

Sherry Gibson
Interview, 25 April 1972
Buffalo Creek Hearings, p.1249

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Sherry Elaine Gibson was interviewed relative to the Buffal[o] Creek disaster and she furnished the following information. Miss Gibson is 16 years old and is a sophomore in high school.

On Friday evening, February 25, 1972, Miss Gibson went to the residence of Bud Johnson, Saunders, West Virginia, to stay overnight. There were 10 other individuals in the house: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, their four daughters and two sons, and two grandsons.

At approximately 5:00 A.M., she was awakened by her father, Denny Gibson, who instructed her to watch for a break in the dam. She was also instructed to run to the hills if the break occurred. Mrs. Gibson and the remainder of their family were staying at the Lorado Grade School in Lorado, West Virginia. From 5:00 A.M. Sherry sat alone(the others were in bed) looking out the window and listening. At approximately 7:30 A.M. she could see the lower right section of the slate pile and the burning slate on the ground in front of the pile.

At approximately 8:00 A.M., Miss Gibson heard the sound of rushing water coming from the direction of the slate pile. She went out the back door with two babies under her arms and started running up the mountain. Looking back, Miss Gibson saw an ocean of water hit the burning slate and a loud explosion sounded. She said that a pile of slate and water bigger than two trailers flew in the air together with smoke and gas. Miss Gibson saw the water (up in the air) bounce off the right side of the mountain before shifting over to the left. She said the water and slate crashed over the church at the right of the dam. Miss Gibson estimated that the water was at least 20 feet high at this point. After the church was crushed, the water moved onto a course following the road down the hollow. Sherry Gibson stayed approximately 45 minutes on the mountainside before she went down to the Johnson residence, which had been damaged but not destroyed.