

## **Dan & Kay Rich**

**Diana:** Today is November 28, 2017. So what is your name?

**Kay:** Kay Rich.

**Danny:** Danny Rich.

**Diana:** And where do you live?

**Kay:** 2572. C R. M. Ashland, Kansas.

**Diana:** Where is that?

**Kay:** It is in the Lexington area northeast of town.

**Diana:** Okay and what is your occupation?

**Kay:** Housewife.

**Diana:** What's yours?

**Danny:** Farmer.

**Diana:** And how old are you?

**Kay:** I am sixty.

**Danny:** Seventy-four.

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

**Kay:** I guess we had gone to Cimarron to buy a calf. It was probably about 1:00 when we came into the valley and we could see smoke. It probably wasn't until about 3:00 when Brandon told me that there was a fire, thinking that it was just coming from the south. Not thinking that we would be in the line of fire. Then I guess it was about 4:00 when my grandkids came out.

**Danny:** She talked me into going along and getting my pickup, the four-wheel drive with the spray rig.

**Kay:** Yeah, we got the spray rig.

**Danny:** I got all that ready to go before it hit.

**Diana:** And this was like about 3:00 or so?

**Kay:** We had everything ready by then. You go ahead (Dan) because your time goes in there first.

**Dan:** Brandon Grigsby called me and wanted me to help him move some cows. So I went over there on a four-wheeler, and we were sitting there talking. We didn't see anything in the northwest; we seen that down there. And then we decided, well we'd go ahead and try to move them. All his cows was having calves and this and that; they didn't want to go.

And we finally got them out the gate and got them in the CRP, big old tall weeds and stuff like that. They still didn't want to go, we was having a mess and we never even seen nothing coming until the smoke was just right there. And of course, we were chasing cows like wild men and then I run into Brandon. I hit him

broadside because we couldn't see. I knocked him off his four-wheeler plus the calf he had and his dog, and he lost his cell phone all that time. He locked it in four-wheel drive and was able to park the two, and we took off again. You couldn't see anything.

**Diana:** So when you say the smoke was really thick, was it a certain color? Was it just white smoke?

**Dan:** Black. You couldn't see five feet.

**Diana:** Was the wind blowing?

**Dan:** Bad, and so anyway, we took what we could get and we just go. Of course, he was worried because his son was in a truck calling cattle ahead of us and we couldn't see that. Anyway we kept going with what we could, and of course, we had some over there and we had to cut the fence and get them back in the road. And we finally got them over to the old Jackson place to put them on wheat. We tried to get some of Miller's to come out and go across with them, and we wasn't successful at that. So I told them, well we've got the cows here, I'm going home. Well, that little draw there west of the Jackson place, you could see the smoke going across the road; you couldn't even see.

I just gave that four-wheeler all she had, and I was heading south because I didn't have all that far to go to the road that takes me back to my house. But I got into the smoke, and I run into all the fire. I went off in this ditch and about tipped it over and came back and went across the road again and hit the fence. Then I figured out where I was at. The minute I got back to the road, I just give her all she had going south.

**Diana:** So you're mainly driving blind, right?

**Dan:** Yeah, and I'd run over a burning tree like that, and I almost missed my road, you know, until a break that let me see the road. Boy, I headed for home as hard as that thing would run. I just pulled into the yard, and the fire was just about 25 feet behind my barn where I had this cow and some hay and stuff like that. So I just jumped off it and got on my pickup. I got that put out, but it was still burning across. So I first went down there with my pick up and the spray rig, and that wasn't doing any good. I wanted to save my hay bales and the cabin and stuff like that, so I came back and got my 4020 going there, and I went down there, and I started dozing me a path. It worked real good because it was sandy enough that I could take a big deal of dirt and junk with it and go right down the fireline and I was putting it out.

But then I ruined a tractor tire and then I had to walk half a mile back to the house and then got my pickup and headed back down there again. And Brandon, I don't know what he was doing, but anyway he pulled in right behind me. He went down there with me, and I was doing good putting out my fire when all of a sudden my alternator light came on. So I shut my lights off; I didn't need 'em anyway. But I was putting out the fire, and I lacked about 40 or 50 feet of getting it out it out when my pickup quit, but I had enough hose on my spray truck that I sprayed and got the fire put out. And then I was putting hot coals out where my pick up was because I figured I was going to leave it there, then I didn't have gas in the spray rig. Brandon, he came up there and said, "Do you have a chain?" I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Do you want to pull it?" I said, "Pull it to the house." We got it to the house, and I said, "That's it. I don't care what happens. I'm done." I had just moved my cattle the day before and got them all moved by the house there and put them on wheat pasture. So I was very lucky; I never lost any cattle, but I had a lot of them didn't want to claim their calves, you know, after the smoke got to them. That's my story.

**Diana:** So did it get close to your house? I mean any closer than that 25 yards or whatever?

**Danny:** It got within five feet from my barn. No. No, when I got on my 4020, I went down there and there were tall weeds down the road ditch and stuff like that. Well, I built a berm there where it couldn't come in.

And I'm lucky that the south side of the road it burned there, the wind was going in the opposite direction, and it was a back burn.

**Diana:** So did the wind shift quite a bit when you were out helping Brandon with the cattle and doing this?

**Danny:** Real bad.

**Diana:** Could you tell the temperature drop?

**Danny:** I don't know. My adrenalin deal was going so much. I came home, and I didn't know it until I walked in the house and my wife said my sweatshirt had been burned off and my pants had holes burned in them. I never knew it. I know I had to apologize to the wildlife and parks guy because they come two or three times trying to get me to evacuate. I wouldn't do it. So anyway he came back the next morning, and I apologized. I don't know what I said, but you know, just leave me alone!

**Diana:** And I'm okay. So did you (Kay) know where he was or just kind of where he was?"

**Kay:** Yes, if I was calling him on the phone letting him know about us. I was worried about him. So several times we didn't get through to each other.

**Diana:** So what were you doing?

**Kay:** Well, like I said the kids got there at 4:00. I was doing sprinklers on the lawn thinking that would help. And then Jessica got there at 4:15 and by 4:30 we could see the black smoke coming in. It was still away, but I didn't know what to do. The wheat field never even came in my mind at that point.

So we both took separate vehicles, thank God, we thought we'd go up the road to Protection, the Lexington Road across there. And we did make it to Steven's Corner but it was just pure black smoke and I could see big flames. I think it was that old house that's right there on that road that Larry Rich owns.

**Dan:** You mean Denny owns.

**Kay:** I mean it was just black with massive flames behind it. So we turned around and I was on the phone with one of my sons. He said, "Just go back to 34 and just head south." So probably right after the curves is when I start remembering the flames crossing the road. It got very black. I was in front of Jess.

**Kay:** Were they high flames?

**Kay:** Oh, they probably were, but the smoke was just so... You couldn't see the white line. It was just like somebody had a black curtain right here.

**Diana:** Worse than a fog?

**Kay:** Oh yes. Yes.

**Diana:** How fast were you going? Do you know?

**Kay:** I don't know. I don't remember, but I don't drive very fast when it's dark, so I don't even know if it was 40. I don't know. I honestly didn't look; I didn't look at the time or anything. And that's probably after the curves when the flames started going over the road and stuff. And at some point, Bailey was with me, and I found myself going. All of a sudden I could see the fence was right here, a wire fence just outside her window. Then we meandered back up. Well, I did not know that Jessica had passed me.

**Diana:** Because you couldn't see her and you were probably out in the ditch, right?

**Kay:** Yeah, I was clear down in the ditch. As I look at it today, it was more of the flat area because it didn't feel like it was really slanted. We got back up, and I just kept going and all of a sudden there was kind of light.

**Diana:** There was a truck on the road, right? And Jessica had hit the truck or part of it?

**Kay:** She had hit that other car.

**Diana:** The other car. The car hit the truck.

**Kay:** Well, all we could see was the... I mean you couldn't tell which was what. I'm sorry.

**Diana:** That's okay. I know it's very hard. So yeah, because the smoke was so heavy, you probably couldn't see what was ahead.

**Kay:** I mean, it just happened to light up that I could see or I probably would have hit them and probably killed them.

**Diana:** So you were able to stop.

**Kay:** Yes. I mean just probably from here to maybe that trash can. I don't know, for stopping distance that I could see, I guess because the truck was on fire, so it kind of lit up that area. And so I just jumped out real quick. I didn't know which was their's, they both looked grey. The doors were open on the other one, that's why I had walked by and looked, and it was about that time I saw Jess coming around to get Ethan out. So then we just ran back to the pickup. I got turned around, and I knew there was a wheat field back.

**Diana:** How far? Do you know?

**Kay:** It was exactly two miles because I gauged it later on. I knew if I could get to that point we would get out.

**Diana:** What about the other family?

**Kay:** I didn't see them. It was just... I guess my thought was, "This thing going to blow." That's all I could think.

**Diana:** Could you tell what kind of a truck it was?

**Kay:** No. I couldn't even, in my thoughts I couldn't even tell how it was even facing until I saw pictures later. I never could see that the cab was facing the north and then the truck was across. I just couldn't see it. I'm was in just too much shock. I asked Bailey later, and she said yes, she could see that. But she stayed in the truck; she did not get out with me to get Jess.

**Diana:** So were they injured?

**Kay:** Ethan was unresponsive when she first got him out and then finally started kind of coming to it. He did have a cut on his head and probably a concussion.

**Diana:** So how long did you have to stay in the wheat field?

**Kay:** I don't even know for sure what time we finally got home. She called 911; I was just busy getting us back through all of that again. She called him, and then the game warden did come from the north side and came and got Jessica and Ethan. Bailey chose to stay with me. So we just sat there. It was probably... He came back and checked on us like two different times. The last time he said, "I think I can get you around the curves to go home." He said, "I couldn't get your husband to quit doing it all."

**Diana:** So he's running back and forth between you and home.

**Kay:** He was checking, I think. At one point, we saw an ambulance go by us from the north to there. I don't know who or what ambulance it was or anything like that. But he took Jessica and Ethan to Ashland, either that or to Brandon. I honestly don't know.

**Diana:** I know they took an ambulance to Minneola, but I don't know if that was the other family.

**Kay:** I couldn't even see, and I had no idea who they are even were. I just didn't know. I knew there was nobody in my car so I thought maybe they got away. I never saw the man at all. You just couldn't see.

**Diana:** So when you finally got home, was your home still in danger the rest of that evening or night?

**Dan:** There was still fire all around, but I don't know that we were in danger.

**Diana:** Did you go out and check on other neighbors or anything to see who was around? Did you see Brandon again?

**Dan:** Not after we quit that night.

**Kay:** He came back for gas because he didn't have any. He was going to travel clear to Bucklin to get gas and Danny said, "No. You get some out of the tank." Because he was scared, he wouldn't have...

**Dan:** The only time I talked to her was after our deal, and she said, "What do I do? There's a wheat field, but I don't know where the gate is." I said, "You build a fire in that Ford, and you make a gate." I knew that. When I got to that point, I could see the gate.

**Dan:** Just to show you there's a little humor in this deal. I told my daughter that when I went through that smoke and got into that flame, I looked up there and said, "Oh Good Lord, take me home now." I told that to my daughter, and she started laughing and said, "No, Dad, Mom's up there, and she said you ain't done raising me yet."

**Diana:** She's probably right!

**Dan:** Well, I'm sure of that.

**Diana:** Yeah. So besides building the berm and you putting out the hose and sprinkling down around your yard, were there some other things that you did to protect your property? Did you think about evacuating?

**Dan:** No.

**Kay:** By the time you were home, there was no water. I mean the electricity was gone, so we had no water.

**Dan:** As a matter of fact, I'm the only one that had water because I got my portable welder out and hooked up. So we had water.

**Diana:** So you had a generator type deal. Did you have some water left in your spray rig?

**Dan:** I came back and put water in it once, too.

**Kay:** I don't know.

**Dan:** I can't remember that.

**Diana:** Okay, so like Tuesday. Monday there was fire all over the place, and you were probably up all night, but Tuesday morning?

**Kay:** He went to bed. I went from window to window to window for months after afterward. I still had family, still in protective mode. He was exhausted. He was absolutely exhausted.

**Diana:** Still a lot of fire circling?

**Dan:** Oh yeah. It was later that night, man that went really high.

**Kay:** Michael Seacat's house was blazing big time. That probably went for two days or maybe more. But there were still so many areas on the south of us that were still flaming.

**Diana:** Okay, so you had that house, and you had that house that was Filson's house.

**Kay:** I could see a lot of flames that direction; I just didn't know what it was.

**Diana:** Could you see the starter yard?

**Dan:** No.

**Diana:** Too far away.

**Kay:** As Bailey and I were standing on a wheat field, I watched Vernon Howell's, the flames, I know it had to be his place.

**Dan:** When it got down in there in that Bluff Creek and all that timber and stuff, there was flames... I'd hate to say how high they were. They burned all the way to the top of a lot of those big old cottonwoods that's still standing. It's going to take forever and amen to clean everything up.

**Diana:** So did you have any difficulty breathing when you were out in that smoke?

**Dan:** Well, I didn't.

**Diana:** You didn't notice it. Did you notice it?

**Kay:** Yes, it bothered me a lot.

**Diana:** Did you have trouble for a few days after?

**Kay:** I happened to have the air thingy. Bailey was up there without, and I did have a little thin blanket. She was, of course, in shock. Her body was shaking. You had to shut your truck off. You couldn't...

**Diana:** Because that would just because it bring the smoke in.

**Kay:** Very bad. It bothered me a lot. He doesn't think it did, but it was very dense for a while. But he had driven right there in it on one of those four-wheelers.

**Diana:** So did you lose anything in the fire? You said you didn't lose any cattle. Did you lose pasture and fence?

**Dan:** Yeah, I lost pasture and fence.

**Diana:** Alternator in your pickup?

**Dan:** Yeah. You know, where I saved that from burning there, where my cabin is there right on the creek, I'll bet the next day we had 250 head of deer down there.

**Kay:** There wasn't much area around that for them.

**Dan:** \_\_\_\_\_ went down and shot about 45 or 50 of them, you know, broken legs and burnt and blind.

**Diana:** So they buried those, too?

**Dan:** No.

**Diana:** They must have hauled them off?

**Kay:** I don't know.

**Dan:** I really didn't see them, you know. So they had to have hauled them off.

**Diana:** Did you see other animals, like possums or skunks or anything around that kind of had a hard time?

**Dan:** Coyotes.

**Diana:** So You've been in this area for a long time, and you've seen grass fires before and wildfires and stuff. Is there any comparison or how do you usually fight a wildfire?

**Dan:** Tractor and disk. Well, farmers put out a lot of fire or helped contain a lot of fires before the firetrucks could even get there. I thought when Seacats had that one that started way up north and come across there; I thought that was a bad one. But that didn't hold a candle to what this one was.

Yeah. What's a normal grass fire usually burn? How many acres? I mean if the wind's high and lightning and stuff like that, does it usually burn a whole bunch?

**Dan:** Oh, sometimes but not really. I mean, nothing like what we had. Maybe 160 or 200 acres. You know, enough.

**Diana:** 463,000 is quite a bit.

**Dan:** Yes, it is. You know we lost, over at that house of Fritz's, I had a big metal shed there, and it didn't hurt it. There was smoke stuff or soot, but when it burnt that house, I had a big old pit just north of that house full of tree limbs and everything that I wanted to burn. And anyway, it didn't burn that. It burned the house, and it swung around and got my barn and my hay bales. It just made a complete circle just like that around that shed. Of course, it burned up my grader and my bailer and the Versatile tractor and the blade. It burned tires off of other equipment and all the hay bales over there. Then I had another pit south of that, and it didn't burn it either! And it burned all down that tree row. Three days later when the fire company got there, of course, they were out of Colorado somewhere.

**Diana:** Right.

**Dan:** I said, "Can I go burn them?" And you know, they wouldn't let me burn them.

**Diana:** Because they didn't burn in the fire?

**Dan:** Well, that was the day that they had all the helicopters flying around putting out hot spots. They said if they see that flame, they'll put it out. So I had to wait a couple more days before I got it burned.

**Diana:** So were you able to replace all that? Are you still working on replacing equipment?

**Dan:** No, I replaced the Versatile and the blade and repaired some stuff. No, the grader was a \$20,000 hit. My baler, I wanting to retire anyway. I guess it's just going to help me along.

**Diana:** Giving you the incentive?

Yeah, but it isn't helping me financially.

**Diana:** So did you take advantage of that community foundation and the KLA's applications for financing?

**Dan:** Yes, and that really helped, and all these people brought hay and fencing stuff.

**Diana:** Did you have any volunteers come out and help?

**Dan:** I had a couple boys, I guess a little crew of a man and three boys.

**Kay:** They were all in their 30's.

**Dan:** They helped for a little bit, a day and a half or something. But you know, once things settled down then here come our kids home. We were able to just attack that stuff to keep our cattle in. It's nothing beautiful; it ain't nothing permanent, it's just get a wire across there, and maybe they won't cross it. So I was very thankful there, and I'm very thankful for the cops up there because I had two boys come down that night, and neither one of them needed to be there, and they wouldn't let them in there. I'm thankful for that. They wouldn't have been an asset; they would have been a liability.

**Diana:** Well, after we drove north, they would have been in that. We did lose a lot of antique furniture and lots of stuff from our families.

**Diana:** That you had over at Blous?????????

**Dan:** Yeah. That was kind of a family storage shed there. At one time, we cleaned everything out of the house when we sold Fritz' deal. Then the wife and kids buy a bunch of it, and it goes right back in the same day, so we've been adding to it ever since.

**Kay:** We didn't need a lot of it.

**Diana:** So did you lose a lot of fence? Like miles of fence?

**Dan:** I lost three or four miles but a lot of my fence I went over and repaired because, you know, we're banking on and you're saying the government is going to do this and this. You know that could be down the line a long ways, and then you got all your capital, operating capital, tied up.

**Diana:** Right.

**Dan:** And I just went and repaired and replaced all the wire.

**Diana:** Did you lose a lot of hay?

**Dan:** I lost everything I had over there at Blough?????

**Kay:** The barn was full of probably about seventy-five square bales in there, so that's was why it burned so hard there.

**Diana:** So did you have any place to take your cattle except for the wheat field that they were in? Did you have pasture land left out afterward?

**Dan:** Well, just that at home.



**Kay:** That's the only place we had to put cattle.

**Dan:** We had about 400 head of steers and stuff taken in on... Well, they're Mick Sharp's cattle and all that grass burned over there and trees and everything. They all stayed out there in that wheat field.

**Diana:** Did you have a bunch of the truckers and volunteers bring you hay to your place?

**Dan:** Jeff directed them.

**Diana:** Told them to come. Do you know where they were from?

**Dan:** All over the country.

**Kay:** They were from up north of...

**Dan:** Missouri.

**Kay:** It's kind of Jessica's area up there by Clyde. I think one of them was Washington.

**Dan:** Some over there by Kansas City, too. We got a load of hay from Tim Dewey from Cimarron.

**Diana:** Did you come to town eat at the Christian Camp or at the school after the fire or during the fire?

**Dan:** No.

**Diana:** When you said your family came and helped, how long were they there?

**Kay:** Just the weekend.

**Diana:** They cleaned up a lot of stuff for you?

**Kay:** It was mainly just packing. I think we were just all in. Shock at that point. So they just packed some stuff.

**Diana:** How would you describe your emotional response to the fire and what have you done to, help yourself cope?

**Kay:** It was traumatizing, there's no doubt about that.

**Diana:** Especially with you having the accident.

**Kay:** I am just thankful that God got us through it.

**Dan:** You just had to give it to the Good Lord. That's just it. There's nothing you're going to do; you just do what you think is right.

**Diana:** Who are some of the people or agencies that were most helpful, not just Monday or Tuesday, but throughout the deal? Besides your children, did anybody come and help?

**Dan:** I can't think of anybody right offhand.

**Kay:** We are thankful for Jeff Kay and Ashland Feed and Seed.

**Dan:** And for Spott's Lumber.

**Kay:** And the hours that they put into that.

**Diana:** Did anybody bring food out to your house?

**Kay:** Actually, I guess that next... Was it the next day? Time-wise...

**Diana:** Could they get down your road? I mean, did they having trouble getting to you?

**Kay:** There wasn't any poles down here.

**Diana:** No poles or the fire wasn't burning still and had pretty much passed over to the east? Did you have some hot spots on Tuesday?

**Dan:** Well, I put a lot of the RA poles put out, you know.

**Kay:** Because they were burning.

**Diana:** With your spray rig.

**Kay:** I think the Christian church did do the burritos the next morning, I think. It was either then or Wednesday morning. I can't remember what day it was. I was just in a fog.

**Diana:** I know Steve Elmore went to MacDonald's and brought back breakfast burritos on Tuesday morning from there and hash browns. He doled them out as he came down the road.

**Kay:** I think these came from the Christian Church.

**Diana:** The Christian Church did a whole bunch of stuff and brought stuff out.

**Danny:** There was so much stuff going on that you can't remember everything.

**Diana:** And everybody did something different or had somebody else help them or whatever. You know, even today, you could still go out there, and what's real bad is, "Well, I'm going to go get this because I know where it's at." No, it ain't there. It's burned. Then you get to looking, and even today I see something that I never noticed before. Shoot, this burned and this didn't.

**Diana:** Right beside each other?

**Dan:** Yeah.

**Diana:** Do you think the fire had more of a physical effect or a financial effect or is it kind of even? What about emotional?

**Kay:** It's kind of both.

**Diana:** If you think about everybody, is it...?.

**Kay:** Maybe a little more financial but emotionally, it hit hard.

**Dan:** It is still hard.

**Diana:** Like you said, there was a lot of mementos that are no longer here. You had that, but it's not there anymore.

**Dan:** It's sad to see all the history that's gone.

**Diana:** Yeah, and what about when you drive to town down the highway, coming in town from the east. What was your first impression when you drove to town that way?

**Kay:** The first time I drove to town, I cried the entire way. The burned marks were still across the road right where it all happened. It's just been, like Jess said, sometimes it just gets her, you know, but lots of times I can just go to town and not even think anything about it.

**Diana:** Yeah. What about all the missing houses?

**Kay:** Oh yeah, I know that's...

**Diana:** When you come down the road, like you said, landmarks.

**Dan:** You know, when I cleaned that old house up there of Fritz', I found some old square nails in that house. I've never... the only square nail I'd ever seen was a horseshoe nail. There were some of them four or five inches long, and it's just in the one little part of that old house. Well then that got me going, and I went and I picked up a bunch of them. I wish that I'd cleaned up more, but then I was down at the Shattuck place because they were down there trying to get things under control, with the wind blowing. I went down there with a skid loader and gathered up the tin and everything. That old barn had some of them square nails. I got to looking again, and that old house that Dan Shattuck lived in had those square nails in it. So you know that had to be built in 18 or early 1900's. Yeah, it had to be really old. I collected a bunch of them. I make little stuff out of them.

**Diana:** That would be cool. So can you perceive of anything positive that came from the fire?

**Kay:** Oh I like to think so.

**Danny:** It can take you closer to the Savior. You know, I came home, and I made that sign, "God saved us." And that's just all you can say.

**Kay:** And we were some of the luckier ones.

**Dan:** You know that I felt real bad when Grigsby's little boy, he couldn't see us. He told his mom that Brandon and I had disappeared in the fire. You know, he had to be scared out of his mind.

**Diana:** And especially when Brandon lost the phone and couldn't talk to Britt anymore.

**Kay:** I didn't know any of that was going on. It took him probably three days before he could talk about it. We were both that way.

**Dan:** It took me a couple days before I could sleep, but boy, when I did!

**Diana:** Yeah, just exhausted.

**Dan:** Running strictly on adrenaline. You know, it's just like I told Tanner. I said, "You know I'm not leaving here. I spent my whole life here building this. And I'm not giving it up without a fight." And that's the way I felt about it, and that's what I did, and I'd do it again if I had to. But I've been through a bad blizzard, and I've been through a bad fire. I guess if it floods next time, I don't know.

**Diana:** Or a tornado, one of the two.

**Dan:** Well, we've had quite a few of those over at our house too.

**Diana:** So in the Lexington area where you live, is there a lot of wheat? A lot of people keep their cattle out

on the wheat because I've heard of less losses of cattle in the Lexington area than in other areas. Is that common?

**Kay:** I mean that's why our house didn't go because all of John Moore's covers us on the West and all the north and then we have a little patch there. So you know that saved our house.

**Dan:** Yeah, but that's what got the hay shed. Between his wheat field and my wheat field, there's a little patch of grass that goes through there, and that's where it went.

**Kay:** Now if the fire would've come from the south we wouldn't have had anything left.

**Dan:** Oh yeah.

**Kay:** All the CRP coming down off those hills...

**Dan:** And then with the wind like that it would have got those tanks and it would have got it all. So I go out there, and I mow me a strip out there every year.

**Kay:** We're more conscious about it. I want green everywhere. I want to water it all.

**Diana:** So what can you do or have you done to prepare for a future emergency or disaster or something of this magnitude? Have you made plans or thought, "I'll do this differently."

**Dan:** I've always been cleaned up like trash and stuff.

**Kay:** We don't keep things tall around, although there's a few weeds we need to get out there and get. I guess just always thinking about that part, to keep the weeds down, of course, that didn't stop anything. I mean, it didn't matter if it was short grass or long grass.

**Diana:** Just skipped over the short stuff a little bit faster, right? So what can the community do, or have they done, to kind of prepare for something?

**Dan:** I don't know what I'd do different. It's really all out of your hands.

**Diana:** Because as big as it was. So, you mentioned that you saw the strike teams from Colorado. Did you did just watch them put out fire? Was there a lot for them to do when they finally got here? Was it mainly back burn?

**Dan:** Well, I guess I did. I had to go up to Mike Strudman's????????twice and save his house, but normally these guys were wanting to go to anything that was burning and wanting to put it out. I told them, "No, just stay out of my tree rows and just let it all burn." You know, everything was burned around it, so what difference was it going to make? Just clean it up. Just let it burn. I've still got a mess to clean up, you know, a lot of them trees is burned. They're dead now and fall down every time the wind blows. I'd have to have another fire just to burn that tree row out.

**Diana:** Is there any good way to get rid of those trees? I mean besides another fire because you can't just go push them over, they're too tall, right?

**Dan:** No, I can get them down, or even saw them off. The big cottonwood trees down on the creek, we'll just saw them off and pile them up to burn them. They're always going to be falling down; they're all dead.

**Diana:** They're all pretty old out there, right?

**Dan:** Oh yeah.

**Kay:** Probably my great-grandparents are some of the ones that planted them way back.

**Danny:** I had a whole bunch of huge cedar trees that I'd cut up that were dead, that I was going to make benches and stuff for all the kids and everything. You know, I'm talking about cedar trees this big around, two foot or better in diameter. I had all them all stacked up there, and the dadgum fire burned every one of them. That kind of put a screeching halt to that.

**Diana:** The furniture building? Yeah, I can see that. So is there anything that you, like you said, there are some things like you go, and you've seen some stuff that you didn't notice before. Is there a lot of stuff you're finding now, again, since it's so long after the fire? Have things changed? Has your pasture come back or is it looking different?

**Dan:** Not like it used to be. No. People that had real short grass when the fire hit are just fine. They have less damage than any of them had tall grass, or taller grass, or had more to burn. What happened is like on those sand hills right north my house, it burned, and then we had all that freaking rain or wind, you know, and erosion of the roots and a lot of that died. So you get up there and look, and about the only thing up there is sagebrush.

**Diana:** And then we've got the rain, and a lot of weeds came up, and then we got a freeze.

**Dan:** We're set up for another fire if something doesn't happen.

**Diana:** We need rain very much, don't we. So anything else that comes to mind about the fire or about what happened afterward?

**Dan:** No, we picked up a deal here a while back, and I found a bunch of old tools and stuff that had burned up. I got a bunch of these old files and welded them together and made a cross inside of them and that is a nicest looking thing. When you make a cross out of that, paint it black and then put white on the ends of the file. Looks pretty sharp!

**Kay:** It's something out of burned stuff, too.

**Dan:** That's the same way with them square nails, you know I picked them up and made a sun out of them. I've been going through all this old junk. I haven't even cleaned up my shed out there yet that burned because I go back and I dig through it every once in a while.

**Diana:** To see what's there?

**Dan:** Yeah.

**Diana:** So you're going to have lots of new ornaments at your house?

**Kay:** He goes out and counts them and says, "How am I supposed to give them to other people if you have them all?" It keeps him busy.

**Diana:** So do you have any other thoughts about this experience?

**Kay:** I never want to go through it again. Once in a lifetime's enough.

**Dan:** But you go through that one time, and you see that there's a lot of good people in the world.

**Diana:** I think we can attest to that from all the people that came and how long they kept coming.

**Kay:** And kind of before that, you know, with all the politics and all of that stuff, you're kind of down on the world. And after that I mean there are good people out there, very good people.

**Dan:** Well, I think some people could have probably saved a little bit more if they were inclined to do it, or whatever. But everybody's different.

**Diana:** And it did move fast.

**Kay:** Just to me, it came from a lot of directions but it was just the wind doing it, you know, you didn't think how it could be there. You're just headed there, and it wasn't there a while ago. It's there by the time you get there.

**Diana:** Anything else? Thank you for sharing your experience.

**Dan:** You should've been there, it was a wild ride.