

7-19-1996

Marceda Huffman interview for the 1913 Dayton Flood Survivors Oral Histories Collection

Marceda Huffman

Jeff Moyer

Mark R. Lyons

Wright State University – Main Campus, mark.lyons@wright.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special_ms296



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Huffman, M., Moyer, J., & Lyons, M. R. (1996). Marceda Huffman interview for the 1913 Dayton Flood Survivors Oral Histories Collection. .

https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/special_ms296/3

This Video is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections and Archives at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in 1913 Flood Survivors Oral Histories (MS-296) by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact corescholar@www.libraries.wright.edu, library-corescholar@wright.edu.

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
1913 Dayton Flood Oral Survivors Histories (MS-296)

Interview Date: July 19, 1996

Interviewer: Jeff Moyer

Interviewee: Marceda Huffman

Marceda Huffman: Okay.

Jeff Moyer: Alright.

MH: Uh-huh.

JM: Um. Can you...Marceda would you please tell me where you lived?

MH: I lived uh on Bruin Street.

JM: Mm-hmm. And how long did you live there?

MH: Warrington then... Well we didn't...we lived on [unknown] Street and then we Bruin...moved over to Bruin and then that was when the flood was. We, we lived uh on [Lugo] oh uh...I, I, not too long. And then we moved over on Bruin and that was the house that had the, the you know, the story and the half.

JM: Mm-hmm.

MH: That was where the bad things were.

JM: Can you tell me about when you first saw the water?

MH: Uh my uh my mother was beginning to do washing and then there was some little holes in the floor and she was running around and sticking rags in the holes. And just before you turned around the water came up and it was up to about that far from the, from the uh stairway. It...like I said it was a story and a half and then you went up the steps and the water was um up until it got up about that much...like I said we were there three days and three nights. And then the uh the boats came along and...

JM: Right. So how much time did you have to get to the attic?

MH: Well um...we didn't have too much time cause see the uh water...when we went to the attic the water was oh as tall as I am downstairs already.

JM: And um, um...what do you remember about the water? Did...were you in the water at all?

MH: No uh we weren't in the water. We didn't have...we didn't have any beds or any bed clothes or anything like that.

JM: Mm-hmm.

MH: But the water came up so fast that we had to get on the stairs and get up there and get up...get upstairs. And like I say we were uh the water was up oh about that far from the uh from the...where we were three days and three nights.

JM: Would you like a glass of water?

MH: I don't know what this is in my throat.

JM: Um. So um while you were up there uh did you see...what did you see outside the window?

MH: You saw people try you know uh in boats and you saw them uh some of them...the water came up about that high and they uh and they were out. I don't know what the world they were doing out there but they but they went...oh I know we lived right near the river you know and uh so then the water came, kept coming up and people kept coming over to where to St. Elizabeth hospital.

JM: Mmm. Right. So they were trying to get there to safety?

MH: Well yeah, they had, they had to walk, walk through the uh river, through the water that was in the river to get over to the uh hospital. And uh...

JM: Right. So um, um what, what happened to some of the other houses around your house?

MH: The other houses around my house...the water came up around them just like they did our house. The houses didn't, didn't float away but the, we, everybody had an old outside toilet. The toilets floated away and uh and uh the uh barns you know people had barns and they had the coal in their uh stuff in there and uh...but they floated away too.

JM: Did you see any houses around you collapse?

MH: Oh I saw in the back there was uh um a big house and uh the, the, there was a family in there and they water came up and uh the girl uh one of the girls that lived there uh they, they um the water came up so bad that she got caught in a tree and I heard her crying and hollering; she was about sixteen, fifteen, sixteen years old. And um the boats I saw then you know turn over and, and for somebody that was only just six years old, it was really, really terrible...

JM: Mm-hmm.

MH: ...cause all that kind of stuff always...anything that you know that bothered somebody really bothered me. But uh this one girl like I say she got in uh the house went down and the uh, uh tree was there and this girl got caught in the tree and she was in there day and night...see the, the flood water stayed up. I was in it for uh...in the house for three days and three nights. And uh when the house...when their house went down uh you know when things hit it and then the house went on down the river and she uh her feet and legs froze. Now I never knew anything else after that but I did. She was about fifteen and she...and I was just only six years old you know and she kind of looked after me.

JM: Right.

MH: Uh-huh.

JM: So um...what was it like for a...do you remember uh the thoughts you had or had you were feeling at the age of six seeing all this going around you?

MH: At the age of six years old I was very scared and I just prayed, prayed. I prayed...I walked back, back and forth and back and forth and prayed cause you know when the water came, it came in just like this and uh and it wasn't very long until it was up, it was up that far from the upstairs.

JM: So um tell me about what uh you and your parents did for three days in that attic?

MH: Well we just looked from one window to the other to see how much more the water was...how much higher the water was coming up. And like I say they took those boats and rowed them all over Dayton where the water was.

JM: Right. Right.

MH: Uh-huh.

JM: Um so tell me about getting the water, getting your drinking water.

MH: Oh. Oh. Well us kids was always thirsty. So my father took his shot gun and shot a hole in the spouting up, up you know where the spouting was and that's what...the water that we drank. We didn't have anything to eat at all...there was nothing to eat up there. But we did have...we slept on the floor and because my dad was lucky enough to take some of the uh bed clothes but all of our, all of our furniture...it threwed away.

JM: Mm-hmm. So this attic um...

MH: It's an old fashioned attic.

JM: Right. Was it dangerous up there?

MH: Well uh you know like I say I was only six years old and all this water scared the Dickens out of me. But uh like, like I say I had been uh, I been uh getting ready for first communion and I did a lot of praying. But if I would, like I say, if I'd have known that my mother was going to have that baby as soon as they put her in the boat and took her across the river there to the St. Elizabeth and she went into the visitor's door and she stayed there until the baby was born. And then they took her out to uh out to River Street and out near the uh...well it was near Dayton Rubber. That was out....

JM: So um, um...tell me about um being rescued and getting into the boat. Who, who was it that came for you?

MH: Well uh NCR.

JM: Mm-hmm.

MH: NCR started making those boats right away, as soon as the water came up. But when they took us to the NCR like I say everybody brought clothes and you wouldn't believe what we looked like, I'm telling you. But then uh when the water went down enough that we could walk out to where uh Dayton View where the Dayton Rubber and we walked from the NCR out to uh the Dayton Rubber and that was where my uncle's had their cars. And then they took us to Versailles and like I say we stayed until September.

JM: What do you remember seeing on your walk from NCR?

MH: Horses that had drowned just all along...just...little you know it seemed like all the horses in Dayton had I don't know what...well they must have got in the barn because they were dead see and all along the river they were laying they were dead.

JM: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And did you see any horses uh during the flood when you were still in the attic?

MH: Yes and they was making their noise you know....like that...well I didn't notice it right away but whenever a horse makes a noise.

JM: Right.

MH: Uh-huh. And they uh...when we got out of the uh NCR we were going out to River View why uh they uh horses...that was when the horses was laying along the uh, along the uh canal. Did you know there was a canal there?

JM: Mm-hmm.

MH: By the NCR. Well there were all, all laying from, from there clear out to River View out to the Dayton Rubber.

JM: Mm-hmm.

MH: They were dead.

JM: Right.

MH: Uh-huh

JM: Right. Um so this memory...

MH: Mm-hmm.

JM: Now what was it like for you, I mean what is it like for you now? You keep...do you...

MH: Well um...

Background voice: Pause it at this point and we'll change the tape.

JM: Okay.

Background Voice: We'll take it out.

JM: Alright. Give us a couple of minutes; we need to change the tapes.

MH: Okay.

JM: So we don't miss any of this.

MH: Okay. [Video goes out from 00:11:03 to 00:11:40 but audio continues] I was, I was so scared.

JM: Right.

MH: I was so scared that I just...you know....

Background voice: Does your brother take care of you?

MH: Yeah

Background voice: They separated you, they fed you...

MH: I was one of the pets [Laughing]

JM: They really liked you huh?

MH: Yeah, I really go along with everybody. [Laughing]

JM: Well we're going to talk about that as soon as we get this new tape in.

MH: Okay.

JM: We want to talk about what it was like at NCR while you were staying there.

MH: Mmhmm, well I'll tell you.

[00:11:40 Video returns]

JM: okay, umm...

MH: There was a nurse's....

Background voice: ...she might have mentioned that...

JM: Yeah, yeah

JM: So did your husband, or excuse me, your father, what did he do to keep you safe in the attic?

MH: We was just up there in that half a story and he had the clothes post, like I told you. Do you remember the clothes posts? And he stayed up day and night and he pushed all the - like I told you everybody had an outside privy around there - and he stayed up and he pushed the little barns and the things like that, because almost everybody had horses.

JM: So did any of the horses try to get in?

MH: No, by the time they got to where we lived they were... some of them were dead all ready. uh huh. Along the creek, they were all laying

JM: Right. So let's talk about what it was like at NCR. Where did you sleep?

MH: Oh, we slept on the floor, but we had the nurses that worked at NCR take care of us and I had one nurse, that she took a liking to me and she was so good to me and somebody brought a doll in about that tall [indicates with hand] and the nurse gave it to me. Well there was a little girl standing to the side of me and she liked the doll so well. I liked to too but after going through all that I just gave the doll to that little girl. And she was so happy, I was so glad, but I sure would have loved to have kept it.

JM: What kind of things did you see when you were at NCR?

MH: Well, they had all kinds of exercise and things, you know? And when you wasn't asleep in the reading, you got to on the horses - you know, imitation horses - and things like that. And we had a lot of fun, all of us kids did. They brought great big tables in from down in the kitchen. I don't know how they got that stuff so fast and the tables were from that door to clear over here. And they had the white table clothes on them and they had the stoves fixed so that they could

cook the food. And they rang a bell when it was time to go to the tables. But like I said, I was one of the lucky ones, because these nurses took care my just like I was one of their own.

JM: And what kind of stuff did you have to eat while you were there?

MH: Oh we had good stuff; all good food. I don't know where on earth they cooked that food, because you know the water came in the NCR. But of course we had a floor - like I said - with all these exercises and all us kids was so busy, you know, getting up on all those imitation horses and we were just busy all the time. We just had a ball. And we had such good food and like I said, the tables that were all white table clothes, everything was so nice. But I was lucky enough that I had one of the nurses that was just like my mom. And she took real good care of me. But when they came to the NCR after they got through, my uncles, and they got to come in, and like I said, they brought all these old clothes, you know? And they would stand you in front of a mirror - they had a room that had a mirror in it - and they try something on you, you know? So we were really, you know, we were really busy, but it was awful when you thought about the, you know, the people that drowned and things like that.

JM: Did you or your family know of anybody who passed away during the flood?

MH: I was so.. I was little, I just really... the nurses kept me busy and the boys and the girls who wanted to ride horse, they brought some of the horses in and let them ride on the horses. I did a lot of riding up and down on the elevator and you just had to keep yourself busy and I was kind of a little busy body anyhow.

JM: So how did the flood change your life?

MH: I never have gotten over it. When I think of it, it all comes back. Oh I was a nervous wreck when I went back to school. You know? I just was a nervous wreck. But the nurses that worked at the NCR, they had their white uniforms on and like a said, they took really good care of us kids and they had the nice white - like I said - the nice white table cloths. We had everything real nice.

JM: So how do you feel about being around large bodies of water now?

MH: Well it took me awhile, but I finally made up my mind that I was going to go learn how to swim. And I did , I learned how to swim.

JM: Where did you learn to swim?

MH: I learned to swim over at NCR. In the summertime, after it was. you know, after we had gotten back from Dayton. Why I went over there. They had a nice pool and I went over there and I swam over there.

JM: Well I think that's about it. Anything else you want to tell me?

MH: Well I tell you, like I've said, I was so nervous and these people who had little children and of course I was a little child myself too. They kept you busy. They had those horses and the exercise room and you really kept to busy that it just kind of got out of your mind what you were going through. But the clothes people brought in, I tell you what, they were something. But they were something to cover your back until we got to Versailles. And the nurses were so nice.

JM: Well I think that's about it.

MH: About it?

JM: I appreciate you taking the time to do this for us.

MH: Well I'm awful happy to do it for you, because look what they did for me and my brothers. They took us over there on those boats and the nurses took care of us and they had the good food and the tables all had nice white - I don't think they were tablecloths, I think they were just white material. Like I said, all the people, everybody was so good to me and like I said, I was just six years old.

JM: Okay, that should be all we need. We'll get out of your way

MH: Oh I enjoy it.

JM: Good, I'm glad you had a good time.

MH: I did.

JM: That's important that you would.