

Faye Ediger

Diana: Okay, today is November 18ths, 2017. What is your name?

Faye: Faye Ediger.

Diana: And where do you live?

Faye: Eleven miles west of Englewood.

Diana: What is your occupation?

Faye: Just a housewife.

Diana: Okay, and how old are you?

Faye: Seventy-four.

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

Faye: I guess we first became aware of it at noon on March the sixth.

Diana: Where were you?

Faye: At the house eating lunch.

Diana: What was your immediate reaction?

Faye: Well, actually Frosty got up and looked out and saw smoke west of us and he said, "I've got to go, that looks like it's over on the Meyers' ranch." He went out and hooked up the disk and headed west. By then it was already coming across towards us.

Diana: So how far is the Meyer's?

Faye: About 10 miles from us.

Diana: Did he get there?

Faye: No, the fire department got out there, and they turned him around, but he almost got caught in it just west of our house.

Diana: Did he come back and plow around your house?

Faye: Yes, but I did not know that. I did not know they turned him around.

Diana: So you didn't know he was there?

Faye: No.

Diana: How did you know the fire department was at your house?

Faye: I saw them come in. Well, Darren Osborn actually called from Ashland, and he said, "Grandma, there's a big fire, and it's headed your way, and the firemen are headed out your way." I found out later that they were actually headed to the Meyers Ranch. He said, "They're stopping and are going to foam your house." I've never heard of this foaming before. About that time both Englewood and Ashland pulled in to our house.

Diana: Who did the foaming?

Faye: One bunch stayed on our side of the road, and one stayed over on the south side where Frosty's mom had lived.

Diana: Did they also wet down trees and stuff?

Faye: Yes, around our place they wet down everything, foamed down everything.

Diana: So did you watch them?

Faye: Yeah. I was in my house, and Darren had come to the door. He said, "You want to be sure everything is shut up because this foam will be on everything." It made me think of when you go through a car wash, you know.

Diana: It looked like the soap?

Faye: Yeah.

Diana: So did it dry on your house?

Faye: Yeah, but you couldn't really... I mean the windows streaked and everything but...

Diana: Nothing big? Could you see the fire coming?

Faye: Well, yes. After a bit when I looked out, but you know it all happened so fast that I didn't realize... all I was worried about was where Frosty was.

Diana: So did they tell you he was close?

Faye: Not for quite a long time.

Diana: You didn't know he was there?

Faye: No. I did not. They were busy because it was coming right straight at us.

Diana: So could you see the flames? Was it real smoky?

Faye: Oh yes. Definitely.

Diana: Did you get a lot of smoke in the house?

Faye: Quite a lot. More than I even realized.

Diana: I heard you kept busy by making sandwiches.

Faye: Well, I did on a little later in the afternoon when they were still out there. So I made some sandwiches with what little I had on hand, you know, and took them out to the firemen. They were waiting to get out because it had surrounded us and nobody could get in.

Diana: Had some left before then?

Faye: Well, I got the call. I think you know how bad it was getting over towards Ashland. And yes, some of them left, and then they all managed to get out, so they had to go. They hated to leave because it was still burning around different places.

Diana: So did you lose anything?

Faye: We lost all of our grass and fences and stuff.

Diana: Did you have some hay?

Faye: No. Well, three bales are all that we had then.

Diana: So did you have cattle?

Faye: All we had was nine head there because our son Brian and the boys and Dustin lease from us and they had all moved their cattle out before this happened.

Diana: So that was kind of a lucky break.

Faye: Yes, but we ended up losing, well, the cows we had alive, the nine head of cows. Brian and them, when they could get in, took them up to Minneola, where theirs were.

Diana: You didn't have to destroy any?

Faye: No, but we lost some. I mean as far as destroying them, no, we didn't have to.

Diana: Some died in a fire?

Faye: And most of them lost their calves, several of them did, because they started calving early.

Diana: From the fire?

Faye: Yeah.

Diana: So do you know what time it was when they finally left around your place?

Faye: It was probably around 4 or thereabouts in the afternoon.

Diana: So all the fire had been through?

Faye: It had already come through, but we still had places out in the tree row that were burning. It didn't burn all of our tree row; there was a portion of it did some.

Diana: So how many times did the fire come through?

Faye: You know, I don't know. I really don't know, Diana. That day it was so... you know what it

was like!

Diana: Yeah, it was a blur.

Faye: Yeah.

Diana: So did you leave home at all?

Faye: I didn't. Well, there was nowhere to go anyway because I couldn't get out. I didn't even think of leaving home because I still at that point didn't know where Frosty was.

Diana: Now when did you find out where Frosty was?

Faye: It was probably when I took the sandwiches out, which I don't know what time that was. They told me that he'd been disking all around our place there and that they had got him turned around. I'm not sure what time that even was.

Diana: So once they left, did they come back?

Faye: They didn't. He had a cousin and his son that came in from Meade with water tanks and stuff, and then Ethan and Layton finally managed to get in. I don't know, they went clear down around by Knowles and somewhere. I mean, you know, the fire was already through before they could ever get in. Then they did a lot of putting out little spots.

Diana: Did you still have some places on fire on Tuesday?

Faye: No.

Diana: Did you ever lose your electricity?

Faye: Oh, yes. We lost our electricity and all of our phone service, cell and regular.

Diana: Did you have water?

Faye: Yeah, we do have water.

Diana: Do you have a generator?

Faye: Yes, we've got a generator.

Diana: Did it help? I mean did you have electricity then?

Faye: Yeah, we got it hooked up later on and were able to have electricity.

Diana: So the electricity went out during the fire?

Faye: Yeah.

Diana: Burned down the electrical lines?

Faye: Yeah, poles and some stuff. There was a bunch of them down.

Diana: Did it take them a while to get them put back up?

Faye: I was trying to think... was that on Monday?

Diana: Yes.

Faye: Seemed like it was Wednesday or Thursday before they got them all back up to where we had electricity. It was late in the evening either Wednesday or Thursday before they got us back on.

Diana: Did you ever leave after the fire? Did you go anywhere and see what the landscape looked like?

Faye: No, not until a day or two later. Janet came up the next day from Oklahoma.

Diana: Did you do a lot of house cleaning?

Faye: Well, our insurance, they sent a crew in to clean the house and stuff. But the ones that they sent to do the rugs did not do good... They've done wonderful on everything but the carpets.

Diana: Did you have to have them redone?

Faye: I actually rented a machine and redid them, but I'm still, at times when I vacuum you can see there's still...

Diana: A lot of ash?

Faye: Yes.

Diana: It covered everything?

Faye: Yes.

Diana: Did you lose anything from ash and stuff?

Faye: No, we didn't. We were fortunate. I mean actually, we were lucky. Now we would have lost everything if the department hadn't got in here when they did. It was headed right straight for our house.

Diana: And the foam didn't do what it is supposed to do, I take it.

Faye: No. I couldn't call anybody. We realized it after Darren called shortly after Frosty left the house.

Diana: That was the last call?

Faye: Well, no, I called Janet and told her and called Brian. And Brian was on the way to Nebraska with his job. I told Janet, "I don't know where your dad is. Put everybody up here on your prayer list because it's going to be a bad one." Shortly after I talked to her and Brian then, we lost everything. So I couldn't call, and nobody could call me. Carol and Eugene tried to come out, and they didn't get very far west. Bill and Darren tried to get out there. The Meade fire department tried to, and they got up there on the hill a half mile from our house. Buster Gleason told us, "All I could do was sit there and pray because we could see it and thought you were going to burn clear out." He said,

"We couldn't even get there."

Diana: Because of all the fires around and that smoke and stuff and how thick it was?

Faye: Yeah.

Diana: It's lucky they foamed your house.

Faye: Oh gosh, yeah, that's all that saved it. Bill Neier told me later when I was in there. He was the one that told me that they actually were headed to the Meyers Ranch, then he said they got the call from somebody, and they said, "Save Frosty Ediger's because it's heading right straight toward them." He said, "We were going to do everything we could to keep you guys from burning out," and they did.

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

Faye: You know, Diana, I don't know. I never did get scared, or worry about myself, about leaving, or anything. Because like I said, I was just worrying about where he was. I mean the actual fire itself went through there so cotton picking fast, other than the little fires and stuff that you didn't really... Later in the afternoon, after the fire department left, I finally went outside and walked across the road because I could see that it had flared up in the ditch again. I thought, "Oh criminy," because it could've come right on up to the house then. I walked across the road because by then I knew Frosty was back around there. I took my cell phone, of course it didn't do me any good. I tried... of course I got nothing. Looked around what I could but it was still so smoky. The soot and stuff were blowing away and everything.

Diana: Because the wind was still blowing pretty high, right? Had the temperature changed yet?

Faye: At that point, no. I don't think it had. You know it was still a little while later.

Diana: So when that fire and the smoke came through, was it a certain color? Was it just grey smoke, or was it black?

Faye: Both, actually it was just both. Yeah. I mean, you couldn't tell a whole lot because of all the soot and ash and stuff blowing, too.

Diana: So you've lived out in the country most of your life, and you've seen range fires and grass fires and all kinds of things.

Faye: Nothing like this!

Diana: So how do they usually fight a fire?

Faye: Basically just like they were. Well, of course, they finally got... Eugene will tell you, and he told Carol when they couldn't get out there, he said... I can't remember how he worded it, but they weren't just in "fighting the fire mode," but they were trying to save stuff. You know, usually, all the ranchers or anybody that's got water tanks and stuff, or tractors and stuff. The fire departments do just like they do right now. They go out there and do everything they can to help.

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

Faye: Gosh, I couldn't begin to name all of them. We had hay come in from several different states.

Allan, Janet's husband, and some of his relations that are managers of a children's home down in Oklahoma, came up that first weekend after the fire and started tearing out the fence that was left and rolling wire and pulling steel posts. They were there all weekend. The next weekend, (we go to the countryside church down there) some of the young men from there had come out through the week and talked to Frosty. They said they wanted to get a crew together and come out. We had 101 people from not just the church, but from around Meade and just volunteers they got that came out and worked all day pulling posts and rolling wire. The Pizza Hut in Meade furnished pizza for everybody. The ladies from our church came out and brought tables and stuff from our church and set them up right out there by our garage. They brought all the drinks and homemade cookies and everything to go along with the pizza. They ran them through like clockwork.

Diana: How much fence did you lose?

Faye: We only lost about six miles. Nothing like...

Diana: Still, six miles is a lot.

Faye: Now there's a lot more miles than that lost. They're still working on it.

Diana: They got it all torn out pretty quickly, and now it's just getting it put back in? Do you have to replace everything? Or could you repair some of it?

Faye: Very little of it could be repaired. Janet and her son, they all got on Facebook. You know, at first, (you know, we're in Meade County) at first Meade wasn't even mentioned. And Janet and Erin (used to be Kaltenbach) Boggs that lives at Meade, and another little girl over there, they got on Facebook and got the ball rolling. Then Janet and Jacob down there got their churches... Diana, we haven't had to buy anything. Then we had crews come in two different weekends from eastern Kansas. Nineteen people one weekend and then 21 another weekend. They built all of our outside fences.

Diana: Yeah.

Faye: We still have, you know, a little bit of inside fence.

Diana: You weren't moving any of the fences, were you? They all went back where they were before?

Faye: No, they all went back where they were. They came out and just wanted to... They were from a church back there in eastern Kansas.

Diana: So how did you get hooked up with them?

Faye: Actually the way we got hooked up with them was through Randall Spare because you know Randall and Michelle go to church over there too. And I guess I had called Randall and I asked him. Randall knew what we had lost and stuff, and he put them in touch with us.

Diana: So then you got hay too, right?

Faye: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Diana: And so did that come through the Englewood people bringing that out? Or some from Ashland?

Faye: Yeah, all of it. I mean you know, from Ashland Feed and Seed, they sent some of them out. Then a lot of it was coming in and going out to Greg. Going to Englewood, they were sending a bunch of it out there because even though we didn't have any cattle out there, they knew we were going to have them back out, you know.

Diana: So if you were to go look at your pastures now, have they recovered?

Faye: A lot, a whole lot. I mean, if it wasn't for fences still needing put up and tree rows where they burned and the tamarix west of us. Just looking, you know, you wouldn't realize how terrible it was.

Diana: Yeah. After the fire, when everything was pretty much gone, did it blow quite a bit?

Faye: Oh yeah. I wish I'd brought the iPod in because we've got a whole bunch of pictures that Janet took the next day. And the funny thing was, Diana, where that went, I mean, it had blown so much where that had burned. You couldn't see any black. Down there in the tamarix, you could. But the sand had just literally covered the black. It was so unreal. This fire coming through, you'd think everything would be black, but just because of that high wind and the dirt and so much sand blowing... We didn't realize there were so many sand hills! I mean, because they'd always been covered!

Diana: So did you lose any windmills or solar panels or water tanks?

Faye: No, we didn't.

Diana: So what effect, physical or financial or emotional, has the fire had on you or on other people?

Faye: Well, I don't know. Probably emotional and financial. Yeah. Because you wonder, I mean. Where is the money going to come from to replace all the fencing?

Diana: Did you take advantage of the funds that were offered by the Ashland Community Foundation and the KLA and all of that?

Faye: We didn't.

Diana: You didn't apply for any of that? You got a lot of donations from people who just come in and helped you?

Faye: Everything we got has been just totally donations.

Diana: And they brought the fencing with them?

Faye: They brought... well, Janet and Alan, well Jacob and Alan and Janet all, they came up. Janet works at the school at Davenport and her boss, the superintendent, his dad owns a trucking company. They had got enough donations and fencing supplies and stuff, and she asked him if his dad would let them rent or hire one of their drivers and bring a truckload of stuff to us. He talked to his dad, and he said, "No, I will not." He said, "I will furnish the truck. I will furnish the driver. But we're going to fill the truck up before it goes up there."

Actually on Facebook and through both of their churches, they came up with a whole semi-load, a

whole load of supplies.

Diana: Quite a bit! Was it mostly t-posts and wooden posts?

Faye: No, and wire, you know.

Diana: And the clips.

Faye: Oh yeah, the clips went with the t-posts.

Diana: So can you perceive of anything positive that's resulted from the fire?

Faye: Oh gosh, there's so much positive I wouldn't know where to start. I think it is really drawing people close together through all of this. You know, all of us tend to go our own way and it just seems like it's drawn everybody closer.

Diana: Yes. So what can you do or have you done to ensure you know how to prepare for a future fire?

Faye: I actually don't know. I can't say what we've really done. I just keep praying we don't have another one mainly.

Diana: And you were kind of like caught, because you couldn't go anywhere. Right?

Faye: Right.

Diana: And it was there before they even went out?

Faye: You know, Bernard Smith actually called us that day, and he said there was a fire over by the old, what they used to call the old Son Mackie Bridge that is about 10 miles from us. He said, "It's kinda headed that way, so you might want to watch it. Watch out." And I mean, that's just the first we knew anything because we're kind of down in a hole out there and you don't always see stuff. And just that quick then, Frosty just got up, because we were eating, and he didn't even finish eating.

He just got up and looked out. Well, we could see smoke and stuff, and he just said, "I've got to go." He said, "It looks like this is headed right at us now. And he just went out and hooked up and headed west.

Diana: Did he check out his tractor to see if there is gas in it?

Faye: He keeps it...

Diana: He keeps it all done up? Just had to hook up the disk?

Faye: Yes, and that was one thing he just here lately told somebody that, "Nine times out of ten, when I go back up to hook up anything I do it three or four times, thinking I'm close enough." You know he's got macular in one eye, and he said, "You know, that was so odd. I backed up to that disc perfect! I just got down, picked it up, and hooked it." I knew he did because I was watching, you know. He wasn't hardly five minutes.

Diana: So did he make a whole lot of passes around your house?

Faye: I don't know how many he actually did, quite a few. But I never did actually ask him. And there was so much going on!

Diana: So what kind of sandwiches did you make?

Faye: Ham! I had part of a ham, and I sliced off as I could. I didn't have enough for a whole lot. You know, I kept thinking, oh man, this is the one time you wish you had supplies on hand. But I mean whoever thought that...

Diana: Most of them didn't get lunch. So they were very grateful to get those sandwiches.

Faye: I had some bottled water and pop, and I just took out the sandwiches. I told them, "I don't have very many but here's what I've got and water and pop." They mainly wanted water, but they took all of it. So anyway, so are you recording this?

Diana: Yes.

Faye: I'll tell you something after you're done.

Diana: What do you think the community can do to prepare for things like this? Fires or other crisis?

Faye: You know, Diane, I don't know, I really don't.

Diana: They were pretty good about evacuating Englewood, weren't they? Weren't most people out of the way?

Faye: Yeah, because you know, Eugene knew it was headed our way and couldn't get out there, and I turned around headed back. And by the time they got back in town, which they really didn't get too far out. She said... I don't even know who put out the word to evacuate. And they ended up in a wheat field south of town, I think it was.

Diana: I think a bunch did.

Faye: Yeah, I know Brenda and them did.

Diana: I think Walkers were down there.

Faye: Yeah, I think they were. I think so.

Diana: So did anything strike you as something you'll never forget? About the fire? Or about the people that came and helped?

Faye: No, not any one certain thing.

Diana: Just lots of things?

Faye: Yeah, you know the generosity of all the people and, like I say, the people that you've never even heard of. And you know, people coming in and helping, and the hay that came in, because we had hay come in from several states. I can't even tell you how many different ones.

Diana: Did you meet the truck drivers?

Faye: Part of them, we did.

Diana: Did they have any meals over here for volunteers or did they do anything like that?

Faye: I really don't know what they did here in town. I know there was a lot of stuff brought in for people, but as far as that part, I don't know. We were so busy with people coming and going out there it was hard to know what was going on right here.

Diana: So how long did people come and go at your house?

Faye: Oh, good Lord, several weeks.

Diana: Was it into April or May?

Faye: Probably, I was trying to think when the last crew came in, because the ones that came in to build the fence, it was several weeks later then before they come back. They were here two different times.

Diana: And always had a big crew?

Faye: That was the ones that there were 18 or 19 one time and 21 on the other time and they spent the whole weekend out there. And in fact, they stayed out there.

Diana: I was about to ask where they stayed.

Faye: Well, Frosty's mother's house is still over there. We put part of them up at our house, and then one of them brought a camper. Some stayed in it, and the rest stayed over in the house across the road. You know we fed all of them. You know, ourselves, but I tell you what, it was men and women both that came.

Diana: Any children?

Faye: Yeah, there were some pretty small and the first weekend when Allen's relations come in, they had... Well, there was one little boy. I think he was four years old. In fact, Jane got the cutest picture, and then there was another one that was a little older. They were carrying a little bucket walking down the ditch. They were gathering the clips that people were losing. She got pictures of them doing that. It was so cute. Yes. But boy, they were right out there with them the whole time.

Diana: So do you keep in touch with any of these volunteers?

Faye: The ones from the other crew that come in, we've talked to. Frosty has talked to him several times. He called them, and Janet has kept in touch. Well, not a lot but with one or two of the truck drivers. Because several of them had contacted her through Facebook and said that's the only way they knew anything about it. She had had a text from one little gal that had come with her husband. And I can't tell who they were, but just here lately she wanted to know how all of us were doing.

Diana: Social media was very helpful during this fire.

Faye: After they finally figured it out that we had a fire!

Diana: It's true, it took a little bit.

Faye: Yeah.

Diana: So do you have any other thoughts or things you'd like to share about this experience?

Faye: Not that I can think of. I just hope we never see it again. You know, every time the wind blows like it is today and stuff, you worry. I guess the Wilsons had a fire yesterday.

Diana: They had a grass fire at Clawsons.

Faye: I knew that. How close was it to them?

Diana: I don't know. They called everybody in and 1022's them, turned them around because they got to put out rather quickly.

Faye: That's what Darren had called and told Tanner, because we went over there for Bill's birthday yesterday. He said, "Mom I don't know what time we'll be there." Because he was helping Kyle Kaltenbach. Kyle's really jumpy, I think, because they had to move cattle and stuff.

Diana: Yeah, I think they're all a little jumpy.

Faye: Yeah, everybody is.

Diana: Because the wind's been blowing and the humidity's low.

Faye: And it's really dry again.

Diana: And everything grew back really well after the fire. And then the stuff that didn't get burned...

Faye: Yeah, it could do it again already.