

Can't go home, yet

Dazed survivors of flood can do nothing but wait

From Staff and New York Times Dispatches

MAN, W. Va.—For thousands of persons who escaped the raging waters of Buffalo Creek Saturday, yesterday was the day they realized they could not go home again—at least for the time being.

Because National Guardsmen were still searching the 20-mile area for more bodies residents were not even allowed to visit their former homesites. All they could do was wait around this valley town and look to the future, such as it is.

One of the survivors, Wallace Adkins, 46, a 15-year veteran of the West Virginia coal mines, was tired from days and nights without sleep.

"I just identified my wife and little girl," Adkins said after inspecting several rows of flood victims at a crude morgue set up in the gymnasium of the Man Elementary School.

"They haven't found my little boy yet," he said, "but I know he's gone too." His 7-month-old son has not been located.

Son told story of escape

The Adkins home at Lundale, about five miles from the dam site, was among those hardest hit when the millions of gallons of thick, mucky coal slag roared down the valley sweeping away 14 coal camps along a 20-mile stretch of Buffalo Creek.

Another son, Wallace Adkins Jr., 9, had told newsmen Sunday of the family's attempted flight from the raging floodwaters.

Adkins, a veteran miner at the Island

Creek Coal Co.'s Stowe Mine on Buffalo Creek, is outspoken on placing blame for his sorrow and loss from the Saturday flood.

"The people on Buffalo Creek took a petition and sent it in to (former) Gov. (Hullett C.) Smith," Adkins said angrily. "The coal company and the politicians (sic) fought the people. Now, I've lost

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Spring's sprung

Furnished by The National Weather Service

LOUISVILLE area—Partly cloudy, mild through tomorrow, chance of showers tomorrow. High both days in the low to mid-70s, low in the upper 40s. Precipitation probability near zero today, 10 per cent tonight.

KENTUCKY and TENNESSEE—Fair, warm through tomorrow. Highs both days in upper 60s to upper 70s, lows in mid-40s to mid-50s.

INDIANA—Partly cloudy, warm through tomorrow, chance of showers tomorrow. Highs in mid- to upper 40s north, mid-60s to low 70s south, lows in mid-30s to mid-40s.

High yesterday, 70; low, 37.

Year Ago Yesterday: High, 52; low, 36.

Sun: Rises, 7:16; sets, 6:36.

Moon: Rises, 7:26 a.m.; sets, 7:15 p.m.

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Dazed victims wait, wonder about future

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my wife and two children because the politicians wanted to do it their way."

Several survivors have told of efforts over about 20 years to have the giant pile of coal refuse removed from its precarious position 200 feet up the mountain side above the unprotected homes.

The dump, reportedly 50 feet deep, 400 feet wide and more than a mile long, served more recently as a silt basin and water reservoir for Buffalo Mining Co.

An official of the company has placed blame for the disaster on state conservation laws that have prohibited the company from releasing the toxic coal waste into Buffalo Creek which now, three days after the disaster, runs black into the state's major stream.

Like his elderly mother and father who were asleep nearby on Army cots provided by the rescue center, Adkins lost everything he owned in the flood except the clothes on his back.

Lost all belongings

Adkins said he lost \$8,000 worth of furniture in the flood. He had no insurance on his home and other possessions and could not have bought flood insurance at any price in the frequently flooded area of Buffalo Creek.

His family has been given clothing from the two roomfuls of articles that have poured into the Red Cross Rescue Center and Shelter at the Man High School.

Like the 300 other refugees from Buffalo Creek, the family is provided three meals a day at the cafeteria. Literally tons of meat, bread, milk and vegetables continue to pour in by the truckload from individuals, community agencies and businesses from throughout West Virginia and Kentucky.

Meanwhile, officials of the Pittston Co., which owned the Buffalo Mining Co. where the waste pile gave way, began to assemble at the local company office. A lawyer for the Pittston admitted the dam had been built across a tributary of Buffalo Creek — which could be in violation of state law — but a company vice president called the disaster "an act of God."

For most of the people affected by the massive slide of water and sludge, the cause of the disaster seemed almost beyond importance any more. It had happened two days ago, and reality now was a cot and blankets in a classroom of the high school.

The people seemed dazed yesterday. They wandered through the halls of the school clutching a few bits of clothing they had been given. For many, the second-hand shirts and slacks were their only possessions in the world. And the bologna on white bread or the hot meal in the school cafeteria was the only way they were going to eat.

Willis Jacobs stood in the doorway and watched the other refugees wander around. Jacobs is an electrician for Island Creek Coal Co. but does not expect to work in the near future because the railroad lines are out to his mine. Still, he was lucky. Somebody passing downhill near his home in Robinette Saturday morning had given him warning so he had 15 minutes to wake his wife and four children and scramble uphill to the side of the hollow, just in time to see a flood carry away his neighbors who tried to run downhill.

"I saw the whole Gunnels family go under," Jacobs said yesterday. "I could see their heads and hear their voices before they went under the water and the timbers. I can still hear them."

So the Jacobs family survived but their \$15,000 home did not. And Jacobs stood around yesterday and wondered what was next.