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Pat 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 Pat Childers. The interview is taking place at her home in Collinsville, Illinois. Pat lived in West Alton, Missouri during the 1993 flood. She is now retired. So Pat, where were you born and what was it like growing up?

Pat Childers (PC): I was born in Poplar Bluff Missouri Hospital. I lived in between Broseley and Qulin School. But I went to Broseley School. I had six brothers, no sisters. So I had plenty of work to do.

KK: What kind of work does that mean?

PC: Well, I had a lot of dishes. I shined shoes on Saturday. I catered to the boys I guess. 'Cause my mom grew up, you know, like old school. She thought that the boys never had to wash a dish, or make a bed, or sweep a floor or anything like that. So, I got, I had all that when I was growing up.

KK: Um, you always talk about growing up on a farm. What kind of farm was it?

PC: We had a farm, uh, my dad, we had cattle, pigs, chickens, ducks, about anything. We had two horses, uh, my dad, we raised a lot of cotton. But he also raised watermelons, and cantaloupes, and he would take them to the market in St. Louis. old farmers market down in St. Louis, we went down there a lot with loads of watermelons and sold them and he went a lot to Piedmont. So that's how we made most of our money, that's how he made most of our money, selling watermelons and cantaloupes. And we also, my dad, we never hardly bought any groceries out of the store. There were, there were eight of us, and uh, oh there was nine of us counting me. We hardly ever bought any groceries. The only thing we bought out of the store was like, flour, sugar, 'cause my dad would always kill hogs, and we would, he would salt them down. We would always have meat. My mom would always can. So, we never hardly bought anything out of the store except you know, like flour, coffee, and sugar. That's basically what we bought out of the store. Everything else, we cooked three meals a day at home. We cooked breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And, we never hardly, I hardly ever ate out until I come to St. Louis and started working when I was 18.

KK: What'd you whenever you were 18?

PC: Hmm, well, my, all my brothers was gone and I was the only one left home so my brother had, he was kinda like a manager at a White Castle so I came up here and I worked. I went out and I filled out my application. I worked so I never did go back to school. I only went to the 11th grade, so then I just started working uh, at White Castle. And then I met Terry and, at White Castle. And then about six

weeks later we got married. And we've been married for almost, be March 11 we'll be married 52 years. That's a long time. [laughs]

KK: Yeah. So, how did you end up in West Alton?

PC: We'd bought a house and uh, over in North County. And then when uh, we was out in West Alton, Terry'd seen this house on Sally Road and uh, it was going up for auction. He said, "I'm gonna go out there and buy that house." And I said, "You're not gonna," it's a little brick house, and I said, "you're not gonna buy that little house." And so he went to auction and he bought that up there in auction in St. Charles. And we moved over there in 1977. We moved there in 1977. And then Dan was born, right after, not too long. I was pregnant with Dan when we moved over there. And uh, that's how we got to West Alton, and I lived there until the '93 flood.

KK: So, what was the year, you know, what was '93 like for you? Like overall, was it a good or I mean a bad year?

PC: It was really bad when the... Every day we had a, me and my husband had a catering business at that time. He ran a catering truck, and I did the cooking, and I had a lady working with me too. But anyway, we uh, the water started coming up, uh, oh in like in June it was getting, coming up. And they thought we was going to have a flood. Well, it came up and it did get in my basement a little bit that time, but by the end of the summer, then the water started coming up again. And then, oh I guess, I would, I would go down to the levee. We didn't live too far from the levee. I drove down to it, to off of Sally Road down there to look at the water about every day to see how high it was getting. And everyday we I drove, the water was getting higher. So, uh, I kept, every day when I would go get groceries, I'd say, "Well, I'm going to go look at the water." Every day, I would get a little more worried about the water, and my next door neighbor said, "Oh it's not going to be that bad this year." And I said, "I don't know." One day I said, "Lord," I said, "Just how bad is this water going to be?" and I was driving my car, and I was going down to look at the water and everything just went black. And I told Terry, this flood is going to be bad. Him and Ray were out there swinging. He said, "Nah. Ray said it's not going to be that bad. We'll probably only get about two feet, maybe a foot in our house." And I said, "No Ray, I think it's really going to be bad," and he said, "No." So, we took some of our furniture out of the house but not all of it. Uh, Terry's brother came up and we took, I bought a new couch and stuff just before the flood. And we took, we took some of the best furniture we had out, but we was still walking back through there staying some. And then we had a camper when the water started coming over the levee. We had a camper; we took it out and parked it over there on, behind the gas station at the Pit Stop. And, uh, so then we would walk down in it everyday to check on our house. And then we got where we'd have to take a boat over there to see about it. And we had to um, we had uh, living up there we had, we only had, I had Dan and Tim and Kevin. Valerie was already married, but she lived in West Alton too. And, Dan was a junior and Tim was in the sixth grade when we, when the flood started coming. And the boys really like the schools over there because it was just a small little school up there in West Alton. There's probably only about 80 kids went up there from first to fourth grade, and it was just a small little school. But after the flood came they closed the school down. And they all had to go to Orchard Farm then. But uh, getting back to the water, and then so, it started getting higher. And I still never thought about where the black came, and the last boat ride we came up there when the levee broke, and the water got really high, I went back home and the water was all the way up to our roof.

And that's all I seen was the black roof. Then I knew what the black meant. And that was a really hard time for me. It hurts to even think about it today. [Crying]

KK: Do you want to take a break?

PC: Yeah

[Recording paused]

KK: Okay, so, um, whenever we were talking about the uh, the little playhouse that Terry had built for Tim and Dan.

PC: He had built them a little, a little clubhouse out back. And it they hadn't been built for very long. And uh, he put windows in it and doors in it. They had uh, we got them a couple years ago, before that we'd got them a tire house. A Star Wars tire house. Tim and Dan really liked Star Wars. Dan collected them but Dan would let, he would put them up and he would get out every Christmas. and they would take them down in the basement and they would set up all the Star Wars stuff and they would play with it for about a week and then Dan would pack it all back up. Put it up and wouldn't let nobody play with it. Then next year we would get more Star Wars stuff and he'd they would get that out and play with it. But, then when they got their clubhouse built, they moved, it was like an eight by ten little clubhouse that had a window and everything in it. And they was going to put benches and stuff back there. And they'd put all their Star Wars stuff out there. And uh, so, Terry told them, "Well, it's pretty high there." so he thought it would be safe there. So uh, the water kept coming up and Terry said, and Dan and Tim was worried about the clubhouse. And Terry said, "Well, it'll be alright 'cause it's pretty heavy." We had a fence around our house but then the last time we went over there, I guess the little clubhouse had floated down, the water floated it down the river. So they lost their clubhouse. Then we walked back in and after the, our house after that, after the water went down. Me and my husband was walking in it and we thought, "Well maybe we'll just rebuild it." You know, all the siding. There was a storm came after that and all the siding, the brick, a lot of the brick was off our house, and Terry said, "Well maybe we'll just redo it, 'cause the floors are still in it and stuff." We walked around in it that day. We went, couple days later we went back over there, where we was walking at, the floors had all caved into the water into the basement; the basement was full of water. If that floor would've fallen, we would've probably died, if that floor would uh, while we was walking around in there. I was, I always collected pennies. I never will forget it, and uh, I had a 2 gallon of pennies in a jar. And so I just, Terry just threw 'em, uh on the bed there and I thought, "Why, I don't know how them pennies got out of the house." And so, we was looking through windows one day, it was really funny, we was just walking around the outside looking in the windows. So, my bedroom window was there and I went up to the window, looked in the window, and there sat the jar of pennies in the window. The whole jar was there. And it was like, it was and I told Terry I said, "I don't know how they got in the window." They was just sitting on the windowsill, as a holder. And we brung them home. The banks wouldn't even take them because the water was really bad on them. So, the bank wouldn't even cash them pennies in. They were really bad. so, we had to clean them up. but, then we had to get some stuff and clean them, but I don't know, I think there was like \$68 dollars or something in it, in the pennies, was in there, and uh, but, and then we uh... It was really hard for the boys 'cause we moved place to place. We moved oh, we moved over in

Berkeley. And the boys was never around a lot. I mean, out there was quiet. we went, we would go to the country, we would go camping. we would never hardly ever locked a door in West Alton. My neighbors would say, "I came home and got a cup of sugar, or I got something while I was gone." I'd say, "Well, the door is always open, you know." We hardly ever locked the door over there. And uh, so then, Terry's friend had a house in Berkeley. We moved over there and there was guns going off every night. Shoot, I mean, cops was everywhere, at somebody's house about every night. I told Terry, I said, "We can't live here with the boys." And Tim was my middle son. He was in the 5th grade. He had the hardest time of all moving. Dan adjusted good. Kevin hadn't started school yet. But Tim really had a hard time. That makes me really bad sad. 'Cause he really had a rough time. Then he had a rough time when we moved too. When we got in Berkeley and his uh, his uncle got him a little knife. A little knife just 'cause he collected, Tim collected knives. He bought him a little knife and one of those kids over in that subdivision took his knife and stuff like that and he was just even scared to get out. So, we moved there, then we moved over to uh, we moved into a log house over there by the mall. The boys could even walked to the mall. Danny and Tim walked to the mall all the time over there. And we would look for a house and we could not find a house. If I liked it, my husband didn't like it. If he liked it, I didn't like it. So we, it was just a constant battle all the time about where we were gonna live. And we didn't have that much flood insurance on the house. So we was trying to stay in it. I thought. the government, we only had like 35. that's all we could get out of it. They told us at the time that's all the insurance we could get. So they wanted uh, the government wanted to buy our house, and Ray went out there the next day and he sold his for ten thousand dollars. And I told Ray, I said, "I'm not selling my house for 10 thousand dollars." I said, "I'll just rebuild on this lot. I am not gonna do that." So I went out there, and I prayed for 3 days and fasted. I said, "Lord, we've gotta have a place to live." So we went up there and talked to this guy. So he said, "Well, we're gonna buy your house. We'll have to go out and look at it." and I said, "well, you can't get in it cause it's all fell down." He said, "Well, there's a house across the road over there that's similar to your house." And he said, "What we'll do is pay your insurance and then we'll give you the rest of it." So then he went appraised our house and I believe it was 75 thousand dollars. So I walked out of there, and I felt relieved that at least we could find a house, you know. So I went back, my neighbor Ray said, "How'd you do out there?" and I told Ray I said, "Well, I got 75 thousand out of my house." And he said, "How'd you get 75 out of your house?" And Terry said, "Well she went out there and she was really upset." So he said, "I don't know," he said, "She didn't even tell me that she'd been praying and fasting for 3 days for something to happen." So then, we got the money from that and we started looking more for houses. And so we was looking over in Illinois over here. We found a couple we liked, but none of them, Terry wanted one and I didn't want it and then, I wanted the best school district around for the boys, 'Cause I didn't want them to have any more trouble. So then and the agent, called me up one day and told me that he had a house that he wanted me to look at, it was a repo house. So me and Terry come and he said it had seven and-a-half acres and the bank owned it. So we came out here and we looked at it. We both really, we just fell in love with this house when we came here. We both liked the house but there was another contract on the house too. So, there was two contracts on this house, and I have a really good old lady friend at church. And so she said, "Did you find your house? I've been praying that you was going to find that house this week." and I said, "No, I found one but somebody else has got a bid on it." So Jenny grabbed my hand and she started praying, she said, "Lord, you let them have this house 'cause they need this house." She said, "You give the other people a better home than they was expecting for a house. Just find them a better one." So the next day, the real estate lady called me and told me that, the guy told me that we got the house. So then we was

just waiting on money from the bank, from our insurance out there to pay on this house. So, the guy really blessed us with this house. The house I live in now is a lot better than the house I had in West Alton, but it was just a bad time for my kids moving, especially my middle son. He had the roughest time of it, and I think today he still, he doesn't, he will not talk about the flood. And my youngest son, he was only four, and he used to go out there when the water was coming up and be swinging out there and his feet would be swinging in the water. But he'd, I mean, he doesn't really remember the flood. Tim didn't adjust. Dan adjusted, but Tim just didn't adjust and I think he still has a lot of trouble nowadays with what went on with the flood. He didn't even like to talk about it. But it was really hard on him, but he seems he's doing better. We just don't really ever talk, we don't hardly ever talk about the flood anymore. They really don't even want, I have pictures, but they don't even really want me to show the pictures or anything like that. He just says it's in the past. but I'm blessed with my kids. They are really adjusted pretty good now. It was just a hard time to go through that. One year, one year was bad, but after we got through that year it was everything seems to start coming together again. Tim's happier now. Dan moved on. He lives in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He teaches college down there, he's a professor. Kevin's got a pretty good job. Valerie works, so they all, the kids have been pretty blessed since we've moved over here. So we just had some rough times there.

KK: So um, whenever you were looking for a house in Madison County, did you know that you wanted to live in Madison County? Or were there certain things, that you know, you saw about this county that you really wanted to, you know, live here? You had mentioned the school district.

PC: Yeah, the school district. Well, we didn't, we couldn't move back to West Alton 'cause we didn't want to go back to flood again. And we didn't want to move to St. Charles because there's a lot of people. We liked West Alton 'cause it was out kinda out in the open. You know, there's just a road. Down Sally Road there's only about eight or nine houses on that road, you know, and all the rest of it was just farmland. So, you know, it wasn't like houses just right close together. I didn't like that, being right close together. So, when we started looking, we found an acre of ground over there. but it was really close over in Edwardsville. Terry liked it but I didn't like the house, but he like the house. Then, we found another one, and the insurance... It had five acres and it was in Edwardsville, but he said that the lady that lived next door, she was really crabby. So with people going in and out, out of there 'cause her house was there by the driveway, you know. The house sit back but you had to go right by her house. He said that she was always giving people trouble. So I said, "Well, I said I don't want no more trouble." So, we just kept looking. Like I said, then uh, about five days after that the real estate guy told me, he said he had a house that just went on the market. But somebody had a bid on it, but he said it's whoever bids the highest is going to get it anyway. But he didn't know what they bid on the house. So he said he had an idea. He told us what to bid. We bid it at, we bid it at, uh, 100 thousand on this house so, uh, was 7.5 acres. The bank owned it. And then I believe uh, somebody else had a mortgage on it but they had just lost theirs. But the bank had to come in here, redo a lot of stuff to this house. But it was really nice when we moved in it. And the boys liked it. They finally found a place they like, because they would go down to the, when we moved here it got better. Tim starts getting better when we moved here 'cause he got a stable place. We have a creek down here in the woods. We have 7.5 acres and a lot of them is just woods, but it has a creek in it. Oh, about a week, we was down there, Dan and Tim and them went down to the creek. Some of their friends that they made come over here and they got down there in quicksand. my oldest son lost his pair of new Nikes down there in the quicksand. He said, come home to get his shovel, said he was gonna get it. I said, "Forget your shoe,

you're not gonna get it back." I said, "It went in the quicksand." They would, they was tires down there. they would walk, they would be logs crossed the, back where, 'cause our property went over to the next street. And they would walk them logs and go over there. So but then they, them boys really like the woods when we moved here. Their friends, a lot of them come just played in the woods all the time. They made trails in there, and then they had them ropes they would cut swing from tree to tree like Tarzans. They would. They would get on them and they'd swing from tree to tree. Then they would get them another one of them things and they would cut them at the roots so they would swing on them. Them things are really strong though. Dan, Dan adjusted really good but Tim it took him a lot longer. He hated school, he didn't like school. He didn't like nothing over here. But seems like once he got in the, seems like after he got out, he went into high school, seemed like Tim was starting doing better. He got different friends, and it seemed like Tim adjusted a little bit better. But I didn't think he really ever adjusted. He liked, he liked it over there 'cause he had friends over there. That they all, everybody's scattered, you know. For the first year you know, they had a reunion you know, and everybody went back to see everybody. And that kinda helped, but then most of everybody that we knew moved from there. So, they was just wasn't any, there just wasn't any, there was still a few people that we known but not very many. Most of them all moved. I think on Sally Road. I think there's probably, they all moved probably except two or three people's left over

there, everybody else just left after the '93 flood. They just didn't want to move back. In that little town in West Alton up there, there is probably only about a third of that town left now. There's not very many people that live up there at all. They even moved to uh, the Post Office is still across the street over there by the Pit Stop. They never did move that back. 'Cause the Pit Stop never got flooded. Well, they got water around them but I don't think they ever got water inside of that 'cause it's higher over there. It was always a problem getting in and out over there when the flood came. You could go if you wanted to walk the railroad tracks. So, the water was, was bad. The only time I got my picture was in the paper in the flood. We was walking down, I'll tell you this. We was walking down, we got, this was before the water got near. Me and my husband had been, we would walk the railroad track, and we went into the house. And we walked around and we came back out. Dan had some money and he put it up and he wanted me to go get it. So I went got over there and got his money for him. And so, we went back and the water was about 3 foot under the viaduct there in West Alton, out there on 67. I said, I told Terry, I said, "I don't have no more shoes, this is the last shoes. I have no more shoes in the camper," I said, "You have shoes." He said, "Well I'll just carry you across my back." So the next morning on the paper, "Man Saves Woman From Water." That was on every news place around. "Man Saves Woman." I told Terry, I said, "You just saved me from my shoes." But that's how the paper wrote it. They had never asked us no questions or nothing. They just snapped that. That's how news gets started though. "Man Saves Woman." Terry laughs about that today. We had pictures of that someplace where he was carrying me through that water and I was on his back. "Man Saves Woman." That was really funny though, that time though. And Terry was riding his bicycle through that, and they thought he didn't have no place to go because he was just riding his bike with Dan. That was funny. They stopped and asked if he needed any help. But Salvation Army was really good through this time though for us. And Red Cross. They both helped us a lot because the boys lost all their clothes and stuff. And Red Cross and Salvation Army, they helped us a lot with the boys' clothes and stuff back then. 'Cause we would tie, 'cause they said that we probably wouldn't get no more than a foot in the house. So, I just took bags, you know, like clothes bags that you would wrap up. I put our clothes up really high. But see how that

turned out. You shouldn't listen to the weather people, sometimes. 'Cause they said it wasn't gonna, well, I guess, if the guy hadn't run the boat into the levee, it would probably. We probably wouldn't have got as much water. But I don't know because, see, we lived in between, where we lived, we lived in between the Missouri River and the Mississippi River. Well, not only the Mississippi River was going over the bank, the Missouri river was running over the top of the railroad track too. So that's another, 'cause when the two rivers just met then, you know, 'cause that what's got everyone's houses then. 'Cause the two rivers, 'cause if it had just been one river, it wouldn't have been as bad but since they both was going over their banks, and they just couldn't do nothing, couldn't do nothing with it. But, I am glad that part of my life is done with. I don't ever want to move back to no flood zone anymore. Really didn't even know when we moved over there that it was a flood zone I don't think. 'Cause we just was driving, when he was driving that day and he seen that house. It was going to sold up to St. Charles, so he says, "I'm going to go up there that day." and I didn't even go with him. Well we was hunting uh, Valerie was younger when we was just trying to get into a better school district with her. She, Valerie, but when we moved Valerie over there she was 11. She adjusted really good, you know. Then after, Dan was, how old Dan was, 16, when the flood came, yeah, he was in high school. He was a junior in high school. He had just turned 16 that year. And over in, uh, that really upset Dan because when he got over here, you know, 'cause when you get sixteen in Missouri, over there you didn't have to take Drivers Ed. You just went and got your license, you know. So when Dan moved over here, he had to take Drivers Ed. before they would let him get his license. So he didn't get to drive until his senior year. He said that, "Well I can get them Missouri." I said, "No you can't get them in Missouri because you don't live in Missouri anymore." And they wouldn't let him 'cause we moved over here in November, so they wouldn't let him take 'cause he was a junior, and they wouldn't let him take drivers ed. that year. So he had to take it in his senior year. Sometimes I think that it's better if they're older when they drive anyway. Then Valerie, she went through the flood. She had a really hard time. She lived by herself, and she only had Cassie then, who was two. She lost everything in her apartment uptown.

KK: You were talking about the guy that had broken the levee. How did you find out about it and what really happened?

PC: We had to take the boys to Terry's brother that night, down in Mt. Vernon. So we was gone that night, and We came back the next day. The guy took a boat and rammed it into the levee and broke the levee. 'Cause the water was really soft. Any...it might of broke anyway, but they caught him. Eventually, 'cause they had so many sandbags there, 'cause the water was always seeping through. But, when he rammed the boat, that's what flooded the house. That's why the water went all the way up to the roof. And, if he didn't do it, it might not of did that. You know, if he hadn't run the boat. We don't know. That's uh, 'cause the water was still coming up then. And, it was coming over. Each day it was getting higher. It was coming over each levee. 'Cause the railroad track there, it was coming over the railroad track and then it was coming over the levee. Over the levee by the Mississippi where we still lived. It was both coming. It was two rivers meeting together, is what it was. Usually, there, when we had got water there before, we just got water in our basement then. Not very much, but a foot or two. Anyway, see the levee didn't break that year, but water got around our house, and we had walked, to get out, to go to town we had to park our cars out. The little school up there where the boys went to school. It never had no water in it until the '93 flood. I mean, they had a flood out there before, sometime they had a flood before the '93 flood. But it never got into that little school. The '93 flood was the first time they ever got water in that little school because it sits up on a hill. Water got into the school. That was the

first-time water was ever in the little school. And that was on account of the Missouri river. Got that one 'cause that was on that side. And the Mississippi, we was more on the side of the Mississippi but the rivers just met there. But before the water got up, we could walk down the railroad track and then cut across, you know walk across the field that go to our house, but then when the levee broke, you couldn't walk anywhere. They would take us back to see your house, and the National Guard would take us back in the boats. And the last, that's when the last time I went out there before the water went down. I seen the black roof on the house, I had always seen. Before we went out there, my next door neighbor Ray, it was only about 3 foot of water. About three foot in my house and two foot in his house and they thought we wasn't going to get anymore. So Terry said that we could just cut the walls half off, you know, and redo the walls. And Ray, went into his house, and opened the refrigerator and the electricity was still on. I said, "Ray, you coulda died." He opened the frigerator and the light was on. And there was two foot of water in his house. I said, "Why would you open your frigerator?" I said, "Boy, somebody was watching out for you Ray." I don' know why he did that. But we never went in ours, when the two, three foot of water, we never went back until the water went down. When you go back, you won't believe the mud. Oh my gosh, you won't believe the mud. I bet you they was 2 or 3 foot of mud in your house. I mean packed mud. When you redo those houses, 'cause me and Terry was going redo it til the floors fell through. He helped, the strangers next door redone theirs and him and a bunch of them would go there. They had to take shovels and get that mud and put it out the windows. That mud is really heavy. And sometimes it would be as high as 2 feet in your house, just solid mud. Nothing but mud. There was mud everywhere. The only way you could get that out too is with a shovel. We was gonna do that, then we went over there, and our floors had fell in. Terry said, "Well, we're not moving back here." Then we thought about just tearing it down and rebuilding it. 'Cause we didn't know, like I said, we didn't have that much insurance on it. So then they offered to buy a place on it so we went up there. But a lot of people left. I say, probably, two thirds of the people's gone that was up there before, in West Alton. Almost everybody. All my friends, none of them live there anymore. They all live, some of them's in Piedmont, Missouri. Some of them is in St. Charles. They're just scattered everywhere, you know. I met a lot of nice people during the flood, that you wouldn't know. Lee Ann and her husband, she was a hairdresser, and her husband was a police officer from Ferguson. They seen us on T.V. and she contacted me and she wanted to give the boys and Terry free haircuts and stuff. And they came over and gave the boys a hundred dollars, yeah, just 'cause they wanted to help somebody. No nicer people than they was. And she said, "Well we wanted to help somebody that we could meet." And then after we got the house, I invited them over and they came and had dinner with us. They were really nice people. You met a lot of nice people during the flood. People you know, it seems they pull all together when there's something wrong like that. You know, you try help each other, I think. This is just like starting all over. You don't have nothing, you know. You just have nothing. But Terry, he, I don't know if it, I knew it bothered him. He just, he wouldn't let it, 'cause he didn't let me see him worrying about all that. All during the flood neither, you know, and what we was going to do. Because we ran a catering business. We had a catering business, and we had a big kitchen and all of our equipment downstairs. And that was just, for him too, you know, that was a big problem 'cause that was our life. That's what we did. We had a catering business. That not only took our house, but that took our jobs too for a long time, you know. But Terry, would just, he would go pick up stuff from restaurants and stuff, you know, and take and deliver 'em. See, it affected all them too because they had jobs, you know. I had friends that worked for me, you know so, they would come down and help me. So it was just different back then though. Things a lot different now. So then Terry went back, driving an over the road truck, not too long after that. So,

he just went driving. He didn't really like it 'cause he didn't like to be gone from home neither though you know. Least, he was home on weekends, you know, when he was driving trucks so. The boys could go with him any time they wanted to on the truck. But they went him to Chicago with him one time and they said that was boringest ride. They said, Dan said, "I don't know how you stand driving that truck." He said, "That's just boring." Too boring for him. He said he doesn't even like to drive up here from Mississippi. But you gotta make a living. You gotta make a living, you know.

KK: So um whenever you moved to Collinsville, and you know, you guys had got situated, you know, boys back into school, and you and Terry had gotten another job. What did you like about living in Collinsville and Madison County? What were the things you had found after you had moved here? What did you like about it?

PC: Well, it took me a long time. I mean, I like the place I lived. But, it took me a long time 'cause my place was always with, I had lived in West Alton so long, you know. And it just took me a long time, 'cause I knew all my neighbors over there. And I hardly know any of my neighbors here now. Even living here this long, you know? It's a different, um, different time. I guess, I don't know. But at first, I didn't even like here, no. We thought about building a house down in Pevely. We had some ground down there; we was going to build a house. But then, we decided that we needed a house now. Not wait for a house to be built. I like this house better than the house in West Alton. It just wasn't in West Alton. But after the first couple years, I got used to it. I like it here now, but at first when I moved here, I did not like it. And my kids did not like the school. Dan tolerated it. But they never went to a big school neither though. Like I said, West Alton was just a small school. Where Tim went, there was probably four grades. From that school there, there was only four grades, there was maybe only 70 kids, no more than 80 in them four classrooms there. Then, when they got in 5th grade, they went to Orchard Farm. It was different for them 'cause, you know, Dan went to high school here, where was going to high school over there, like with 70 kids and he moves over here and there's like 500 and something, you know, kids in the school. So, it was a big adjustment for him too. You know. And Tim, he didn't adjust, he uh, he was just really, I would try to talk to him. He just wasn't not happy at all. He wasn't happy with school. Nobody liked him. He had no friends. And Dan jumped in and made friends real easy but Tim didn't make friends easy. And he just, but after Tim was here, he more or less got, when he got into sixth grade, seemed like he might have been doing a bit better. The first year was really hard on him. But then, when he got into high school seemed like he did a little better. But, he will not talk about the flood now today. And Kevin doesn't remember it. And Dan doesn't want to talk about it neither. So they don't hardly never mention the flood. Nobody hardly ever mentions the flood. They just kinda, that's in the past. They don't even like, I've taken movies from that out there, they don't even want to play them back. You know they just don't want to. They just don't want, they don't even really wanna mention it. But Tim had the hardest time. You know, when you've been a mother and when your kids is not happy, that's probably why I didn't like it so well over here. 'Cause Tim was so unhappy, you know. He had a horrible time in school. But it took a long time for him. He just hated it. He said he hated it here. He just hated it. He hated everything. But it took him a long time. I probably shoulda really had counselling for Tim, really, but I didn't. But I didn't think about it at the time but I probably should have. Tim probably should have went to counseling.

KK: Previously, before the interview, you had talked to me about, you know, how there was a teacher after you had moved here in Collinsville, that really, you know, helped Tim through a lot, especially...

PC: Mrs. Barr. She was great. She was the greatest teacher. She called me one time and she said, "I know I'm supposed to say anything about who your kids are but," she said, "I know where you came from." And she said, "I just don't want to see your kids get mixed up with something, you know, with the wrong crowd." And I went to school and talked to her. So she said, "Tim just don't wanna do nothing, you know." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. Ms. Barr why don't you put him in the corner? I know you can't spank." [She said,] "But I can't put him in the corner neither." And I said, "I'll tell you what." I said, "You just send me a note home if he behaves and I'll take care of the punishment. Okay?" And from that day on, I never had a problem with Tim and Ms. Barr. She said he made one of the best students. And I seen her, oh, last year up where I was eating up at Fazzi's. And she asked me how Tim was. She still remembers Tim. And I remember her, she was the best. I mean, Tim had one teacher, I had tried to get him moved from her. Because you know, Tim didn't need that. But then the next year he got Mrs. Barr. And she was great. She knew where Tim had come from. So, she said, Tim was having a hard time, 'cause he couldn't connect. Because he sat around and she said he's thinking about West Alton all the time. She said that's what he was thinking about. She said West Alton, where he came from, the flood, and stuff and what happened to him, you know. And she said she could see that it really bothered Tim. So she probably helped Tim over here more than anybody. She was a great teacher. I wish there was more like her, I tell you. She's retired now. But she was really a great teacher. Tim remembers Ms. Barr. She was really, she was a good teacher.

KK: After that, he started you know, improving in school?

PC: Yes. After that, yeah. After he got in her class, seemed like he did better. Well, he didn't want to do better at first. But we just, like I said, I went and had a talk with her. And we talked and she said she couldn't, and I said, "Well, I know you can't do nothing." So I said, just like I told them, send me a note. She said, and when she said Tim just turned around completely, you know. And she said he made a really good student. He was really doing bad in school. 'Cause he wouldn't do his work or nothing, you know. And she'd send me notes. She got him on the right track. She had patience. She had a lot of patience with Tim. I know she talked to him a lot because she had known where he came from. So she probably give him a little more attention than the rest of them 'cause she knew that he had a rough year that year. That year before he came here, so. She understood, I think, Tim more than any of the other teachers. He just wasn't. I told him, I said, "Tim, if we go back, none of your friends, if we build back in West Alton, all your friends are gone anyway. So they're all scattered everywhere. So there's not none of them anywhere, you know. They're gone. They've moved to St. Charles. Pevely. Some of them moved to Piedmont, Missouri." I mean, there wasn't any place else. He wasn't going to have the same friends anyway, you know, 'cause they was gone. But when you're in the fifth grade, it's hard when you have your friends and then, to stick you in another school where you don't know nobody. Tim was a little bit heavier, and he said kids would call him fat. Oh and they'd call him four eyes. I couldn't hardly get him to wear his glasses because they would call him four eyes. And he had a hard time, and eventually, he refused to wear them. He don't wear glasses today, but oh man, the teacher wanted me to go get him glasses. "I am not wearing them." I had the awfulest time with him wearing glasses. He would not wear, he did want to wear his glasses. Then when he got older he quit wearing them. And I guess his eyesight's alright now. But he hated them glasses buddy. He said they made fun of him all day long wearing them glasses. I think he broke them on purpose, knowing Tim.

KK: So, um, knowing that you've lived in Madison County for a while, you've talked about how the

boys initially had troubles and now that, you know, they went to school and found friends and stuff that they're doing a lot better. You, yourself, you've enjoyed it now that you've been living here for a while. But, what would you like to see, um, you know change in Madison County? What are the things that you appreciate or you would like to see change?

PC: I would like to see the taxes go down a little bit 'cause taxes are really getting high for people living in Collinsville, Madison County. You know that. 'Cause our taxes have over doubled since we moved here. And that's one thing that's not good about Madison County. Is the taxes. But the school district, the schools I like alright. I feel that they have good schools. Kevin, like I said, Kevin wasn't in school. He was only four when the flood came. Kevin went to school. He liked school over here. So, I had no problems with Kevin in school at all. Because, he never had to go. And I'll say something, and he'll say, "Well, I don't remember none of that." He was four. He's just, if he did remember any of it, he doesn't remember. He says he don't remember any of it. And I like being close. I am not that far from the store anyway. In West Alton, the closest grocery store for me was probably about ten miles. I had to drive when I went to get groceries. So the stores are a lot closer. I like that better. And I have a lot of friends now, over here, that I didn't have. I have made friends now since I've lived here. But it's hard, it's like hard starting all over too, you know. I think it's harder, it was harder for Terry than he let on, I think. I think it really, I think it was a lot harder on him. He would just try to not to think about it too, I think. Sometimes, things don't work out like you think they're gonna do anyway. We thought we'd live in West Alton the rest of our life. But see, different plans. You always, don't get too certain about your plans 'cause they can always change. Well like I said, I love it here now. When I first lived here, when I first moved here I loved the house and everything, but I wouldn't move back to West Alton now. After I, after the years I've spent here. Nah, I wouldn't. I wouldn't never move back now. But, ask me that about the first year, I wanted, I would've moved back. Probably most of it would have been on account of Tim. 'Cause he hated it so bad. He was really unhappy. But Dan, I worried about him more than I did Tim 'cause I thought Tim would adjust better than Dan. 'Cause Dan was a senior in high school. I mean a junior in high school. We moved over here in November and he came over here as a junior. I thought, he would have a more harder time than Tim because he was in high school. But, it worked out the opposite way. Dan made friends real easy. Tim didn't. Dan made friends with Mike and all around over here, just like, you know. He made friends real easy, and Tim didn't. I thought it would be the other way around. But it wasn't. It was harder on Tim. Sometimes you think. And Dan wanted me to get his license and let him drive to Orchard Farm every day. I said, "I'm not doing that." But after he got used to it, he like it though. Like I said, Dan made friends right away. He had friends that he hung with all the time. Well I said, when Tim, when he got in sixth grade, he had friends. They would come to his birthday party. 'Cause I give parties and stuff. I let them have parties and stuff and invite kids over. Then, they would go down to the creek and stuff. So that made it better. I just don't think Tim ever really adjusted really good to it, at all. And I don't know if something happened to him. We was just shifting here and there, you know. I don't know if he had something happen. But, he never did say if it did or not. But I don't know. He just don't want to talk about it.

KK: Is there anything to else that you would like to discuss before the interview is over?

PC: Well, one thing that is nice happened. Tim found a nice young lady that I really like. She's great.

KK: Well thank you.

PC: I think she helped him out a lot. So, I'm thankful for her.

KK: Well, thank you for saying that. That was very nice, and thank you for taking the time to meet with me today, and I really appreciate the opportunity.

PC: Alright. Thank you.