

Eugene Woodruff & Olen Whisenhunt, ready for edit 4/25/18

Diana: Today is November 18th, 2017.

Diana: So, what is your name, where do you live and what's your occupation?

Eugene: Eugene Woodruff, I live in Englewood, I do nothing, now.

Diana: What did you used to do?

Eugene: Oh, I cowboy'd.

Diana: And how old are you?

Eugene: Seventy-four.

Diana: (To Olen) And your name?

Olen: Olen Whisenhunt.

Diana: And where do you live?

Olen: Englewood.

Diana: Okay and what's your occupation?

Olen: I'm retired, supposedly.

Eugene: And he's still mayor.

Olen: I'm the mayor of Englewood.

Diana: And how old are you?

Olen: Seventy-eight, almost a hundred.

Diana: OK. So let me ask you this first. When did you first become aware of the Starbuck Fire, hereafter referred to simply as, "the fire".

Eugene: When I got the page, I still get pages.

Diana: For being on the fire department?

Eugene: Yeah. When I got the page, I was standing looking out the north window. They was going out, and I knew then the wind was blowing 30 or 35. I told Carol, "This is not good."

She said, "Why is that?" And I said, "The winds blowing too hard. It's going to be all day and all night, maybe." I was wrong; it was a lot longer.

Diana: So Olen, when did you hear about the fire?

Olen: Well, June and I had gone to Laverne. We had done a little business down there, and at about 11:00, we come out of Laverne, and I could see the smoke coming from the west of us. I said, "That don't look good. That could hit Englewood." So anyway, we went on home and we had lunch about 12:30 or 1:00, and I thought, "I think I'll go out and see where that smoke's at."

So we walked outside and looked west, and you could see the smoke coming up. It looked like fire just right under it. Well, it was just a little later, about five or ten minutes, and you could see smoke and fire way up in the air. So I went out west of town, and I thought, "Well, Goodnight's have wheat out there. More than likely, it won't get to town."

So I went on kind of checking things out and thinking about what I ought to do if it gets to town. It seemed like everything I thought up was wrong. It did come to town.

I went back into town. Well, my neighbor, we watched it come down. It was kind off west of Walker's and Harrington's, and then a little farther back right west of us was on the Claremore Road. Anyway, we sat there and watched a little while, and then Walkers evacuated. So I went back to town and waited a little while. It looked like a fire was started down the creek. So I went back west of town. There was... No, I guess Gordon Harrington and I, the fire'd finally got to town, and Gordon Harrington and I started back out west. Mary Cox's place, and Jerry and Joyce's, and Molly's place was on fire.

Diana: Do you remember what time that was?

Olen: No.

Diana: Was it dark yet?

Olen: No, it wasn't dark yet. It was still daylight.

Diana: What was the smoke like? Was it grey or black or...?

Olen: It was black.

Diana: And could you see big flames still leaping, like you said earlier?

Olen: It was big flames. It seemed like it was flames way high and then it was like sparks flying. It was hot enough that the grass would just ignite way ahead of the flames, where the flames was burning. And then it would get bigger right quick. So I come back to town and went up north here.

There was fire that looked like it was getting in Dan and Eileen Butts' yard. I jumped out and got a shovel and scraped that out. I thought, "Well, that will be all right." And so I went on and then, Kenny Boutz, the fire jumped the highway right there at his place. I mean, it just seemed as if it engulfed it.

Diana: (To Eugene) So what were you doing?

Eugene: Mom made me leave town. I wanted to stay. I knew that if we had a truck left, I could go help spray and keep stuff from getting too bad. She made me leave.

Diana: Where did you go?

Eugene: We went up the Angle Road, and by the time we got to Acres, Gardiner's had bales burning already. We went on into Ashland and they run us off of it. We went on east and went south to Sitka, and on down to the state line and come back across.

Diana: So were you still in Englewood when they said to evacuate Englewood? Or did you leave before they started the evacuation?

Eugene: I don't know. I don't remember. All I know was, I wanted to see if they had a truck left. That was all I could think about. But I knew she wouldn't go if I didn't. So you got to get...

Diana: Yes, you got to go. So did you go out west of town any?

Eugene: Yes, she went out. When Englewood went by, we got a call just right then that the fire was at the Mackey Bridge. Clear south of me, it had jumped it. Her good friend Faye Ediger, we headed out there. We couldn't get to her. We got up on a hill and her son in law and all of her grandsons were there. Clark, they'd tried to go on out but couldn't see to drive.

Eugene: So they had stopped there, we pulled up and stopped, and at that time, there was fire straight north of us. We was a mile from their house. You could see that fire right up there going, and like I said, it was rolling hard.

Diana: So were you still out that way when the wind shifted?

Eugene: No.

Diana: Okay, so you came back town and then headed on over to Ashland. So were you out with Olen looking, when the wind shifted and brought it into town?

Eugene: Yes.

Diana: Did you get an evacuation? Did somebody come over and tell Englewood to evacuate?

Olen: They tried to get me to leave.

Diana: Who came and gave the notice to leave? Who did the evacuation?

Olen: I got called on the phone.

Eugene: Yeah.

Olen: June, my wife called me, and I said, "Well, I need to be here and see if I can stop the fire if it goes towards somebody's house."

Diana: Did she leave?

Olen: Yes, she left. She went out to our daughter's place out east of Gate, Oklahoma. They have wheat fields all around their house. So they was pretty safe there.

Diana: So were you still in town when all of the fire trucks came back here?

Olen: Yes, I was.

Diana: Were you able to direct them where things were going or was it just a lot of chaos?

Olen: They had people calling them and telling them where to go, so I stayed out of it. But after I left Dan and Eileen's, I thought, "Well, it will be okay. I got that fire kicked out and it won't come back." Well, it did, but someone else noticed it. It got in their wood pile right there by their door and someone got in there and threw that all back and stopped that. The firetruck up there wet everything down.

Well, I went around and the fire was kind of back to south of the east elevator. Anyway, I thought I'd throw these tree limbs away from that scale house and stuff and it would probably be all right. It hadn't got to where June grew up, it hadn't got that house yet. Anyway, then I went on all around and Gary Woods' house was burning. I stopped there, and I said, "Is there anything I can do?" Nope. That fire come across that field and went under the cedar trees and got in that deck on that house and went right in the window. I don't know or understand it, but that's the way it happened.

Diana: So did it come across town pretty quickly? Was it burning in both the west and the east part of town at the same time?

Olen: Yes, it come in on the creek, and then from the creek, it spread both ways. They had a fire truck down at Brenda's, it caught her garage on fire right quick, but they had that fire truck right there and they kept spraying her house and the garage. Finally, the fire went on past and they did save her house. You know, it was hot enough that it scorched the shingles and siding.

Eugene: Brenda was down there in the wheat field where we stopped. And she come in there and she was pretty shook up. Somebody called her from here in town, maybe it was Olen, I don't know. They said it was all around her house or something. I said I had confidence in them, I've been around them too much. She was shook up because she was sure she was going to lose her house. You know, she said, "Firemen are there, but I don't think they can save it." And I said, "Yes, firemen will. I've got confidence in them. I've been around them too much."

Eugene: I finally got her calmed down. She did lose all the stuff outside but her house is still there.

Diana: It got the pool house.

Eugene: They did run over a hydrant out there.

Diana: I think hydrants were a big casualty of the fire. So when were you aware there wasn't any water left in Englewood?

Olen: Right after it went dry.

Diana: Was that early in the fire?

Olen: Well, no, that was after the fire got to town.

Diana: So did it go through town pretty quickly? Was it here and then gone? Were you fighting fires for hours?

Olen: It seemed like it took forever to go through, but it couldn't have been over an hour.

Diana: Then there were there lots of little burns still going through that they needed to go around and put out?

Olen: There was places where it kept, you know, a little fire would break out, and as soon as it would go a little ways then it would spread out. And the wind was behind it and kept it going good. But anyway, then I come back around after I come past Wood's place. I come back around and the scale house was burned down. It didn't burn that junk that needed burned for the last 40 years right across the road from it! Then by that time, Boutz's

and everything was gone. How it missed the Mexicans, I don't know. And how it missed the Mosely's, they got enough junk there that I don't understand it. I guess it was because it was close to the firehouse.

Diana: And the wind just kept blowing stuff?

Olen: But the wind changed to the south, and then in about an hour it turned back and was blowing south. It changed to the northwest and come in blowing.

Diana: Is that when it got the cemetery?

Olen: I don't know. I don't even know, because I didn't go north of town. It was burning so hot up there, I decided I wasn't even going to go there. Anyway, the cemetery... I don't know, it was a straight fire.

Eugene: It might have been right in the line of fire.

Olen: Yes, it was in a straight line of fire, because all that whole country up there pretty much went all at the same time but the power didn't go out till after we'd gone out to... me and Gordon Harrington went back out to their place and it burned the big barn down and stuff and the fuel tank was on fire. We went over to Harry's to see if anything was there. There was a little, well a limb had gone through their yard, there was one of them limbs that had fell out of a tree and was laying up against their house and it started just a little corner of the house on fire. Then this, I don't know what his name was, but he grabbed the garden hose and come and put that little dab of fire out. Then in about five minutes, the power lines burned up.

Diana: So was it dark when it did that? Or was it still light?

Olen: It was still light.

Diana: So all of Englewood had pretty much burnt by the time it got dark, and then it was already on its way to Ashland and that way. So when they asked people to evacuate Englewood, did they mostly go down to the wheat field in Ditch Valley? Or where else did they go?

Olen: Well, some of them went to the 64 intersection, some of them come back when the fire was still across the highway back down south there. Some of them come back, and well, Gordon Sampson, they came back. They drove through fire coming back, and they said the fire was already through Englewood. They went home and the fire had come up through the creek got one of their outbuildings that was close to their house. That was a deal where there was so much fire that there wasn't no way to stop it.

Eugene: That's just it. You know, I hope everybody thinks, and I think 90 percent of the people do, how great a job firemen do. Like I said, I'm really proud of them that they saved what they could, and what they couldn't...

And that's really what they did. Well, the heat that they were in. People don't understand the heat when you're fighting fire. They was talking about around Brenda's house up there. I knew. The firemen said they drove around the house spraying. When they'd stop, well, it got hot enough to melt the reflection on their helmets and it was hot. I had one fireman that showed up in goggles. The plastic broke and his eyes were so swelled up he was looking out of squints.

The firemen... I was asked why would anybody that had cattle, why would they be fighting fire? Well, they're fighting it for them and everybody else. It's your job and you do it. You might die from that or while you're doing it. But you still do it. And when you get done, it makes you feel so good when someone runs out and throws their arms around you. Yeah, there's nothing better too.

Diana: You've both been in this country for a long time and seen lots of wildfires. What's your experiences with wildfires before anything like this?

Olen: No. Ordinarily, you can get behind it and start foaming and put it out. This one was going so fast you couldn't even keep up with it. You couldn't get close enough to it to put it out.

Eugene: I talked to a fella the other day. He'd been talking to a pilot that was up on top and he said he was running 80 plus to keep ahead of it. So you know good and well there is no way you can fight a fire at that speed.

Diana: So aren't most fires usually maybe a half a mile and a mile long or something or less? And how would this compare?

Eugene: It blew them off the map.

Like I said, it was just everywhere. Yeah, I mean I've never seen anything like it. We've been on fires that was seven or eight miles long and really, they weren't hard to put out. One reason we had area firefighters here with trucks. This time, we had none because they was fighting their own fires too. Usually, here in Englewood, you'd have Gate, Rosston, Lavernee, Meade, Beaver. We'd have had Meade County. And like I said, all we had was Ashland and Englewood. Minneola was fighting their fire.

Olen: And then Ashland pulled out.

Eugene: Yeah.

Diana: Comanche County was over here and they had to go home because Protection was in trouble because they evacuated Protection just a little bit after Ashland. Everybody had to go back and fight their own territories.

Eugene: You know, we've had Alva, Oklahoma, up here and stuff up. And we've had the border of Texas, but everybody's fighting their own lines at their counties. Ford County was fighting fires.

Olen: So we have another problem. We don't have... if we had a hundred fire trucks, we've only got 10 people.

Eugene: Where we had ten trucks from Ashland and Englewood. Ashland had one break down and Englewood had a clutch go out. So that happened at about the time of day they told Ashland they had to get, and we'd take care of what we could.

When you're down, you just can't find a fight with something like that.

Olen: The thing was, it would go by one place and then pretty soon here it come from a different direction. It come up the road ditch and got into the south side of town. And it got Rick's garage but it done it so quick.

Diana: It was already there before you knew it. So what's your most vivid memory of the fire?

Eugene: My wife scared to death. I kept telling her, you know, "We're all right don't worry about it." No. She'd seen the smoke. I just keep coming down out of Ashland, we had to get out of Ashland. It's like I said, she was worried about herself, and the cats and me and all of it.

Oh yeah, the cats go first, then I go!

Diana: So, Olen, what's your most vivid memory?

Olen: Well, it was the feeling of helplessness. That's I felt was helpless. Like, I can not do nothing. Everything I'd think up to do, it's not going to work.

Diana: Or it's too late.

Olen: It's too late. Then another thing was all my friends had that stuff. I just couldn't hardly stand the thought of what had happened to them. You know, the fire takes everything all at once. Everything that is precious to you. Everything besides your life is in your house.

Eugene: You didn't worry about your life, did you?

Olen: I didn't.

Eugene: No, you don't.

Diana: So did you lose anything in the fire?

Olen: Well, we lost a lot of fence out west of town, and trees and stuff, of course.

Diana: Yeah, pasture.

Olen: And it was about two blocks away from us, our house. So like I said, I wasn't worried about Englewood. I wasn't surprised that some houses burned.

Diana: It's kind of a new experience, isn't it?

Olen: Yes. But I was worried about the fire. I don't know like I said, I've been on a lot of fires. It not that the trucks quit, because they do, they're mechanical, they quit.

Diana: Well, there's a lot of smoke too. Doesn't that affect them?

Eugene: Yeah, if you get a fire right up to the truck, it'll kill the truck. It'll kill all the air. That's one of the things I was worried about. I hoped none of them guys got too close to that fire and it kills their truck because you're dead then and there's nothing there they can do.

Diana: I know George said there's a couple of times when his tanker was pretty sluggish and wouldn't move as well as he wanted it to.

Eugene: Running out of air, and you know there's still something that if you're in the truck or vehicle. I'm going to say you feel invincible. You can do anything. You're on the back squirting water and you can handle it, let's go. Firemen are a different breed. I've been told they're stupid but you know how that goes.

Diana: So who are some of the people or agencies that proved most helpful during the fire after the fire?

Olen: Just about everybody.

Eugene: That's what I was going to say.

Olen: Well, it seems like the hog farms down there. They sent generators up here to get our water wells going.

Diana: Somebody said there were some oil companies that sent their water tanks up here.

Olen: Smithfield's same stuff, and then the well-drilling company at Beaver, they sent a couple of generators and picked them up.

Eugene: Yeah, there was three tankers setting up here, I mean there would have been. There was one filling in the country, he had to go to an irrigation well out there and fill up. He'd come in or pump off onto a firemen's tanker. I don't know how much water they hauled but they hold a lot.

Olen: Then General at Laverne sent up a couple of fracking tanks and trucks to fill them up with. Minneola and Laverne sent water trucks up to fill our water tower.

Diana: So how can they see when they were doing this because there is no electricity. Do they have floodlights?

Eugene: Yeah, they've got floodlights on their trucks. They've got some lights up there at the firehouse that you can set up. But really, they didn't set up after dark. I don't think they was here after dark, was they Olen?

Olen: Lavernee was, with their fire trucks.

Diana: But mostly after dark everybody had headed to the east part of the county or to Ashland, wherever the fire was at?

Olen: Then out south of town in the sand hills, they fought it for two days.

Eugene: You know, we come in when we got back into town... I can't tell you the time, because I don't know.

Diana: Was it Tuesday, or did you come back Monday?

Eugene: Monday. If it went through on Monday, then that's when it was. We come back through, and we had fire down here in south of town in the airport pasture that was probably three foot high and I told Carol, I said, "That is manageable but this other stuff isn't. You just can't fight fire when it's shooting up there six or eight foot.

Olen: It was shooting up 16 foot in some places. That's taller than a windmill.

Eugene: Yeah that's what I'd say. You're done with fighting the fire there, you can try to hold it, but that's all you can do. Sixteen feet is another story. You'd best get away.

Diana: So as the mayor of this town, did you get to talk to reporters or official people?

Olen: Yes. I talked to *The Wichita Eagle* and took that guy around and got videos. After we got done, I kept hearing about it. Well, the next move is California!

Eugene: To the movies!

Diana: So when the governor came out, were you part of that group that went and met Senator Pat Roberts?

Olen: I met Pat Roberts and all them guys. The guy from *The Wichita Eagle*, he came down to the well house before Pat Roberts came up. He was wanted someone to show him around to see what the fire had done. I said, "Okay, I'd just as well do that. I can't help these guys any. I couldn't help these guys any, they'd get it tied in and get it going. So I was just explaining some of the stuff.

Diana: So while you in town during the fire, was it hard to breathe? Was it hard to see?



Olen: I never noticed. Did you?

Eugene: You know, like I said, our house had a lot of soot and dust in it, of course.

Diana: So did you have to get it cleaned after the fire? Or did you just clean it?

Eugene: Mama did.

Diana: So can you perceive anything positive that resulted from the fire.?

Olen: Well, it got rid of a lot of junk that people never did take care of.

Eugene: Positive? The worst thing about it, like I said, was everybody that was in the middle of it. It cost a lot of money to build fence back and houses.

Olen: No lives was lost. Our loved ones are still there.

Eugene: We lost one, didn't we?

Diana: Yes, the trucker, and there was an accident where some people had minor injuries. That was that was it. So what effect do you think the fires had on the communities? Is it more physical or financial or emotional? Or is it kind of a combination of everything?

Olen: I'd say financial and emotional. Of course, it takes in physical, if it is emotional or financial. It's tied in with all of it, so I guess all three would be.

Diana: What do you think is the hardest to overcome? What do you think's taking the longest to recover?

Olen: I think the financial is the hardest to recover from. Everything costs so much money to replace.

Diana: So you think a lot of people took advantage of the community foundations deal in the KLA and that type of stuff? Do you think a lot of people use that to help recoup losses?

Olen: Some, yes.

Diana: Did you see a lot of volunteers come over here?

Eugene: Oh yes.

Olen: Lots and lots of volunteers.

Diana: Hay?

Eugene: What amazed me was a couple days afterwards or three. Some people from Winfield came, they had hay and they had some stock tanks and stuff. Stuff that they'd bought a tractor supply. The rodeo came back there, I don't know if it was Winfield or two towns or how it was. They had went together, they'd heard about it on the computer, not on TV or nothing. And they went and took donations and stuff and raised some money and the Tractor Supply gave them a discount on everything, they brought it all out here. Like I said, they had a trailer full of hay. There was at least three or four girls with him, you know young girls, high school age.

Like I said, people like that are just something. Companies, yeah, there's a lot of companies brought stuff in.

Olen: And bottled water. We felt like we was in a flood.

Diana: All the pallets of water?

Eugene: Smithfield and all of them, they sent stuff and a lot of churches.

Diana: So did you have a place here where people could come in and eat food?

Eugene: Yeah, they had it all set here in the schoolhouse. There was a lot of, a lot of it here, and a lot of it was used.

Diana: So how long did it take to get electricity back in town after the fire. You had to replace post, poles, wire.

Olen: It took all the poles out from here clear up to Ashland. It melted the wire clear in two in places. We basically had to replace all the wire and a lot of the poles.

Diana: So what about the tree rows? How are they going to replace that?

Olen: They probably won't.

Diana: How are they going to get rid of them?

Olen: Well, some of them will probably push them all up in a pile and burning them eventually.

Eugene: Yeah, that's about all they can do.

Olen: Some of them will just rot down.

Eugene: I was told David Clawson said he's going to dig a hole, bury them, put them in there, burn them and shove some more in.

Diana: So what do you think about the pastures? Have they come back?

Olen: Well, some of them have.

Eugene: They've come back, yes. But if you look down to the ground, you've got bare spots.

Olen: Through the sand hills, they won't be back for another 20 years.

Diana: Will they have trouble with the wind blowing dirt during this winter?

Eugene: We do have sagebrush. People hate it, but that's what keeping that ground from blowing right now.

Olen: We was lucky we got a rain afterward, a few days after.

Eugene: The sagebrush started spouting because you can't kill it. And that's what started a hole in the sand hills.

Diana: So what about here in town. Did the smoke smell stick around for a long time after the fire?

Olen: You get here and stir this dirt up, and you'll be black in just a little while. That stuff's still here.

Diana: Did it smell for a long time after the fire?

Olen: Yeah. It took several rains before it quit smelling like fire.

Diana: Okay, so what can you do, or have you done to prepare for a future fire?

Eugene: What can you do? Can I ask you that?

Olen: We're trying to get damaged trees cut down and get them... Well, we're working get to where we can finish burning them. After that, I don't know if it's going to just take time to get everything grassed over again.

Diana: Yeah. So what's the potential of another large fire?

Olen: Right now, you know it's pretty great.

Eugene: You know, I hadn't been fire chief for very long at all when I asked the council if they'd like to burn this creek out. The discussion just went on, and they just kind of pushed it back, and we never did burn the creek out. But at least if it was burned out and didn't have any stumps, a man could slip down in there and mow it and make it a little more manageable.

Olen: That's what I had in mind when I got the county boys... I wish they'd stayed a little longer. But you know, they got their buddies to contend with. And so I was very grateful for what they done.

Diana: It helps control?

Olen: Yes. They done a good job, and I'm very grateful for it. I keep thinking maybe I'll talk to somebody loaning us an old Cat so I can do a little more of that. I'd like to smooth that up to where I could mow it with a tractor out there and keep it mowed.

Eugene: You know, he's a Cat skinner anyway.

Diana: You just have to have the equipment and the budget to do it, right?

Olen: The little crawler we've got, it's about to play out.

Diana: So what about your water supply over here, has it been fixed?

Olen: No, it's not fixed, and we can't get it, it seems like.

Eugene: They come and tell us, "We got it!" And they're going to just get it right to you and get it started.

Diana: Then there's some kind of hold up?

Olen: It don't never happen. I'm getting to where I don't believe them when they tell me and then I asked this one person about, "Why can't we get money to get our water?" "Well, you have to have a plan." Well, my plan is, if I can get money, I'll drill some test holes and find a good well, we will produce it. But I can't do it without money. Drilling companies and people don't want to come do something without money.

Diana: They want it up front.

Eugene: They kind of like it up front. I don't blame them, you know. When you got the government involved, it always costs hundreds of thousands, instead of just thousands.

Diana: Is Englewood better off or worse off since the fire?

Eugene: I think we're worse off. We had a lot of people leave.

Diana: Did you have a bunch of people leave because they didn't have houses anymore?

Olen: No, not really but we have less people in town now.

Eugene: We had one left, Kenny Boutz... Anybody else?

Olen: Well, you know Bare's didn't. It didn't burn his house, but it did burn a lot of stuff around. Raymond wanted to move over here. It didn't burn his house, but it did burn a lot of stuff around there. I don't know about Debbie Isenbart, what she's going to do.

Diana: She bought a house.

Eugene: Really?

Diana: It's out there, I thought, she had a mobile home and she bought a trailer and was living in a mobile home.

Olen: I haven't been by there for a long time. I don't know what he's going to do.

Eugene: You know he might leave.

Olen: He's liable to because he went back there to build stuff for that girl in Connecticut. That's a long way for a carpenter to go build the shop for somebody.

Diana: Do you have any other thoughts about this fire experience that you'd like to add?

Olen: I don't want any more.

Eugene: That's a pretty good deal but like I said, I'm just so damned proud of all the firemen period. Like I said, I've been on it for many years. I know what they want through.

Olen: Oh, you know Bernie Smith, the next day after the fire, I went down. I don't know if somebody's dog was in with him or what, but I put my arm around him and said, "Bernie, you did a wonderful job." He broke down and cried.

Eugene: You know, it's a terrible deal for the ranchers and stuff.

Olen: Bernie said, "I don't feel like I did my job." Well, how you do your job when you're overwhelmed so bad? They lost thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of cattle and fence.

Eugene: Bill Neier was telling when I was visiting with him, he said, "You know, all the years I've been on the fire department, I've never lost a house to a wildfire. But he said, "Look what we did this trip."

Olen: This trip, it got every house on the highway from Ashland to Sitka, didn't it?

Diana: No, there's one. There's still one. The Gibson house is still there. Actually, it's all the way from there, all the houses clear up to the Clark/Comanche line because there's the house that Westrups live in and the house that Hazens live in. It got the Koehn house. It got the two Wilson houses. It got what used to be the old Baker

place, which was Edmonston's, and where the Frye sisters live. There was Huck's, which is now Milligan's/McKown's and then Donald Edmonston's house. Everything's gone. The highway was scorched. It was black.

Eugene: I don't know who it was that I was talking to, but they asked me, "How hot was that fire, do you suppose."

I said, "Oh, 1500."

"Oh," he said, "A fire ain't that hot."

I said, "Look at the highway going north of town."

Olen: It caught that on fire.

Eugene: Yeah, you know it... I guess because when you're on the fire department, you realize, you read and stuff like that about fire. In California, they have this every year, you might say.

Diana: Did you get to see any of the strike teams see them in action or see the airplanes here?

Olen: Well, we've seen them flying their airplanes. I think that one airplane dipped out of our pond for a time or two. Then some of the strike teams came around and sawed some trees down that was burning.

Eugene: You know, I wish somebody would list the departments that showed up and where they was from. Like I said, Pagosa Springs was here, I know that I was visiting with them.

Diana: Montrose, Colorado, was here, there was a bunch.

Eugene: But what I mean, what amazed me, the guy from Pagosa Springs, he was telling me, he said, "How do you guys handle this."

I said, "We don't handle this very often."

He said, "I would a lot rather handle a forest fire than I would some of this." Well, he got here when it had calmed down a little bit! I really couldn't understand that because a forest fire would scare me to death. You'd see me running off over the hill.

Olen: Well, I've been close enough to forest fires to know that them forest fires get up in the top of them trees and just go like everything.

Eugene: But, I couldn't believe it when we was visiting about it. Osawatomie was here, I visited with them.

Diana: There were four firefighters that came from Greeley County, Kansas, in a car didn't even have a truck.

Eugene: Well, you know, I was visiting with Bernie about it, and I said, "I've got a grandson that is a Liberal fireman. The grandson told me that he would have loved to have been there." But he said, 'I didn't know what to do. I didn't have a truck.' I told him that if he would come, they would put him to work.

And there was a lot of them, Englewood had a lot of trucks with people on their truck, not driving, but on the back working, who weren't firemen and who weren't from this area.