

Diana: Where do you live?

John: In town.

Diana: And how old are you?

John: I'm 60

Diana: And your name is?

Kristi: Kristi Lee.

Diana: You live in the same place?

Kristi: Yes, we do.

Diana: What is your occupation?

Kristi: City clerk.

Diana: And how old are you?

Kristi: 57.

Diana: When did you first become aware of the Starbuck Fire, hereafter referred to simply as "the fire."

Kristi: Well, we heard about it when the first fire whistles went off, and I think that was about 10:30 or 11. Might even have been before that.

Diana: It was 11:45

Kristi: We knew there was a fire down south of us, and we started having people coming in because the wind was just crazy. We had started having people come into the city hall, asking, "What do we do on evacuation because evacuation has started being talked about." I told them that I actually didn't know since it was my first time with this. But I was sure whistles would blow continuously and bullhorns would be going up and down the street by the law enforcement.

Diana: So, when did you first hear?

John: I had actually gone to Hutchinson the day before and was coming home on that day. I ran into a fire over between Pratt and Greensburg over by the cotton gin. I was detoured around and then got on up to Bucklin and turned south and started running into smoke. So I made a phone call and was asking why there was smoke here. I was told that there was a fire way down south. I was pretty surprised because of the amount of smoke I was seeing. I thought if this fire was a long ways away, I shouldn't be seeing this much smoke. I thought maybe there was a fire closer than that.

Diana: Do you remember what time it was when you got to Bucklin?

John: It was after lunch, maybe 1:30 or 2.

Diana: Did you either one of you evacuate?

Kristi: No and yes.

John: When I got home, the talk was just the fire and the smoke was getting thicker. I met up with a friend of mine and we drove out into the country to see what we could see. At one point, we did see the fire cross the Englewood highway. So I'm like, yeah, there was a lot of smoke, but in my mind, I wasn't really grasping what it actually was. Then when we saw the planes, what we saw wasn't huge, but it had jumped the highway and was moving. Kristi calls me and says "They are evacuating town." She was like, "I've got the dogs loaded up already."

Kristi: This was later in the day because I didn't leave the office for a while

Diana: What time did you leave the office? Do you remember? Because the evacuation came at 3:40 for Ashland.

Kristi: It was probably close to 4:30 or 5:00, because even Nick Johnson came by and said, "Kristi, you've got to leave," and I said, "I can't, my phone is still ringing, asking for help, and I need to be here."

John: Because I had gone out and driven around for a while.

Diana: What kinds of questions were people asking you?

Kristi: "Where do we go?" "Which way do we need to go?" "Is this a true evacuation?" "What is the extent?" I even had people from out of town call me and say, "Kristi, what is going on?" I talked to them and told them that they were evacuating Ashland due to fire, and I said, "We've got another one coming in from the north." At that time, that one from the north had started up and was coming in on us.

Diana: Did you talk to law enforcement?

Kristi: No

Diana: Did you talk to the emergency preparedness people?

Kristi: No

Diana: Where were you getting your information?

Kristi: Kendall finally came over because they never really did make contact with the city. But Kendall said that...

Diana: And Kendall is the mayor?

Kristi: Yes, Kendall is our mayor, and he said finally that he had been hearing things and that they had talked to one of the city guys. Then the city guys called Kendall, and he called John and said, "Look, we've not been officially notified," and then we were actually officially notified, so we started procedures of moving stuff. Like I said, I didn't leave the office for awhile. I did a couple of backups of my computer. Araceli and I put our permanent records in the back part of our vault. We started getting the office prepared for the worst. Our cemetery stuff, all of that stuff, we had to start moving stuff.

Diana: Is that your vault up-stairs?

Kristi: Yes.

Diana: When did you finally go home?

Kristi: I think things finally quieted down a little bit closer to 5 and I finally locked the doors then. I went home and loaded up our dogs just to get ready. I know that there were some major issues, but I guess maybe naively, I still thought we would be okay. So we did leave town and eat supper.

Diana: Which direction did you go?

Kristi: We went to the west. We didn't go east. We went west to Minneola and then on over to Fowler and ate supper. Then they started to say they were shutting things down, I looked at John and said, "John, we gotta get back into town. I've got to be back in town." He said, "We will make it."

Diana: How did you come back?

John: We came up to the eleven-mile corner, and there was people stopped everywhere, you know, that is where they were shutting them down. I was talking to one of the state highway people that was flagging, and they told us that there was a highway patrolman or a police officer a mile or two up the road towards Ashland. They said, "You will not get through that way." They were like, "We can't give you permission to leave," but with her really needing to get back... I had issues with some things that we needed to do, and I was definitely of the opinion that we needed to be back.

Diana: What time are you talking?

Kristi: It wasn't totally dark yet.

Diana: So, maybe 7:00?

John: Yeah, it was just starting to get dark. We just turned and went south about a mile and hit that first dirt road and came in on the dirt.

Kristi: There was one bad spot that we went through.

John: Smoke.

Kristi: Smoke, and there were some flames right there alongside the road, but we made it through and got on into town.

Diana: So you came on old Highway 40 all the way and came in by the dump?

Kristi: Yes.

Diana: And then when you got back into town, did you go to your house or did you go to the city hall?

Kristi: We went on to the house...

John: You started gathering

Kristi: I started going ahead and gathering some stuff, a lot of my Daddy's paperwork and stuff like that, and some pictures of John's mother that I knew were irreplaceable that we probably didn't have negatives. I started gathering some stuff up. John started helping me. We just set stuff by the door, and we left the dogs all kenneled in case we had to hurry and grab them. Then we went over to our property on the east side of town and we kept

watching the flames. There were still some people in town that were helping each other. We kept visiting that if something got bad, we were hurrying and calling it in, trying to get help.

Diana: Did you call into dispatch?

Kristi: I never actually did go ahead and call dispatch, but after we talked to a couple of people, they said that they just had. I was right there with Kirk Woodruff and some of them.

Diana: So you were mainly calling each other on cell phones?

Kristi: We were actually talking to each other there. J.R. and Kirk and all of us were right there together for a little bit talking.

Diana: So how close did it come on the east side where you were at?

Kristi: Well, it was within 100 or 200 feet.

John: When we had gone out, we moved the camper and the tractor and stuff like that out into the middle of the green wheat field.

Kristi: Yeah, we were moving stuff.

John: I put sprinklers on the buildings, and I just sat there and watched it come. It crossed east of us... probably... I don't know, 300 or maybe 400 yards, and it just kept going south, but because the wind was pushing it south, I mean, there was still a lot of CRP back towards us on the north side of the road. But that was like a back burn. It was coming into town, but it was moving slowly. We called the dispatch and they were like, "We don't have anybody to send out."

Diana: So when you came back from the west, had the wind already shifted? Or even before you left town at five, had the wind shifted and was it coming out of the north then? Had it gotten cold?

Kristi: I want to say it shifted after we got back because it seemed like when I left city hall, it was still just blowing like a banshee from the south.

John: It was later when it shifted.

Kristi: Yeah, it was later when it shifted. He wasn't home yet when I got home, so I started driving around, and I went out west of town just a little bit, and I looked down and I thought, "Oh my gosh, I'm on empty!" I had gotten to about the tower and I turned around and came back in and that last hill... I think that was when it finally started hitting me. When I came over that last hill, I couldn't see town. It was gone. It was covered in smoke.

Diana: What color was the smoke?

Kristi: Brown. I mean, it was brown.

Diana: Could you see any flames?

Kristi: No, could not see any flames, because I was looking towards town at that point, but it was just the smoke, you could not see town.

John: The flames weren't that close to town yet.

Kristi: So I went ahead and pulled in. Lawson was getting fuel at the same time I was, and I wheeled on back. I said to John, "Well, what do you want to do?" He said, "Well, I don't... I think we need to stay." I said, "Well, we can go eat supper with the kids and come back."

Diana: Did you have any troubles getting gas?

Kristi: No.

Diana: The card machine was not screwing up at that time?

Kristi: No.

Diana: Did you get it in town at...

Kristi: Yes, at AV energy.

Diana: When you were on the east side of town, was that like about 10 or midnight?

Kristi: Yeah, it was pretty late.

Diana: Did you stay up most of the night?

Kristi: We kind of did.

John: I don't know, I was up till about 3.

Kristi: 3 or 4 . Well, we went home once, and then the house... the house even started filling with smoke, so we got back out, and you couldn't even hardly see across the street. So, we got back in the vehicle. It was probably a good 4 or 4:30 when we finally...

Diana: Did you have any trouble breathing?

Kristi: A little bit.

Diana: How did your dogs react to the fire or the smoke?

Kristi: They hunkered down. They didn't...

John: They wanted to be close to us.

Kristi: They knew something was going on and wanted to try to make sure they were where we were at. So we just kept all of them close to us when we were at home. And after a bit, we split. You went in your pickup, and I went in mine, and I just kept driving the perimeter, checking things, and if I saw something, I would holler at somebody.

Diana: What were you checking?

Kristi: I was just watching to see how close it was getting to town.

Diana: How far did you go?

Kristi: I just stayed right on the perimeter. There once I went out.

Diana: So you went out to Kentucky street?

Kristi: Yes. I would go to Kentucky, go down Santa Fe and then I would zigzag between Cedar and Chestnut, and then go back up.

Diana: How far east? You stayed inside the city limits?

Kristi: I pretty well stayed inside the city limits. I started to go out east, and I saw the flames just right there. I don't know how we saved the east side of town. I just knew it was going to get in those trees though, and the creek. And probably that wheat there did help, and a truck did get there and help us on some, or we probably would have lost it.

Diana: A fire truck?

John: Yeah, when the fire truck got there, they were able to put that back burn out really quick because the wind still coming from the south, and this was coming to the west, so it wasn't fast, and they were able to put that out pretty quick.

Diana: Did the wind go down from where it had been at 4 or 5?

John: Yeah, later. Early in the morning, it did.

Kristi: Early in the morning it did. It still blew for quite a while into the night. Then I was amazed because when people left, they just grabbed stuff and left. Front doors open and lights might be on. I just started zig-zagging some through town, checking that nobody was where they wasn't allowed. I'd see a couple of people going into their house that belonged there. Never did see anything out of place.

Diana: Did you see any sheriff's officers in town during the night?

Kristi: You would see one every now and then, so yes.

Diana: Was it Clark county or another county?

Kristi: I couldn't tell you, because it was dark. I know a couple of times I think at least one was Clark County, and then, of course, there was a lot of activity up at the command post.

Diana: Did you go to bed?

John: About 5.

Kristi: Yeah, finally we did.

John: When we decided that...

Kristi: You know, we thought we were passed through the worst.

John: It wasn't going to get into town.

Kristi: I know every time I did a perimeter, I would watch, and I would say, "Okay, if we need to go, which way do we get out of here?"

Diana: So what did you decide?

Kristi: It was always going out south of town off of Kentucky. It seemed like after it sort of veered off that that was the clear spot now. Once we got further out, it might not have been but, it seemed like that was the spot to go, because otherwise we were clear surrounded.

Diana: So what did you do first on Tuesday?

Kristi: I went to work and sorta touched base with Doug. We started reviewing things that we needed to do. Who didn't have electricity, because we serve people outside of the city limits? We lost a total of twenty-one poles. We were trying to get the Kellenbergers, the Kaltenbachs and some of them going north out on Lake Road. Trying to get them sort of going again, and getting some service there. I didn't really open up, but I had the front door open if people came in and needed help.

Diana: Did you have lots of people stop?

Kristi: We had a few, not very many though. A lot of people were still... the town was just soup, and then the wind was blowing again that morning. The air was dirty. It looked like dusk again. They finally started letting people back into town. So when I first went and I was just looking around, it was just like a ghost town. It was just heartbreaking.

Diana: So what did you do Tuesday?

John: Got up and Michael Schatz and I drove on out in the country and started looking around.

Diana: What kinds of things did you see?

John: Total devastation. I mean, everything was charred. Probably the hardest thing was seeing all of the dead cattle. I mean, it's just like there was nowhere for them to go.

Diana: Did you see any that were still living?

John: At a distance. We just stayed right on the road. So we couldn't tell what kind of shape they were in. When you would run on to them... I mean just... no hair, bloated, just... and everything was black all around.

Diana: Which way did you go out of town? Did you go every way, or did you just go west?

John: Yeah, we pretty much went and just made a circle. I mean, we went out, we drove down south and then turned down around Kirby Pike's place, and then on over east to the Matt Wilson area. I went north went up through some of Giles'.

Diana: How did that make you feel when you saw that?

John: It was... unbelievable. I mean, it was like I said earlier, when this all was coming, in my mind I really couldn't grasp... why would you have to leave town? It can't burn up a whole town in my mind. But I had never seen a fire like that either. And then when we got out the next day. I mean there was nothing around that didn't get it.

Diana: Like when you drove out on the highway going east, clear out to Wilson's and Giles', where there are no houses anymore.

John: Out there on Giles', we found where the bridge had just burned out. I think they lost a police car there. The car was still down in there. How he got out alive, I'll never know. It was just... It was kind of like if you've ever been somewhere after a bad tornado and it looks like somebody just set a bomb off. Just total devastation. Well, this is more or less the same thing, except there's not much left. With the tornado, there's a lot of rubble and trash; this was just stuff that was finishing burning or was already charred.

Diana: Did you run into any flames still?

John: Yeah, there was out there by Kirby Pike's place. Those tree rows were right up along the road, and we went through there and after we got into some heavy smoke, we thought we probably shouldn't have done that. But we were able to get through the smoke without...we were watching the sides of the road carefully, because you really couldn't see in front of you.

Diana: So what was your most vivid memory of the fire?

John: Probably my most vivid memory is setting out there on the east side town up there on the hill and all you see is fire. I mean you look north, there was fire up there. It had already come by us on the east. It was east of us; it was south of us, it was back on west. It was like the world was on fire.

Diana: Could you see any lights of people out fighting? Could you see like the car lights?

John: I think that night we probably did, in different places, I know we saw flashing lights.

Diana: The smoke was too dense?

John: It was...

Kristi: It was really smoky.

Diana: So what is your most vivid memory?

Kristi: I would have to probably say, just in the different spots when I was by myself and I would go and watch it. It was like you said, as far as you could see there was flame, and when it was over here on the east side and I pulled up there and I looked, it was shooting up so high, over by our plant. Right there in that area that it was shooting up so high, I thought, "Oh Dear Lord, how are we going to survive this?" And we did, and we are, but I think right there, seeing those flames shooting up so high. And right there in that area, just really stuck in my mind.

Lori Krier got an awesome picture of that back there right behind our light plant. So I think that and then when you go to sit and you would see it go, and they would get it because there was a couple of trucks in town by that time. You would sit there, and you would see it start working its way in and then they would get it out. And then here it would come again. It was just like it wouldn't leave it alone.

Diana: Did you end up losing anything in the fire.

John: No, we did not.

Kristi: We did not.

Diana: Do you have any previous experience with wildfires, or like prescribed range burning, or have any history of wildfires in your family?



John: No.

Diana: So just kind of what we normally have around here?

John: I think that's probably why it was so hard for me to grasp it.

Kristi: I've never... I mean we had an outbuilding catch on fire one time when we lived out in the country. But, that was nothing to what we experienced that night.

Diana: So how would you describe your emotional response to the fire, and have you done anything to cope with that since the fire. Have you talked to people?

Kristi: Well, we talked a lot to people. I think it sort of gets things out. I wasn't able to get out of town for quite a while. I stayed in town. I helped our city guys with meals, tried to make sure because we were all working long hours. Tried to make sure they had lunch because they would sometimes work through the lunch hour, and then they would work on into the evening. So I would make sure there was stuff at the plant or take it to them and just try to help them too because I was in and out of the office. I would go to the command post, and I went to the command post then that Tuesday morning too to make sure that everything... and they said that if they needed help that they would holler at me and I said, "Okay". I said that I would be willing to help where needed. And just taking the phone calls and the messages because the donations started in. We had some donations dropped off at the city hall.

Diana: Did you get a lot of calls through the week?

Kristi: Yes.

Diana: You really went back to work Tuesday and worked all your regular hours mostly?

Kristi: Wednesday was probably back to regular hours. Tuesday we were in and out, and when I would leave, I would just lock up the office. Tuesday, with Matt and Janae losing houses, I just told Aricelly, "You go help family." So then Wednesday she came back, and that helped me because she would stay and I kept moving back and forth. So Wednesday the office was open all day. Thursday, I ended up working up at the command post all day until 8 o'clock that night. I helped them out there with logging calls.

Diana: So what kind of donations did you receive at city hall?

Kristi: That one from the Kansas Lions Association had shovels, brooms, buckets, gloves, masks, and tarps.

Diana: So what did you do with it?

Kristi: That Sunday I stayed in town; I didn't go to church. I had gotten a call from some donations. There was some other stuff, some clothes and some coats and jackets and things like that and I had gotten a phone call. So I went and met them down by the office and helped them with a jacket because the flames did make it on into Englewood and there was five homes destroyed.

So I was helping a family there get some stuff that had been donated. Then I talked to Ryan, my son, and I said, "You know, a lot of the stuff is needed out there, but they are so busy, they aren't going to be able to come into town to get it." So Ryan and me loaded up his pickup and we loaded up my pickup with a lot of supplies and then we went and got a bunch of water from the high school. We loaded everything down and we just started going to the houses. We started out in the south part of the county. Just started going-- Gardiner's, Mccarty's and Betchart's. We just started hitting houses and leaving a little bit at each place until we were totally empty there. Then we came back in and loaded up again and then we started going out on the north side. We went to Giles',

Kirk's, Rich's, Strobeman's. We left a bunch there at Rich's, and they said they would get them on to John and Lisa Moore and on out to some of those places. Some of them, finally when they realized that this had... you know they didn't even think about it, but they didn't even have a bucket. They didn't even have a bucket to help with anything.

Diana: Those people that had like a house or a shed burn, did they have electricity? Or did they lose their electricity?

Kristi: There were some that didn't have it, but for the most part by that Sunday, if they didn't, they had gotten it back. I know out at Kirk's their shed had some windows out and their tractor had burnt up. They were able to save their house, but you could see that the burn line went clear up to their house. It was just amazing; the Lord was with them on saving their home. It was just amazing. And then when we were driving through, it was like, "Why didn't that burn?" It was moving from the north, but that was on the north side. The south side burned in this one patch, but the north side didn't burn. It was amazing on some of the burn lines and what we witnessed that Sunday.

Diana: What were you doing during the week?

John: I was just trying to help anybody that needed anything. Like I said, we didn't lose anything. All I could feel was empathy for the people. I felt very blessed. We were very lucky. So if I could help anybody in any way, I would do that.

Diana: Who were some of the people or agencies that proved most helpful with the fire and after the fire?

Kristi: I don't know... A lot of it was food issues. By Wednesday, we had a lot of volunteers. We had strike teams. The high school stepped up way above and beyond; I commend them greatly. The organization part... things are going to be so chaotic. I was in the command post that Thursday and was talking to some of the state people and stuff. It's chaotic but they commended us... They commended Millie greatly; it was chaotic. There were times I was sitting in there on Thursday just listening to their stories because I was out, it was just unreal. You feel helpless. So they started feeding, making sure people were fed. Agencies, like the Ashland Community Foundation, took a lot of the donations. The school was taking on the material donations. We took a lot there at city hall. We finally started feeding. We had so many volunteers.

Diana: Did you volunteer to help down at the camp?

Kristi: Yes.

Diana: And what did you do at the camp.

Kristi: I did everything and anything possible to make sure those volunteers were taken care of.

Diana: Was this mainly after you got through with your main job?

Kristi: I got through with my main job at five o'clock, and then I went right on down to the camp.

John: She never came home. I wouldn't usually see her until about eleven o'clock at night.

Kristi: We just had to make sure those people were filled.

Diana: About how many people did you feed a night? Do you have an idea?

Kristi: Right there, in the beginning, there were times where we probably fed well over 100 people, at times it seemed like there was more. That one weekend we had a charter bus come in from Michigan, and the people that we met were just amazing, such a blessing. And they were just so appreciative that we were feeding them. I know that one night we served right at 200, 230 people. We had a big group. We had invited the farming and some of the community people to come eat with us right along with the volunteers that night.

Diana: How long did you feed volunteers and house them?

Kristi: March, April...

Diana: The end of May?

Kristi: The end of May. It did get sort of less right there towards the end, but for the first two months, we were there every night. We would think we had them all in and would be picked up and cleaned up and here would come ten more. You feed them. You drag everything back out and you feed them.

Diana: So who all helped at the camp? Were there specific churches or organizations that helped.

Kristi: It varied. There were people that might show up and help. Mel was one of the main ones; I was one of the main ones, Brock was one of the main ones. Brock would usually do breakfast, and a lot of times after we would get supper done, we would fix breakfast for him. Some of the kids were in there. Like Emily Berryman was in there. She wanted to help do a lot of stuff, so some of the young kids were involved. Pam Harden came in and helped a lot.

Diana: Were these mostly people that have full-time jobs that came after their full-time job?

Kristi: Yeah, and there were some that...

Diana: And where did all of the food come from?

Kristi: It was donated. A lot of that food was donated. It was amazing the outpouring of food that came. And then they fixed up a monetary account at the grocery store where if we didn't have something we needed, people were donating to the grocery store to help us to feed them, and we would go into the grocery store and grab it.

Diana: Do you have any idea about the dollar amount of food that came through and went out of the camp?

Kristi: No. There would be no way that I could have tallied that up.

Diana: Tell me what a regular meal would have been like?

Kristi: Well, we fixed spaghetti bake. You know, baked spaghetti and green beans and corn and a roll. The desserts come in we would have desserts. There was one pickup that came in that had a lot of salad stuff, and so we had to use that up. A lot of our perishable stuff like that we used up quickly. We had a salad bar type deal set up for them, the plates, the napkins, the silverware. Stuff just kept rolling in. Sometimes a semi-truck would come in with hay, and they would have a truck with supplies coming in. I mean from everywhere.

Diana: Like paper goods?

Kristi: Yeah, and they would have them bring it in. They had stored a lot over at the chapel, and then we ended up with stuff still at city hall.

Diana: Did they ever run out of paper goods or stuff?

Kristi: I don't think so. We still have some plates and stuff there and even some food that is still housed at city hall. The Mennonite crew, when they came in here a couple three months ago and fed the crew and worked around out of the Hardesty house. They would come over and get plates and forks and napkins and toilet paper and stuff like that to take care of their crew while they were helping the community. We still have stuff in the basement.

Diana: Can you perceive anything positive that resulted from the fire?

Kristi: Something positive?

John: There were people helping people.

Kristi: I think it was everybody pooling together. There wasn't anyone that I can think of off the top of my head, even if they did lose something, that wasn't willing to help somebody else. Because when it came down to it, I think we all considered everybody family. Even those who lost stuff said God was still with them.

Diana: So what can you do, or what have you done to prepare for another emergency like a fire or a tornado? Has this made you look at what you would evacuate with?

Kristi: It has. I would try to get more of my important papers closer together instead of just kind of scattered. Because then I got to thinking, I didn't even know where that insurance policy was at. So yeah, it does make you think on stuff like that. You need to be getting your important papers gathered up. Like I said, I had all of my father's stuff gathered because I deal with his day in and day out. Our own personal stuff... just try to get stuff gathered. Take pictures of what you have in your house and on your walls.

Diana: Did you think of something, like when you got back and thought, "Oh hey, if we had burnt... "

John: We would have lost this.

Diana: We would have lost this.

Kristi: Yes.

Diana: Do you have a couple of those type items?

Kristi: Yeah, he probably does.

John: Yeah, definitely.

Diana: Couple of guns?

John: Oh yeah.

Kristi: Hunting and fishing and...

John: Yeah, my outdoor stuff. In a quick situation like that, there is no way to get it all. And I mean when it comes down to it, if you are in the worst spot and you get out with your life you did good. The other stuff can be replaced.

Kristi: I think the hugs were very special.

Diana: What about the stars that came later?

Kristi: I loved the stars. That was... we went to that program when Jeff was here and presented those, and it was amazing. We've got another box of stars that I've got that was delivered to city hall that I have. I've got to get them out. And I thought if anything, just get them to the Montana people and the Oregon people that have been fighting fires. But it just lets you know that there is still hope.

Diana: So is there anything that you think that the community could do to prepare for the fire, or could do better next time since we have had this experience?

John: I don't know about the community itself, but I have actually heard people talk about like the flint hills where they have a lot of growth out through there. They burn some of that stuff every year, and I heard some people talking that maybe we should do a little bit of that to keep things down so that if something got bad again, it wouldn't be as bad.

Kristi: I have heard that discussion also. Just try to do some of our own cleanup before something like that would happen.

John: Preventative.

Kristi: Really preventative, clean up before something would happen again. But I know that our houses and vehicles smelled like smoke for weeks and weeks. The soot that came in off the... I mean it just littered everything.

Diana: What did you think of the smell?

John: It was more than a week.

Kristi: Yeah, it was more than a week.

John: I remember, I don't know, about... it was probably three weeks.

Kristi: It was probably four weeks.

John: Three weeks after, I walked out one day in the morning and I told her, I said, "I'm really getting sick and tired of this smell."

Diana: It wasn't the same though every day was it?

John: No, but I think some days it was stronger than others.

Kristi: I think some days it was worse than others.

John: Maybe depending on the wind direction or whatever. Then after we started finally getting the rain...

Kristi: But even the rain... when it started raining, didn't smell like rain for a long time. It was into the... It was quite a while after the first few rains that it still even... It just stunk. So I was never so glad as when, probably the twelfth or fifteenth rain we got, it finally started smelling like rain again. And then everything just started greening up. It started looking so nice and beautiful and pretty. It just shows that there is still goodness that comes out of the darkness.

Diana: So yesterday, September 19, the wind blew pretty heavily. What was your reaction or thoughts about that? Did it bring back the fire?

Kristi: I hope there is nothing going to spark.

John: We had a tennis meet, and we weren't enjoying the wind either.

Diana: I can imagine.

Kristi: It just kinda gave you a weird feeling, and you were on edge a little, and you start having flashbacks a little. So I still can't look through that book that Lori did, *Surrounded by Fire* without crying. I still can't look at it without crying.

Diana: And that's mostly town pictures.

Kristi: Those are mostly town pictures. When anybody starts talking on the animals, I can't handle it.

Diana: It is a lot.

Kristi: Yes it is.

Diana: Do you have any other thoughts about this experience that you would like to share? Any other things that...

Kristi: The only other thing that I can think of is that we just need to try and make sure that we can pay it forward.

John: The amount of help and...

Kristi: The help and stuff and the stories that you hear and you can reach out and touch somebody. We only lost the truck driver. You can reach out and still touch. When the Greensburg tornado, there were eleven of our church families that lost stuff. And John and I was in there quite a while helping our church families clean up. It's like John said, at least here there was nothing, and there was so much degrees there. I can remember I would drive in and I would start bawling. We would get to helping, and I would bawl all the way home. Because I kept thinking, "I have a house to walk into, and they don't." But then this affected our stuff too, and I think it just hit me more. So we have got to pay it forward. Be there to help each other and love each other and support each other and help each other to keep going. That's one thing that I have learned from this.

Diana: Any other thoughts?

John: Well I'm not as emotional as she is.

Diana: Well thank you for your time and sharing your experiences with us.

Kristi: Thank you