

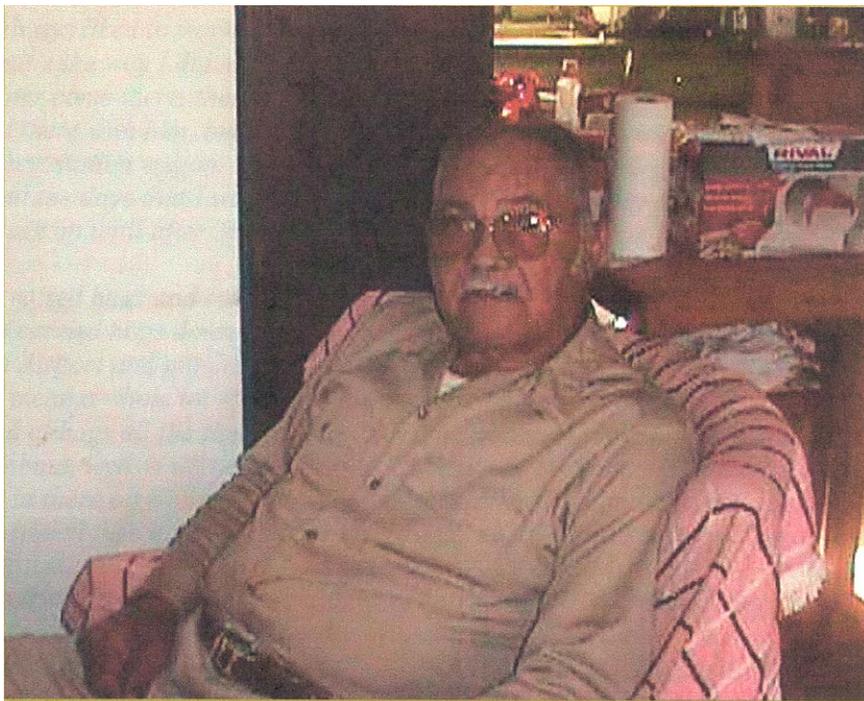
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Spotsylvania Preservation Foundation, Inc.

Oral History Project

Transcript of Interview with Mr. Milton Terrell

January 10, 2000



Interviewer: Mrs. Christine Walsh

This is Christine Walsh, I'm here doing an interview with Mr. Milton Terrell at his home at 10726 Robert E. Lee Drive. Today is Monday, January the 10th and the year is 2000. First of all, I want to wish you a Happy New Year and can you believe we're already into the year 2000? Thank you for allowing me to come to your home. Just give me some information on when you were born and where you were born.

I was born 6110123 and I was born in Chancellor District and then I moved back when I was eight years old. I moved back to what was a post office down there, and that was Logan Post Office. And we lived down here on 649,

just before you cross the bridge, and that was our home place. And then we moved from there back to Dr. Hicks, which is where Jerry Leonard live at now.

We moved down there, and that's where I left there and went to the Sylvania Plant. Then I worked at the Sylvania Plant, I think it was two years and a half, then I left the Sylvania Plant and went in the Army. Then I stayed in the Army from September 2nd until March 28 in '46, and then I went to work at Oakley in '46, April the 17th and then I worked at Oakley up until now. And then they changed the post office from Logan. Then they moved it up the road to Ed Carney's, and that's where, at the old Hardin place, and that's where the post office was.

And then, when I went back to Oakley, Mr. Hand was the manager, and then I worked therefor him for fourteen years, and then he passed away and then, for two years, I run the farm myself for two years. And then after that, then Charlie Canner come in and he was the manager, and then, Mr. Hand, he had had a heart attack and for two years I was in charge there at Oakley. Then Charlie Canner come in and he taken it, and then he was in charge for about fifteen or twenty years then George.

That's George Beals?

Yeah, but I always liked to work at Oakley Farm because I felt like it was a job of my own, you know, and that's the way I did my work. Just like I was working for myself, and then ... but before Charlie Canner come there, then it was another man therefor about two years. Was Jake Knight and I worked there with him, but at that time the bought a... that was in '62 ... they bought a new y truck and a new station wagon. And they give me the truck and I drove that truck just like it was my truck. And the days that I was off, they used another truck, they didn't use that truck. And I drove that truck up until after Johnny Canner come there and taken the farm over.

And then we raised hogs and cattle, and had a sawmill. We run a sawmill too, and all of that. But, now, we carried hogs down to the deep water terminal in Richmond, and then we carried them to Byrd Airport and put them on a plane and shipped them overseas. And they was a whole lot of 'em. I mean a whole lot of hogs, because we'd keep about a hundred sows and about five hundred head of hogs all the time. And at that time we was raising feeder cattle and everything. And we had about, well, a whole lot of times it was about one hundred and fifty feeder calves. Would come in there on trailers, and we would look after them and then we'd keep 'em through all the summer and then the next fall, we would sell 'em and that's the way it worked.

And, your brothers and sisters. You had brothers and sisters? You came from a big family?

Yeah, well, I was the oldest, which was Milton, and then there was Julian, he done passed away. And then was Charlie, he's my main brother now, and Billy Boy, and then that's all of us that's living now. Is Charlie, Billy Boy and myself, and Pauline Woodthrop, that's my sister, and then Mary Jackson, she lives right down the foot of the hill here, and she's my oldest sister.

Where did you live growing up with your brothers and sisters? Was that Route 649?

On 649, and at 649, and at Jerry Leonard's which was Dr. Hick's then. And we lived down there. And then that was where I left and went to the Sylvania Plant, and then I went from the Sylvania Plant to the Army. Then I came back, and I've been at Oakley ever since.

And what was it like growing up in Spotsylvania?

Well, I done traveled around all other places, and I don't know, I ain't seen nowhere that I would like to live but in Spotsylvania. Especially here in the Livingston District. But it's so many outsiders moving in now until they're building up until, I mean.. whole lot of people will move in and move out, and you don't never know, you never get to know 'em, see, and that just makes it bad. But now the family that lived across the road there, now we get along just like one family. They just as nice as they can be, and when I leave, if they out there in the yard, I'll blow the horn and wave and they do the same thing when they leave. But, that house ain't been there no more than about a year now.

So this area is quite rural now, what was it like back then when you were growing up?

Well, now you take right here in this field here where all these houses at, I cut wheat in them fields where all them houses at. And, then when you went to Fredericksburg, it warn't no more than about five houses the whole seventeen miles that we lived from Fredericksburg. With about five houses, and four of them was dairy farms. And now, ain't no more dairy farms, they're subdivisions. And you take down on what they call Plank Road, we called it Number 3, I'm telling you the truth, it warn't but two houses down there and they were farm houses. And that's over there where Sherryton ... and cross over where Mom and Pop's Pancake place is. That's all, they was the only two houses and they was dairy farms.

But you know back there then when I was growing up, everybody was friends. Didn't make no difference whether they was white or colored. They was friends. Because now, down there at our old home place, the Seays lived across the creek and we lived on this side the creek Well, if we were at

their house, when time come to eat, we eat. And if they was at our house, when time come to eat, we all sat down and eat together. And we played together and got along just as good, just like sisters and brothers did. But I just can't see what this here hatred is done come from. But now, it's getting better now, than what it used to be. Because, well, that goes back to Martin Luther King and them. And so all of them people, you see, kinda hope to get things straight and things worked out a little bit better.

But, when I was in the army ... because I took my basic training in Ft. McClellan, Alabama. And if we went to town and we met a white man, we had to walk out in the street, and he come up the sidewalk. We had to go in the street. And if his hat blowed off, we had to run get it. That's the way it was then. And then it got to the place where, when we got to Eglin., we had one lieutenant, over there, he wanted to separate the whites from the blacks. We come almost to having a riot right there in that building where we were there. Because we knowed that we was in the army together, and we were going to live together, we were going to die together, and we were going to eat together, and we were going to sleep together. And that's the way it was going to be. And so that's the way we wanted it, but he wanted to make a separation. And I'll never forget it. Because we were at Liverpool in England, and ... because that's where we got off the boat at. And they carried us to a building. And, then after that, some of the sergeants told him, man, say, now, when he come to be out on the eld, he said, don't send him out there.

And so then after that, about three days later I asked one of the men, I said where is ... I forget that man's name now, but anyhow, I asked him, "Where was he at? " And he said that they done shipped him back to the states. And we said that's a good thing, because if that man had come out on the frontmoset line, I know some of them boys would have killed him because he wanted to separate us. And we didn't want to be in there no way because it warn't our war, but still we had to go. And I seen and I talked to some of them German soldiers over there, and they said "We're just like you all are. You all don't want to be over here", and said" We don't want to be fighting you all and you all don't want to be fighting us, but it's our orders that we got to do and that's the way it is. "

Let's go back to your education, being educated, what school you went to.

I went to ... which was Carter School. It was down here at the footreof of the hill. Which was ... it was 612, they call it Catharpin Road now, but right at the foot of the hill down there, Oak-ley give the spot to the school and

they said that if ever the school broke up, that land went back to Oakley. So they tore the school down up yonder at Parker's and brought it down here and put it up. I can remember I was about 5 years old when they brought that school from up yonder at Parker's and brought it down here and put it up. And that's where I went to school. But at that time I went to school, and that field right there that's growed up in pine now, well I went to school, I had to go to school four days and Daddy he was working away from home.

What was he doing?

He was working down there at a farm which was D. C. Howard's. And he worked on that farm for a dollar a day. That's what he got, a dollar a day. And Mr. Howard, he worked at the Sylvania Plant, he was a foreman at the Sylvania Plant. And we went to school four days and then the other days we would have to come home and farm. Look after the hogs and cattle and do that at home because Daddy had to work out. Well, maybe he won't make but a dollar a day, but that warn't but five dollars a week, and sometimes six dollars, if he worked on Saturday, it was 6 dollars. And I plowed that field right there, it's pine now. I plowed that field and then we went to church, I mean to school. But 4th grade is all that I went to school. Then when I come home, but then I had to work. And then after that, then we had to come home then and work, sho' nuff afterwards.

And that was as high as I got, in the education, was 4th grade. And then after I got in the army I went to school for 2 years after I got overseas. I went to school for 2 years. Whole lot of the boys where I work with they asked me, "Milton, what college you go to?" But now, like working on equipment or anything like that, I could put ever what it was, when it would come all to pieces and everything, and I put it together. And but I had ... I had what I reckon you call common sense. And then I found out here lately they call it mother wit.

But the good Lord just been good to me. Because we was putting something another together, and the boy, he done finished high school, and he had done worked on that thing for about two hours and he couldn't find out how to put it together. So I waited until they went to the house. When they went to the house, I went there and put it together and I went on. I just put it together and left it there and went on. And then after that, that was when he asked me, "Milton, what college did you go to?" I said, "I didn't go to no college." I said, "I wished I'd finished high school." I said, "Because, if I'd finished high school, " I said, "that would have been good enough for me." I said, "Along with my understanding that I got. " Yeah, but, " he say, "but I worked on that thing for two hours and couldn't get it together " and said "I wasn't gone but fifteen or twenty minutes and then I come back here and you done put the thing together. " I said, "Yeah, but...

" I said, "I can't tell you that. "

You are just very handy. (Yeah) And imagine with the education you have.

Well, if I work with somebody and ever what they did, if they weren't there, I could step right in and go right on. Because I worked at the sawmill and I turned logs and the man sawed. And then one day he was sick and the boss man said, he said, "We can't go to the mill today because the sawyer ain't there. " I said, " Well, " I said "Come on and go " I say, " I can do it. " And I fell right in there and I sawed for about a week.

But the Lord just been good to me, because it looked like to me like everything that I went to do he helped me. But you got to have confidence in yourself if you want to do anything, you know. And just like I tells them sometimes now, I believe that if I was up in a airplane, and something happened to that pilot, I say, I believe I could set that plane down. I said "All I wants is somebody to talk to me a little bit. I believe I could do it. "

I'm sure you could. Do you remember any of your teacher's names at the Carter School?

Yeah. It was Virginia... Virginia Carter, Helen Carter ... and then it was all of Miz Banks' children went there. It was Olivia, Lillian, and Walter, and Vincent Banks, and Sylvester Banks, and Julian Banks... and then it was Hayward Gibson, Arlene Gibson. And then it was the Tyler children came in, and then there was Hazel Fantroy, she was Hazel Woodward then, and she went there. And then it was Mary Terrell, that's my sister, and then it was myself, Milton Terrell, and Julian Terrell, and then ... I think Pauline went to John J. Right ... and Charley, and Leroy, all of them.

All of these were the children around the area?

Around in this area. Then there was Gracie Jackson and John Tyler, and Warren Lee Tyler, and all of them, they went to the Carter School, too.

How many classrooms? Was it just one classroom?

One classroom. And we had Myrtle Johnson, Miss Moody, they was our teacher. And Mr. Timmons and Mrs. Burnett. And our supervisor was Mrs. Danridge. And Mr. Snow, he was the big shot superintendent. He was a white fellow, but all the rest of them was colored And all them children had to walk about five or six miles. All of them that went to that school. And it

was about twenty-five or thirty of us. One big room and, then it was from first grade, from first grade to seventh grade, went there to that school. I mean one teacher taught all of them grades.

So you feel like you did get some education.

Yeah, I got some of it. But I learned more afterwards, working different places and going different places. And that did me more good than the learning that I got.

Can you tell me something about the jail, you do know a little bit about the prisoners that were in the jail. Can you just tell everyone?

Yeah, that was Jackson and Shell. They was ... I believe they were colored. I ain't going to say for sure, but I believe they was colored, two colored boys. But anyhow I know they killed them two people down there, and threw them in that well, and that was in the '30s.

What happened to them, do you remember them being in the jail?

I think that after they take them out the jail, I think they was electrocuted.

You were telling me, the warden was warden Foster at that time?

No, he was just a man that lived up the road here. And he was the one that was kind of angry with them boys because they killed them ... I think it was a man and his wife, that they killed ... but anyhow ... and threw them in that well. And I was trying to think what year that was. But anyhow, I believe Earl Conner was the deputy sheriff. He might have been the sheriff But I don't think it was Carter Rowe. Max Blade was the sheriff then, I think he was the sheriff. Maxie Blade. Earl Conner, he was his deputy.

What do you know about Max Blade and the deputy sheriff? Did you have any contact with them or had you just heard about them?

I come into contact with them. We was working down there at Guinness. There was some big oak trees, and it was Dr. Flagnehammer lived down there. There was a church on this side of the house. The sheriff used to get behind the house and then when we would cross the railroad tracks, if we didn't stop, then he would come out and chase us and stop us. He wouldn't give us a ticket, but he would always tell us, he would say, "You all got to stop at that railroad track because you can't never tell when the train is coming. " We was hauling over to Bumpass, Virginia. We would haul for the state. We were hauling sand out of that pit. That's when I was working for C. W.

Pritchett. Earl Conner, was the Deputy and Maxie Blade, he was the sheriff But I ain't never seen none of them sheriffs, they never had a gun on them. And then Carl Roberts, he was the sheriff later, and I never seen Carl Roberts with a gun. But they were good sheriffs and if anybody was in trouble, they would always go and get 'em ut I ain't never seen 'em with a gun or nothing. And everybody was just as good.

And everybody kind of respected them, I guess.

That's right. Back there in them times, people was different than they is now. They had respect for the sheriff and they had respect for each other. But still, now, look like people, you know, just don't have respect for themselves.

I was asking you about Robert E. Lee Drive. What was it called before?

Well, before then it was 620 ... but I had something over here. I was looking at it a while ago ... Box 394 one time, Rt. 2, Box 394, that was in '58.

What did you do as a child, with your brothers and sisters and friends, what did you do for entertainment? What did you play with? What were your play time activities? (Do you mean my wages?) No, when you kids got together and did things, do you remember what you did for entertainment?

ON Back there then you would get a bottle of coke-cola for 5 cents. Back there then they had Nehi and gas wasn't but 17 cents a gallon, back there then.

But when you were real small? What did you play? Hopscotch? Did you play on the farm?

Oh! When I started out working, I got 25 cents a day.

How old were you? (I was about 12 years old. I got 25 cents a day.)

How many hours did you work? (We worked ten hours a day.) Where was the child labor laws then?

We was working for one man, and then the man that Dad was working for, that paid him a dollar a day, he told us, he said now, when them boys finish working for him, he said I'll give them 30 cents a day and that was big money then. Shucks, we was ready to go!

If you started when you were 12, you really didn't have much time to be a child.

That's right. And in the winter time we had to get out. And our kitchen was one room in between the kitchen and the room where we slept in and when we would go over there in the winter time, you could pick the dipper up and you'd pick the whole bucket up 'cause it was froze with ice. Then we had to go down the hill to the spring and bring water up the hill. And sometimes we would get close to the house, just from here to that door, and you'd slip up on a piece of ice and fall down and waste all the water and then you had to go back down the hill as far as from here up to the corner there, almost. 'Cause we had to go down the hill, from as far again as here over yonder to that house and back again to the spring and get wood and get water and then we'd bring wood here to the house, cut it up.

That was the only time that my Daddy ever hollered at me and I wished he had of whipped me. Daddy never whipped me a day in his life, but he hollered at me one evening 'cause I didn't put no wood on the porch. And I went around the house and cried for about an hour. I wished he would have whipped me. The whipping would have done me more harm more easier than what it was by him hollering at me.

And I don't know what it was, it was one of the alphabets. Mama got the fire poker and told me to get the water bucket and I had to go to the spring. Ever what it was now, I can't think of what it was now, but every two or three steps, she would tap me with that fire poker on the shoulder. And ever what that letter was that I couldn't remember, that's what she would tell me and I ain't never forgot it.

What was that letter?

I don't know what it was. It was " W " or " Y " or one. I always would say 'em and then I'd get to that one and miss that one, but anyhow, she told me "Get that water bucket, " and I got the water bucket and she went right on behind me and every now and then she'd tap me with that fire poker and she would say that letter and so I didn't forget it no more.

I understand that you're an agricultural advisor, would you want to tell us a little about that?

Well, whole lot of times, well then, the water cultivation is tied in with that, in other words that's another department. But ever what they prove, then it comes to us. Then we got to prove whether that the government should do that or not do it. And so, but anyhow, that went on. Because now, whole lot of times and especially this year, we had to dig ... had a whole lot of paperwork done come across the table where people had water and they had to put in, some of them wanted to fix a pond. And then if the other, if the water

cultivation proves, then it's brought to us, then we have to prove it and then because, now the water cultivation, they were paid about 40 percent of it and then we paid 50 percent, and then that man, he don't have to pay about 10 percent, don't you see. But still and then, just like, then if they bring the tickets in where they done got the lime and fertilizer and they want to seed the place, then that is brought before us, and then we have to figure whether they need it or don't need it, you see.

I understand that you have been on the Board for ten years. It includes the Spotsylvania, King George and Stafford.

Yeah, right, and I believe that's one of the plaques up there.

We have the plaque here from the Farm Service Agency, "Certificate of Service, Milton Terrell, in recognition of the completion of ten years of county service." Very Nice. So this has been very fulfilling for you. To serve on this. Who got you involved in that? How did you get involved in that?

Well, they wanted a advisor, and it was another man that was in charge at that time and he asked George Beals, would he reckon that would I serve on the Board. Back in that time it was for two years. I told him I would. That man's name was Temple. And he's dead now. But anyhow, I went there then and I've been there ever since.

If we could backtrack a little bit, what was it like growing up in the depression?.

Well, it was kinda hard back there then because everything that you had to buy, you had to go through the county or the government. They was giving horses and mules and everything to different farmers, you know, back at that time. And a whole lot of .. because then back there the gas was rationed and you had stamps to get gas with and you'd didn't get but three gallons a stamp. And about... if you weren't working, about nine or ten gallons was all you were allowed to have in a week, and then but if you owned a truck you had a different stamp and that would get you five gallons of gas.

It was kinda hard because right in this neighborhood it looked like, I mean there weren't nothing but poor people. But it warn't but one thing that helped. Back there then people raised might nearly about everything that they would eat, outside of the meat and the lard and all of that stuff all that was raised, and your syrup and everything, you had your m ilk, you had your eggs and your butter and everything. All but a little sugar and coffee and kerosene, that was about all that you had to buy. Well, then you would

take, sometimes you would take, maybe about, if you had a good bunch of hens, well you could have about three dozen eggs and carry them to the store, well you could trade that and you'd get you a half pound of coffee and maybe a half pound of sugar because they, back there then, they would break a bag of sugar and let you have just ever what amount you wanted.

But, I don't know, I just said if people could go back to them old days about a month, then these young folks would have a little more reason with them, because they would see how we come up. Because a whole lot of them tell you now, "them was old time, old times. I say yeah, but they was good times.

They were old and good at the same time? I mean they were good and they were hard times.

Yeah, that's right, but it was good, and everybody, didn't regardless of what, when come around to thrashing wheat, Daddy would say I spoke to two people, he said, about thrashing my wheat tomorrow. When it come around for him to thrash, soon as the thrashing machine come in there, here come people from every direction with horses and wagons coming in, and would help to do. And they would ... and killing hog time, we'd make the fire overnight, fixing it and everything, and set it and then the next morning, sometimes we wouldn't even gotten out the bed and we'd look out there and the fire'd be burning. Somebody done come from the next house and done come over there and started everything up, but shucks, shucks, now you can't pay nobody to help you. But them was hard times, but they was good times.

Before we conclude the interview is there anything you would like to add? About growing up here in Spotsylvania, about the area? Anything you can think about?

One thing, I believe, other words, now we used to be about seventeen miles from Fredericksburg. But now I don't think we ain't but no more than about twelve or fourteen miles from Fredericksburg, because everything is growing and its moving on out. Because now, just like I said, now, at first when we used to leave here and go to town, I mean from the time I first started going to town, you could count the houses on one hand and now, shucks, you can't count 'em all. Houses is built now everywhere, and I don't know what is going to happen. Because it's so many people now, and our roads is getting to be rough and people done built the houses so close to the road until after while... 'cause they is going to have to do something through here, because after while, I'm telling you the truth, that traffic is ... now because, you come this away?

I came in from, yes, Robert E. Lee. I came in from Blockhouse to Robert E. Lee.

Yeah, alright, well now, it's three houses, I mean three cars is been in my basement. One car went in there and then a pickup truck went in there, and the last time it done about nine thousand dollars worth of damage, and the first time it was six something another, six thousand dollars damage. I had to put a new furnace and everything in the last time. And the bowl in the bathroom, it busted that all to pieces and everything, and the last time they wouldn't ... I couldn't stay herein the house. I had to stay with my brother for a week until they fixed the house back, but, I'm telling you.

That's just from people going too fast?

Coming around too fast and just come right straight on in there. Because the rescue squad men come up here one night... 'cause the last man that went in there, he, I'm telling you, he, it took a hundred and thirty some stitches in his head. And he was- got out the truck and come out on the porch 'cause I was sitting right here and my niece was sitting there where you're sitting there. And that time something another hit, and I went there and opened the basement door and looked down there, and I said to myself, I said, "Something done happened down in the basement. " And she said, "No indeed, " she said, "Somebody done hit that house, " and so that time the man come there and knocked on the door and he come tell me about be cool, be cool, be cool, and blood was running all down on his head, so then I called the rescue squad and they came and took him in and carried him to the hospital, and they said it took a hundred and thirty-eight, and a hundred and thirty-eight stitches in his head, but I know it.

And then the other man hit the tree and he run. And they caught him up on Finney Road. He went through the woods and come out up on the Finney Road. Then the state trooper, he came, and there was two state troopers, and after that, one of them went around and said I'm 'going around this away and see if I see him, and then the farmer, they went down there though the woods with the flashlights and everything, looking around. And that time somebody called and said for the rescue squad come on to the Finney Road, and said there's a man over there hurt, and that man he done run up through the woods there. And then about two weeks about, after he hit the house, a man come from Louisa and shot him and killed him. Shot that man and killed him and that was the same one that hit my house the first time.

And then I went to church one Wednesday night and came back and the child across the road come from around that away and I thought to myself, I said "I reckon one of her dogs done gone off. " She had little old short dogs like that. And I said, "Must be one of her dogs be done gone off. " And that time, as soon as I got out the truck, she come there and she say,

"Milton, " she say, "There's a car round here behind the house done hit that tree.

" And I said, " Where the man at? " And she said, "He around here. " And shucks, I went around there, and he was down, he come down there next to Caroline and come up in here, and all of them had been drinking. And he hit the tree out there, and messed his car all up in there and he couldn't drive it away from there. Then after that, then one of the rescue squad men said to me, he said "That's a parking lot! "

Well times certainly have changed, havent they? (I'm telling you) and I understand that you're supposed to be retired but you're still working?

Thanks right, yeah, I'm still working (well, good for you) and if I live to see the end of June I'll be 77 years old.

I'm sure you will.

I went to the doctor, (You're certainly taking good care of yourself) yeah, I went to the doctor the other day, at least it was Friday ... and he told me, he said, "I'm well pleased with the way that you're doing. Ever what you been doing, you just keep on doing it. " And he said, " I'll see you in six months. " So, that's good. They give me a pacemaker about eight years ago, but I been doing good.

Well, have a very Happy New Year!

Well, I thank you, and the same to you.

And this concludes our interview for the SPFI organization, Spotsylvania Preservation Foundation, and I thank you.

You're welcome.

Spotsylvania Preservation Foundation Inc

Oral History Project

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(Signature of Interview)_____

1/10/2000 (Date)

(Signature of Informant)_____

(Date) 1/10/2000

(Address)