, when the water was up, we didn't know what we were going into. When the water went down, we didn't know what we were going to find. There was some people, like my parents, lost everything they had. You had to rebuild. And there's still several neighbors that got flooded like we did, that still love it and still live in that area. I have, oh I guess this is a couple months ago. I went over to get gas, was right over there by the Pit Stop. I was over off Highway 94. I drove down through there. Where mom and dad's house used to be. Where the apartment that I used to live in. The apartment I used to live in is gone. it's not there, they tore it down. The tavern in town is not there. They got rid of the post office. The Post Office is sitting in a trailer, a make-shift trailer, up there sitting on the parking lot of Pit Stop. They never rebuilt the Post Office there. My friend Tammy's house, they tore it down. Mom and dad's house is gone. But, the Schrader's rebuilt. The Grimwald's across the street rebuilt theirs. There's several people that I knew in that area, had went back and redid their house. But, I do believe that if my mom and dad's insurance company and told them what they should have told them ahead of time, they told them after the fact. Mom and dad had so much money on the house, and so much money on the contents of the house, it would...when they come up to adjust it they had just redone their kitchen floors. Beautiful floors. Just did their hardwood floors in the living room. They were working a little bit here and there to replace things, you know, to update the house, basically. And when the flood waters receded, the insurance company agent, after the fact, had told them they could have got up to a hundred thousand dollars worth of flood insurance on the house. They only had forty-five on the house. And twenty-five on the contents. And when that guy come out to adjust the house, told them just the house alone, to rebuild the house the way they had it before, would have cost them about eighty grand. That's money mom and dad didn't have. I mean they had the insurance, and the contents, but that wouldn't have redone the house the way it was, before. Things are too high. So mom and dad got a loan, and ended up getting this house over here.

Everybody likes this house. There's a real estate agent that sends her a letter every year, telling her to let her know if she ever wants to sell the house. There's a lot of people that want this house. I liked the house we had in West Alton. But would I move back? No. Can't put myself through that again.

KK: When you were saying things about, around the house, being built, and things like that. Were there anything special outside? That was built? Or anything for, family gatherings or something like that?

VC: No. I mean, they had a nice size yard. Dad had put in a big garage to put his truck and stuff in. And when I was younger, my mom had this Suzuki 125 motorcycle, that I just put a rut in her driveway-in their backyard Just riding it back and forth, back and forth. See, you can't do things like that over here. Back out there in the country you could burn trash, could can ride dirt bikes on the road, you could... horses. There's stuff out there you could do out there, cuz there was never a cop around to stop you from riding out there on a four-wheeler with no driver's license. No tags or anything on it. Here you have to have tags on everything, and stuff. I remember, when we first- I guess this was right before the flood of '93, I got me a little moped. I was a kid. I drove that thing all over the highway. I got pulled over one time. The one time you wouldn't expect a cop. I got pulled over. He told me I couldn't drive it on the highway without a license, so I drove it in a field the rest of the time. You couldn't get away with something like that over here. You know, it's the country. It's basically like, how do I want to explain this? It's, it's peaceful there. Put it that way. All you basically heard was crickets at night. Mice you had a problem with when they plowed the fields. And that's one thing I can't stand is a mouse. Nope. Whether it was through the flood or harvest time, something was always going on in that house. Having problems with mice...I remember we got a little flood water one time, and it was before '93. We had problems with flood waters coming up off-and-on the whole time we lived out there. Nothing as bad as '93, now. But the water had went down and we had cleaned up. And I was younger at the time, I think I was maybe 14, 15 years old. And my grandma had come up to visit. And I was always afraid- we didn't have water come up in the house, it was just around us. And I was always afraid that a snake would slither somewhere in that house. Because of the water all around us and stuff. And I went down to switch the laundry one time and mom told me, "Bring the laundry back up and switch it around." And I had just turned on the basement lights, and I see these two ole' beady eyes staring back at me. Over by the dryer. I dropped that basket of clothes and went running up those steps and my mom said, "Where's my clothes?" And I said, "Downstairs with the snakes and you can keep it. I'm not going back down there." Couple of days later, my grandma called me outside. She said, "Valorie come here/" And I said, "What, Grandma?" And she goes, "I got your snake. Come here." So, no, no, no not going outside. It wasn't a snake, it was a little salamander, and she'd cut its head off when she thought it was a snake [laughs.] Out there you had to be, I was scared of snakes. I didn't like mice, raccoons. We had raccoons. We had possums. We even had several beavers just running around. Because it was out in the middle of nowhere. There's not -- There's one little store in town. You basically had to drive up Highway 367, at least ten miles, to get to the nearest store. Little ole' convenience store there in town. But they never had what you need. Well, and if they did, it would cost you an arm and a leg. That's one thing I hated about that place. I guess after bringing up some of these memories, it's not as bad as I thought it was. But it's a time a time I would not want to go back and stay. It was really hard on my parents. A lot harder on my parents than it was on me. They were older than I was, and I'm able to bounce back better than they can. When you see how hard your parents work to have something, and then in a matter of just days, have it ripped out from underneath it. I understand what that means now. I was young then. I didn't think, I didn't put two and two together. Now I know. It was a terrible time for them.

KK: Your mom had mentioned that she had, that her and Terry had the catering business in the house.

VC: Yeah. I remember that. Having to completely regroup, I guess you would say. And adjust to moving from. There was lots of times water would get in the basement and we'd have to move everything upstairs. You could still get in and out of town, just Highway 94 was blocked. There was several different times remembering dad having to cart stuff to town, using a wagon. I was helping him carry stuff -- Just so he could go to work. Then when the flood waters hit, they took what they could, you know? They had family come up and help. Several people brought trucks and helped move what they could. What they couldn't get to in time, they left behind. You had...the Army Corps of Engineers would tell you you got till right here. This time. To get out safely. And when...I'd packed all my stuff up and I was helping my parents then. I had a friend watching my daughter. When we started packing stuff out, the last load that we took out, we had three or four trucks, my car, my mom's car, and as we went to the end of the road, it was coming up on the street. And we had a puddle that we had to go through there for awhile, at least six inches deep. And that was...the water had got there before they had told us. You know, they give you this timeframe, and the water was there before that timeframe that they give you. So it's a good thing that we did what we could, and got what we could, and got out of there like we did. Cause then we would have probably been trapped. And people would have lost their vehicles, you know, it' just a scary thought. I can picture all this in my mind. Talking about it is a little different than playing it back in your mind. If you know what I mean. When we got out town, we parked our vehicles. They had Highway 94, there was two lanes going towards 367, going towards Jamestown Mall and towards St. Louis County. And then you had the top two lanes on '94 going from North County to Alton. We'd cross the Alton bridge. The flood waters got so high they had to close down the lower part of '94 and have one lane both ways. And even, I mean I was an adult, and I see how high that flood water got on that lower part of '94, and I'm driving towards North County in my car. And I was always scared to death that one of those other cars would sideswipe me or hit me and knock me off into the flood water. And I was, like I said, I was scared of water, which is a bad thing to be scared of at the time. So it was just...I could just picture me just being trapped, and can't get out of the car. Or trapped and I can't swim to safety. I don't know, it was just a scary thought. but that thought never left me though. When flood waters come up like that When water comes up like that, you constantly got something planned in your head, "What if these happens?" or "What if this happens?" And you're scared that that's actually going to happen. You have thought about it so much that you almost think it's reality, that it can happen.

KK: So, whenever you would go into North County, that was probably for your job, right?

VC: No, that was just like...I think we were going towards North County to...that's where mom and dad had found them a place, over in North County. For a short period of time, over near Jamestown Mall. They had them a log house and they really liked the house, but the lady...the roof leaked so bad that she wanted too much money for it. And that's when they decided they moved there, from there...you know, we had moved several different times between now and then moving to here. We started out in, what you call, North County, then we ended up in Blackjack, I believe. Or no, that was...Jamestown Mall is Blackjack. We lived in Blackjack and then we moved to Ferguson. Where, until we could settle on...basically to decide on whether mom and dad were going to go back, or try to rebuild, or find something else. And I guess mom and dad kind of had went back and forth about moving back. Do you want to go back and deal with this? Or do you want to take the government's buyout, them buy your land. They went back and forth on this for a little bit. And the both come to the decision that they didn't want

go through that again. So once they decided that they didn't want to go back, they moved from Ferguson, which they knew they had to get out of Ferguson, anyway. They moved from Ferguson to...where did they go...I think they came from Ferguson to here. Cause I think they lived in Ferguson for awhile. They were looking for a place around here. And there was a place in Edwardsville that dad liked, and mom liked this place here in Collinsville. And I guess they kind of weighed the options and they decided they liked this house better. And they've been here, what? Twenty-five, twenty-six years now? Yep.

KK: So after the flood, whenever you and your parents and your brothers, they all decided to move over here to Madison County. Cassie was getting to the point where she could be in school and stuff like that. What were the reasons why you, and not just your parents, but you yourself, why did you choose Madison County?

VC: I guess cause I'd stayed over here so much with them? That I've gotten accustomed to being over here. I have family over here. I didn't want to move somewhere where I didn't have family. So that's why I stayed here. I haven't lived here the whole twenty-six years. I moved out, I lived in Randolph county, I believe, two years? And then I lived in Minnesota for a year. But for the rest of the twenty-six years I've been here in Collinsville- well Madison County, I live in South Roxanna now. But out of the twenty-six years, I've lived here twenty-three. My parents have lived here twenty-six, I've lived here twenty-three. I just, I fluctuate, you know. I would rather stay here than. I guess I got used to being here. And when you. It's not that I really chose to move here. I guess it wasn't a decision, I didn't really think about it. Because I had my family here, that's why I stayed here. You know. We all get along. And I'd rather be close to family. And Cassie would rather be close to her Grandparents. That's why we stayed. She was the main source in that.

KK: Now, you had mentioned that before that you didn't really care for being here right away. But then you got accustomed to it. What are the things now that you like about Collinsville, Roxana, Madison County in general.

VC: Hm. There's a lot of different things I like. Lot of things different from West Alton. You have convenience of about every store on every corner that you would need. Out there you didn't. I think the schools are better over here. The schools out there taught good, but the schools out here focus more on the kids. And, if they see a kid falling behind here, they're pretty good about calling the parents and saying, "Something's going on here. She's off course. Or he's off course. And their grades are slipping." And the teachers will work more with the parents and the students. Whereas in West Alton, I don't think that the teachers really cared. I had one teacher out there that did really care about what happened with me or my grades or what have you. And at first, when I first met him, he was just a counselor. And it wasn't until I was in high school that he started teaching. He taught American history. And his name was Mr. Nunn. That's one man I'll never forget. That's the one guy that made it a little easier to go to school in St. Charles. That made a difference. I don't know...people over here, they're just...for the most part they're just good people. If you need them, they're there, but they don't get into your business. Whereas out in a little town in West Alton, it's this one's dating this one's wife. And this one's dating this one's husband. Here, you don't hear too much about that. And the schools are better, like I said. And there's more job opportunities in this area than out in West Alton. There wasn't nothing but farming out there. You'd have to drive into the city to get a job anyway. So I mean there's a lot of jobs around here to where you won't have to take that drive.

KK: So in the future, what would you like to see changed for anything? In the county, Collinsville, Roxanna.

VC: Hm. In this day and age? I'd really wish for people to quit killing each other. Just, plain and simple. A life is worth saving. A life is worth living. I don't care what color you are. Just don't...there's too many people out in this world today that would rather, if they get into with you, would rather pick up a gun and shoot you as to talk to you about it. I wish that could change. I wish people could get along a bit better. And that's about what I want.

KK: Is there anything else you'd like to discuss?

VC: If you got a question, I'll answer them.

KK: No that's it. You've done pretty well. Well, thank you for letting me interview you. I appreciate it.

VC: You're very welcome.