

**Bernie Wilson**  
**Interviewed, 19 April 1972**  
**Buffalo Creek Hearings, p. 1325**

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At approximately 3 A.M. Saturday, February 26, 1972, Tom Sparks, a friend of Mr. Wilson's arrived with his family at Mr. Wilson's house because they couldn't sleep. They were fearful that the dam would break and wash them away because their house was located directly below the left of the dam in the town of Saunders. Mr. Wilson also believe, that the dam would break because he had been to the dam the prior Monday and the water was getting higher and higher. At approximately 7:30 A.M., Bennie Wilson and Tom Sparks departed Wilson's home in Spark's truck, went to a service station and got gasoline. Afterwards, they picked up Harold Sloane, a neighbor of Sparks, who lived across the road from him, and went to Sparks' house where Sparks proceeded to feed his hogs.

The morning was clear and light. Bennie Wilson went to the bathroom in Sparks' house and Harold Sloane watched the water coming over the dam. As Mr. Wilson left the bathroom, he heard the water rushing over the dam and when he went outside he saw the water hit a hot slag dump piled on the outside of the dam approximately 100 yards from Sparks house across the road at the right of the dam. Mr. Wilson said the slag dump exploded, carrying water and slag 100 feet in the air. The water coming over the dam pitched up and shifted to the right side of the dam (as you face it). Mr. Wilson said he did not see the dam itself break. Mr. Wilson yelled to Tom Sparks who was in the hog house and all three men ran across the highway, across the railroad tracks and up the mountain directly opposite Sparks house. He said they were frightened and worried about their families. Harold Sloane's family was in Davey Hollow with his brother because Mr. Sloane took his family there for safety.

From a perch approximately 30 feet up the mountain, they watched the water, which after having pitched to the right, take out the church near the right side of the dam. The water then moved to the left, sweeping away Harold Sloane's house, Tom Sparks house his pig house, pigs and truck. Mr. Wilson said the water, which was about 30 feet high at this point,

He was asked if he had noticed a drain pipe in #3. He said he had not noticed a pipe in dam #3, but he did see pipes in dam #1 and #2 and they were both discharging water in about 1/2 capacity.