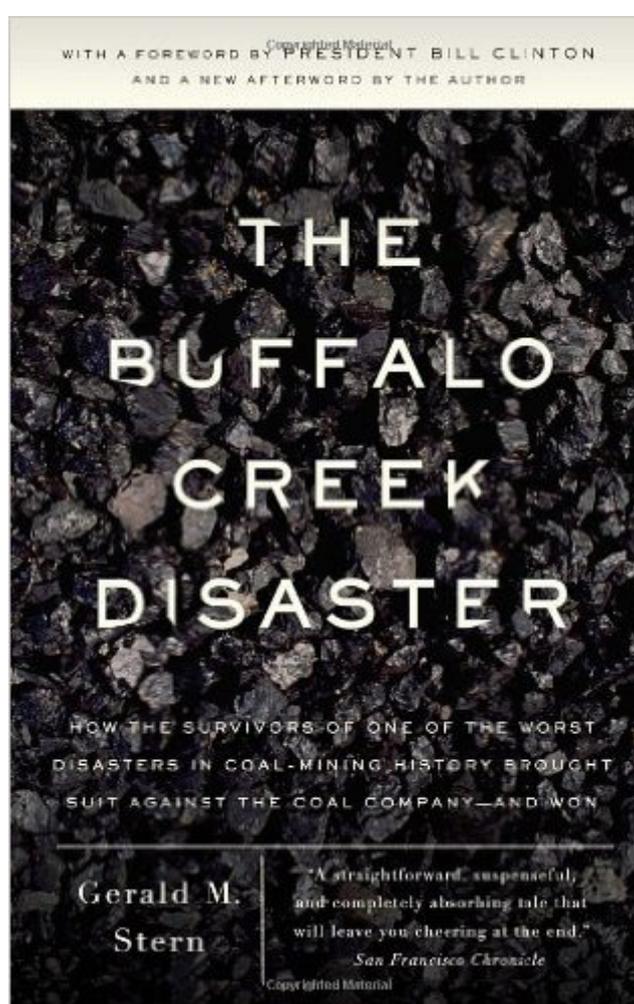


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# The Buffalo Creek Disaster: How The Survivors Of One Of The Worst Disasters In Coal-Mining History Brought Suit Against The Coal Company- And Won



## Synopsis

One Saturday morning in February 1972, an impoundment dam owned by the Pittston Coal Company burst, sending a 130 million gallon, 25 foot tidal wave of water, sludge, and debris crashing into southern West Virginia's Buffalo Creek hollow. It was one of the deadliest floods in U.S. history. 125 people were killed instantly, more than 1,000 were injured, and over 4,000 were suddenly homeless. Instead of accepting the small settlements offered by the coal company's insurance offices, a few hundred of the survivors banded together to sue. This is the story of their triumph over incredible odds and corporate irresponsibility, as told by Gerald M. Stern, who as a young lawyer and took on the case and won.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Vintage (May 6, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307388492

ISBN-13: 978-0307388490

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a firsthand account by Gerald Stern, the lawyer who represented many of the coal mining families affected by a disastrous flood that killed many of the residents of Buffalo Creek Valley, West Virginia. Despite the fact that Stern falls into many of the pitfalls that this type of author encounter, the story itself is riveting enough to forgive the book's many flaws. In the tradition of Erin Brockovich and A Civil Action, this book focuses on the legal battle between a profit-mongering corporation and the honest people whose lives have been threatened. In this case, the danger manifested itself in a dramatic and explosive way, as a poorly-constructed dam gave way and a wall of water thundered throughout the valley, creating hundreds of gut-wrenching stories of families torn asunder. The dramatic power of some of the true survivor stories is just unbelievable, as in some cases men are forced to choose between holding on to a life-saving bit of wreckage, or holding on

to their children. The gross neglect that led up to the inevitable disaster is overshadowed by the scandalous legal tactics that the mining company employs in the aftermath, including seeking out survivors and getting them to sign agreements that gave them a pittance in exchange for exoneration. Stern and a handful of survivors were able to persevere against all odds and get a mammoth settlement that certainly encouraged companies to be more careful about how callously they treat the communities that sustain them. Of course, the climactic victory is still overshadowed by the grief that the massive loss of life has created.

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