

STAFFORD COUNTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF W. HANSFORD ABEL
by PEARLE E. YOUNG

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PEARLE YOUNG INTERVIEW WITH

MR. HANSFORD ABEL

Q: Now, Mr. Abel, we want to record your family life and community life between the years of 1900 and 1965. We also want to go into your memories of your tenure on the Board of Supervisors. Okay, give us your full name, Mr. Abel.

A: Wallace Hansford Abel.

Q: Okay. Do you mind telling me when you were born?

A: 1908--November the 15th.

Q: 1908, okay, you can go back quite a distance then. Where were you born, Mr. Abel?

A: I was born in Prince William County.

Q: Prince William. Okay.

A: And moved to Stafford when I was two years old.

Q: Alright, you came to Stafford then in 1910.

A: 1910.

Q: Alright, and where did you live when you came to Stafford?

A: I lived down below... Church in a little small house that belonged to my grandfather.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then that was down on 653.

Q: That's what they call Hoose(?) A-venue or whatever they call it there.

A: Yes.

Q: okay, were your grandparents living at that time?

A: Grandparents were living then and they were living up here by the church.

Q: By the church.

A: Little chapel church--had a house down by the church.

Q: And you lived farther on down that road?

A: Yeah, farther on down the road, yes, m'am.

Q: okay--describe for me your house that you lived in when you came to Stafford--how big-

A: Well, a very small house--little small house and we moved down there and stayed--I can't remember the number of years, but wasn't too long and we moved back up with my grandparents. And stayed with my grandparents up until when I was married--I lived there the whole time. That was 1927.

Q: You were married in 1927?

A: Yes, m'am.

Q: Okay.

A: September the 24th.

Q: Tell me something about your grandparents' house there--is that still there?

A: It's still there.' It's a big white house right up there by the church cemetery.

Q: Right as you pass the church?

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: That's right.

Q: Tell me something about your home there--was it--did it have electricity?

A: It didn't have electricity--no, at that time, it didn't have any electricity.

Q: Alright.

A: We went on for right many years before electricity was available. And then when it came through, why we hooked on to the house and...

Q: Alright, what was, what were your parent's names?

A: My parents was Stuart Abel and Emma Abel.

Q: Stuart and Emma. And who was Emma before she was married?

A: She was Snyder--Emma Snyder.

Q: Emma Snyder.

A: Yes.

Q: And how many children?

A: There was two children. Aubrey...

Q: Were you the oldest?

A: I was the oldest.

Q: You were the oldest.

A: Yeah.

Q: Alright, and what were your grandparents' names?

A: Richard Snyder.

Q: Richard Snyder.

A: Richard Snyder.

Q: And that was Richard Snyder's house there that you all lived in?

A: That's right.

Q: Okay, you say you didn't have electricity--did you have telephone?

A: No telephone.

Q: No--no telephone. Did you have running water?

A: For right many years, we lived without running water. We just had a well in the yard there and we used that.

Q: How was the house light?

A: Well, we had lamps--oil lamps.

Q: Were you born in the hospital?

A: I don't think so. No, no, no.

Q: Did your mother probably use the services of a doctor or a midwife?

A: Yeah, I think a doctor.

Q: Doctor?

A: Yeah.

Q: What part of Prince William were you born?

A: Dumfries.

Q: Dumfries. Up in Dumfries.

A: Dumfries.

Q: At the time that you can first recollect after coming to Stafford, you probably don't remember Prince William.

A: No.

Q: No--after first coming to Stafford, how did you all travel? How did you travel from Prince William to Stafford?

A: Well, we probably had horse and buggy or horse and wagon. Most all traveling we did then was horse and wagon.

Q: Horse and wagon.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, and you probably came down what Route 1?

A: Route 1.

Q: Was that hard gravel?

A: Not Route 1 then--they had back roads there--we came in back of Stafford Courthouse--in that section. And on down by American Legion Building came out down by Mackinckill's(?) farm there.

Q: Well, was that the Route 1 really--was that the main highway?

A: That--at that time, that was the main travel road. That's the way people traveled from up in that area.

Q: Main--

A: People traveled from up in that area and then they--people from Mountain View, they traveled that same--people from Mountain View, they came down and crossed Plymouth Run up at that end--what they call England's Ford(?) and they crossed there and then they used to come up by our place here and the road from back of the Hoose(?) Chapel Church here and went across my field here over to the other end.

Q: Quite a few changes, hasn't it?

A: Quite a few changes.

Q: And all of that was a dirt road?

A: All of that was a dirt road.

Q: Okay, then you left Prince William and came to Stafford and you moved into a little house up on the avenue there before you moved over to--at your grandparents'. Okay, what did your grandparents or your father do? Were they farmers?

A: Well, they did some farm work there and then he worked for different people on the farm and one time he worked for--he helped build a bridge. He worked on the bridge at Falmouth--the new bridge that came across there--he worked on that, too.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, did you all raise your own food?

A: And had good bread and food(?), had good gardens and stuff like that--a couple of cows and milk and butter.

Q: Alright, did you raise sheep?

A: No, we didn't have anything--just the cows. We always raised... hogs for meat.

Q: And, come fall of the year, that was a big time.

A: That was a big time.

Q: You killed them and strung them up on a pole.

A: That's right.

Q: And then, a little later on, they were--you probably started up the smoke.

A: Yeah.

Q: And smoked the meat. I don't suspect there are many young people today who
has ever seen that. I saw that. That was a real exciting time on the farm then.

A: That's right.

Q: How did your mother wash your clothes, Mr. Abel?

A: Well, she had a washtub and a washboard and wash and scrub them on the board.

And that's the way--and then...

Q: Did your mother ever make soap?

A: My grandmother did.

Q: Your grandmother did?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: That was quite an ordeal, wasn't it?

A: Right.

Q: Did they make hominy?

A: Had hominy, yes.

Q: Made hominy. Make their own molasses?

A: No, we didn't make it. Sometimes the people around had sorghum--made sorghum we would buy some...

Q: Did they churn their own butter?

A: Churned their own butter, yes, m'am.
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Q: And was that ever your job?

A: That was sometimes my job, yes, it was.

Q: Children usually get a job like that. Did your mother ever have any household help--anybody to help her or did-

A: No, she did it all herself.

Q: She did the cooking and the washing and the cleaning and everything?

A: Yes. And waited on my grandma and grandpa.

Q: They were all right there--well, that's the usual way, I think. Did your father ever help around the house?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: He helped?

A: He was real good at that. He helped around the house and helped keep things straight and all and helped my mother a whole lot, oh, yeah. They worked very close together.

Q: Well, good. Okay, I suppose you started to school around about six years of age.

A: Went to school at six years of age.

Q: Where was your school?

A: School was down the road on here--652--right below... Community Center. The old school there--that old house there--that old school house. And of course, when we went to school there we had two rooms. One on one end and the other and we-had in the winter time, we--it was heated by a wood stove and we would go out to the woods there and Miss... time to pick wood and bring back... and we would keep warm... before the stove and set on the benches and say lessons.

Q: And the boys had to provide the wood?

A: Had to provide the wood. We would go in the woods and bring back wood and stuff.

Q: And keep the stoves going?

A: That's right.

Q: How many children were there?

A: Well, I imagine it was somewhere 25 to 30, somewhere like that.

Q: One or two teachers?

A: Had two teachers.

Q: Two teachers?

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A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you remember the teacher's names?

A: We had Mr. Graniker was my teacher's name and the other teacher, was, let's see, I can't think of the other lady's name--oh, yeah, it was, let's see, no that's not right.

Q: Did Mr. Graniker live in the community?

A: Mr. Graniker lived over on the other side of 17 and he came over here.

Q: Did the woman who teach there, did she live in the community?

A: Yeah, she lived up above McQuirk's Store now--it was Cecil's Store(?).

Q: It was here home?

A: That was here home.

Q: Okay, you didn't have teachers who boarded in the community then?

A: No, not when I went to school.

Q: Okay, do you know how much they were paid?

A: No, I don't realize what they were paid--I do, well, I realize what--after, years after that I caught on to what they were paid.

Q: Not too much, was it?

A: Not too much--very little bit.

Q: Yeah. What kind of games did you all play?

A: Well, we had--take and make--take a bunch of rags and sew them together and make a ball--a baseball. And played with that, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: We would have a piece of wood bat--a piece of wood made out to bat the ball. And that's the way we played ball.

Q: And did you have any other games?

A: That's about all I can remember we had.

Q: Okay. At home, when you came home, did you have--tell me something about the kinds of toys you had at home.

A: Well, we had different kinds--not a whole lot of toys then. We didn't have very many toys at that time. We had express wagons, different stuff like that. We had a right large wagon we bought and we brought wood in with it. And different things like that.

Q: You have chores to do when you got home?

A: Oh, yeah--had to help get the wood in and bring it in and take the cross-bent(?) saw and saw the wood with cross-bent(?) saw and get it ready for that night and the next day. And that's-

Q: Did you ever have to milk the cows?

A: Yeah, milked the cow.

Q: Milked the cow.

A: Milked the cow.

Q: Take care of her. Do you ever remember as a child celebrating the holidays? Like the 4th of July?

A: Oh, yeah. We celebrated the 4th of July. We looked forward to that--it was always routing for us to have fried chicken for dinner on the 4th of July over at Stafford.

Q: Was it a picnic? Or you had to--

A: Just at the home.

Q: At the home?

A: At the home, uh-huh.

Q: Did you have fireworks?

A: No.

Q: No fireworks. How about Christmas?

A: Well, we had--well, we had a big Christmas. All my uncles and all would-they was--two of them were out in... and on the telephone lines and they would come in on Christmas Eve from Fredericksburg and the next morning we would take the wagon--horse and wagon and go down and meet them at Fredericksburg. And get the stuff and bring back. My uncle--one of them working on the boat and he would always bring us a pound of oysters.

Q: What boat was that?

A: Middlesex.

Q: Middlesex.

A: Old Middlesex.

Q: Pleasure boat or--

A: Yeah--it was a boat that runs from Fredericksburg to Baltimore.

Q: To Baltimore, huh? Steamers.
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A: Steamers, yeah.

Q: And wasn't that nice--you got a barrel of oysters.

A: Always got a barrel of oysters a year. He knew a lot of people down the river there and they would always give him a barrel of oysters. --For Christmas.

Q: That was a real treat. Did you go out in the summer time and pick berries?

A: Oh, yeah. That's one thing we did--we went and picked strawberries. We'd go out and pick blackberries, huckleberries, --pick them all so we would have something to can, for winter.

Q: Right. Did your mother ever learn how to can vegetables--you know, the kind like corn and beans and that-

A: No, she never canned too much of that. It was all just fruits and stuff like that. Made a lot of preserves. A lot of preserves. Pear preserves.

Q: Did she dry apples?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Where did you put your apples to dry?

A: Well, most of the time we would go up the stairs and put them out on the porch--on the porch and let them dry and bring them down.

Q: Everytime it would look like it was going to rain?

A: We'd have to go get them--that's right.

Q: Right, they were wonderful times.

A: Wonderful times.

Q: Did you ever have to go to the doctor when you were a child?

A: Not too much--I wasn't sick too much. Once in a while, I can't remember going to the doctor. Probably, when the flu was going around I think a doctor came out to the

house, to see us and-

Q: What doctor was that?

A: Doctor Pratt.

Q: Pratt. He came from Fredericksburg?

A: Yes.

Q: You didn't have a doctor in this community?

A: No. Doctor Patton used to be the doctor who traveled a lot through here. But we never had Doctor Patton, we always had Doctor Pratt. We had Doctor Pratt from Fredericksburg.

Q: Did you ever have to go to the dentist?

A: Oh, yeah. Sometimes we did. We would go down to the dentist. We went to Doctor King, used to be.

Q: In Fredericksburg?

A: In Fredericksburg. We used to go to Doctor King.

Q: If you will remember in reading one of there articles in the paper, Dick Chinn says the dentist used to come to the house. Did you ever remember a dentist that would come into your home?

A: No, I can't recall that.

Q: I don't either. I think that must have just been in the White Oak neighborhood.

A: Yeah. That might have been.

Q: If you or your brother got sick or anyone in the family got sick, what kind of medicine did--did you go to the drugstore?

A: Well, we probably go to the doctor and get the prescription for a cold or something like that--some cold medicine, different stuff like that. And take it.

Q: Did your mother ever use... (?)

A: Well, yeah. We used a lot of Vick's Salve and all that kind of stuff. Momma used to think that was great ...

Q: You went out and cut your foot, what did your mother do to it?

A: Well, sometimes ... try to find fresh turpentine... put on that foot to cure it up and that's the way we tied it up--stomp our toe or something like that--we would go barefooted and we went barefooted a lot, too, then.

Q: Do you ever remember in your childhood of having blizzards?

A: Yeah. We had back in--years on up--we up by the church--the road then came up by the church then and cut through here and we would go up by the church and we would have snow all the way across the road and the people who wanted to get through there would have to go around back across Mr. Truskdale's(?) field and then when they wanted to get through the wagons, they would walk and take shovels and shovel a path through the snow drifts to get there which was way over your head, you know. Across from one bank to the other. Three or four feet high. And we shoveled out to get out that way.

Q: Things have certainly changed in that respect, haven't they?

A: They certainly have.

Q: Did you ever have a telephone in your home?

A: No.

Q: No telephone. Do you remember that first airplane you ever saw?

A: Yes, I can. Yes, I can. I was down below the house one day--down in the field and I heard this noise humming and I looked up and this plane was coming over this way and I remember running back to the house and telling my mother and them about the plane coming and I see it coming back up the hill there and they all got a glimpse of it then.

Q: Everybody ran out the house.

A: Yeah, they ran out the house to see the plane.

Q: Right. Do you have any idea how old you were then? What year was that?

A: Oh, I don't imagine I wasn't but 10 years old.

Q: Along in 1918?

A: Yeah, somewhere in there.

Q: That was about the time of the first World War. Do you have any recollection of the first World War?

A: Yeah, I had some--

Q: Did your father serve?

A: No, he didn't serve.

Q: Did any of your relatives or any of your relatives in--?

A: No.

Q: Alright. Let me ask you this question now. Were your parents strict on the children?

A: Yep.

Q: Very strict.

A: Mother would speak to us and we would have to obey here or else we would get a good spanking and that was it.

Q: When you say she was strict, did they allow you to talk at the table?

A: Very little bit--especially when people were around. We always sit back and they'd eat and we'd go in and take a second helping.

Q: You couldn't eat if you had company? I mean, the children were not at the same table?

A: That's right.

Q: And you got to the second table.

A: That's right.

Q: That sounds usual. If you did something that your mother or father had

forbidden, did you get punished?

A: Yep.

Q: You got a spanking?

A: Got a spanking and I also got put in the closet and shut the door. Wouldn't let me out.

Q: Who usually administered the punishment--your mother or father?

A: My mother.

Q: Your mother. She was--

A: Daddy never did, as far as I can recall, Daddy never put--never did whip me or-in my whole life.

But she did.

Q: But she did it with love, I'm sure.

A: I'm sure.

Q: Did your mother ever take you shopping with them?

A: Yeah, we would go to town, yeah--in the wagon.

Q: Yeah. In the wagon.

A: Yeah. Right.

Q: And you get to maybe buy some clothes?

A: Clothes and stuff like that to go back to school.

Q: And some candy. Do you remember your parents ever taking you to a funeral?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: You went to funerals?

A: Yeah. At the church up there at the cemetery.

Q: You were so close to it.

A: Right there at the church.

Q: Yeah. Tell me something about this community, Mr. Abel. How many people--I mean, what was it-- mostly farm community?

A: Most of it was farm--just farm.

Q: And who were some of the other people who lived in the community and farmed?

A: Well, we had Mr. Waller--D.B. Waller(?); Mr. Truslo(?) over here and we had Mr. Fretter(?) and Bond(?) and we had Mr. Moncure owned this farm at that time.

Q: Which Moncure?

A: R.C.L. Moncure.

Q: R.C.L. There were so many of those.

A: And he owned this and that. And then the others--that was about the largest farms they had that did the most farming. And the balance was just small farms--just raised gardens and stuff like that. They didn't raise herds of cattle.

Q: Did you have a country store?

A: Oh, yeah. Over at Truslow's(?) store was there and I can first remember.

Q: Who ran that, Mr. Truslow?

A: That's right--Charles Truslow.

Q: And you had the Hoos(?) Chapel Church?

A: The Hoos(?) Chapel Church.

Q: And that was the community--the farms, and the store, and the church.

A: That's right.

Q: How did you get your mail delivered?

A: Well, we had mail carriers that went through there. Mr. Truslow(?) I remember one carried the mail. Most of the time--'til he passed on and it went to the other--children, we taken it and carried

it then. And it was just handed down--one to the other.

Q: As you grew on up to become a young man, how long--did you ever go to any other school other than the one over here?

A: Yeah, I did. Yeah, I went to Fredericksburg School.

Q: You went to Fredericksburg School?

A: Yeah, I went to Lafayette School also.

Q: And what grade did you go over to Lafayette School?

A: Well, I think it was fourth grade.

Q: Fourth grade.

A: And I went through that and on up. Then I went to school--to private school to Miss Kate... (?) and that's where the silver boys... went to that same teacher.

Q: While you were there?

A: While I was there. I went to school with them.

Q: Well, I declare.

A: And... Spotsylvania--they all went to school there. The Coleman boy, Freddy Coleman.

Q: Judge Coleman?

A: No, his nephew.

Q: His nephew.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: He was the teacher?

A: No, he was one of the boys.

Q: He was one of the students. And this man who was the teacher--was he the only teacher?

A: No, they had two of them. There were sisters there.

Q: Two sisters.

A: Two sisters.

Q: Was that high school?

A: Well, it went on up in the grades to high school, yes. And then I went to school--went to the normal school over there at Mary Washington College is now. That was the first--when you went down from Fredericksburg, that was the first building on the righthand side there--we went up there and we went to school there. ...(?)was going from... Stafford over here and Lubbock(?) girl from...

Q: How did you travel?

A: Bicycle.

Q: On bicycle?

A: Bicycle.

Q: What did you do when the weather was bad?

A: Well, I'd try to make every day--I'd go rain, shine every morning. Lots of time it would catch me in a big rain coming back, but that's alright--went every day.

Q: Rode your bicycle.

A: Tried to get--lots of times, tried to get out to go, but the snow was too deep and I'd have to turn around and come back. Start, you know, but too much snow to get back.

Q: Well, how many months during the year did your school run?

A: I think some of them went around 7 months, 8 months, something--7 months would be most.

Q: Who was your school superintendent here in Stafford--do you remember when you were going to school here in Stafford?

A: Let's see--I think Mr. Peyton was one of the superintendents of schools, wasn't he?

Q: Yeah, Mr. Peyton.

A: Mr. Peyton. That's right. I had--I'll have to tell you this--one of my teachers at the normal school in the--we're talking about--was Miss Kate Woods and I remember she came in that morning--she was real sweet looking. She had beautiful curly hair--she looked real sweet and she was one nice teacher, too.

Q: Okay--you were still living at home then, of course. And then did you graduate or did you just get to the stopping point and you just-

A: Got to the--

Q: Got to as far as they taught?

A: Yes--that's it.

Q: There was no graduation?

A: No.

Q: Okay, then you finished school. Then what did you do?

A: I came back and we--...(?) daddy... in 1921 and bought a new car. And we... Quantico.

Q: What kind of car did you have?

A: A Model T Ford and I've been fond of Fords ever since.

Q: Good cars, huh? You raised your vegetables and--harvested them and--

A: Raised vegetables.

Q: And took them to Quantico.

A: Took them to Quantico. ...(?) would buy chickens and stuff and carry them to Quantico and sell them and different things.

Q: And that was during the summertime? What did you do during the winter time?

A: In the winter time, we would get wood, haul wood and carry loads into town, two or three times a week, to help out and that was about all we could do in the winter time.

Q: Now, how old were you when you got married?

A: I was--I got married in 1927--I think I was 18 or 19 years old.

Q: Okay. You finished school and were still at home, helping your parents, did you have any ambition to be some special kind of a person--some career you wanted to get into?

A: Well, farming was about--Mama(?) and I working over here and when the wheat time--harvesting wheat--we'd come over here and tried to help them--hold the bags open, tying the bags, and everything. And of course, couldn't get very much in about 250, a day and so I remember one time I went back and told my mother that one of these days I'm going to buy this farm over there and she said, "Aw, don't come in here talking foolish talk." I said, "Well, you can never tell." So she did see it.

Q: She did? ... she was very proud.

A: I bought it in 1945.

Q: When you--you said that you making 25c a day on the farm and that was what you did mostly up until the time you married--helped on the farm?

A: Yep. And I had a Model T truck and I worked for the State Highway Department--a gas tank with a box over top of it--sit on that and go all day and I worked for Massey and Hall(?) Country Club on down to Port Tobacco Bay hauling gravel in that truck all day. Then I got a job patching the roads. We patched the roads from here on down to Port Royal on through there--daytime hot--summertime. I worked for--and then in winter, I carried the trucks down to... (?) King George and Mr. Freeman(?)--he carried them down--he wanted to work them down there and he gave me a job up here--there were some men

loading gravel for the State trucks to haul off out at... in Fredericksburg.

Q: Did you make more money doing that?

A: We got a \$1 an hour for the truck and myself. But it all counted up--it didn't take long to make up enough money to pay for the truck.

Q: And gas was real cheap then.

A: Oh, yeah--that was 15c a gallon.

Q: I'm glad that you brought that out--that--I'm sure that a lot of people have never heard of gas being that cheap. Did you hunt? Were you a hunter?

A: Used to have 5 or 6 dogs--real loud and my uncle used to come from Alexandria down here on the 15th of November on my birthday. We always would have a birthday party that night and in the day time, we'd go out and hunt, you know. He'd come down for a week and I'd hunt the whole week with him with these rabbit dogs and used to have a real time with them--used to have some good dogs

Q: Well, could you save any of that food for the winter?

A: No, we didn't have any freezer.

Q: No freezer.

A: No.

Q: No way to save.

A: No way to save it.

Q: Did you do any fishing?

A: Oh, year. Yeah. We'd fish in the Potomac Run, Abel Lake, we'd fish down there and that was Potomac Run and go down to the beach at nights and we'd catch some small perch would all we'd get, but we enjoyed it and had a big time.

Q: Oh, yeah--you would take them home and cook them. They were good. How did you spend your Sundays, Mr. Abel?

A: Well, ...a bicycle--we'd get two or three of us together and we'd ride different places. We'd ride down to the railroad, watch trains go by--ride on down through Mr. Moncure's place--that old brick house we used to call, down through there and just different places that we'd ride the bicycle. Could ride it.

Q: Did you go to church on Sundays?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: Sunday school.

Q: Who was some of the ministers up there at Hoos(?) that you remember? Back when you were a child?

A: Well, Mr. Lynn was--I guess could remember him. He stayed down there a long time and Peyton, I think, he was a minister. And Mr. Often(?) he was a minister, too.

Q: Did they live here in the community?

A: They lived in Fredericksburg.

Q: Fredericksburg?

A: Yeah.

Q: Something else I thought of I wanted to ask you--but it slipped out of my mind. Oh--did Mr.--who was Boos(?) Memorial Church named for? Mr. Hoos?

A: Mr. Hoos.

Q: Did he live in the community?

A: He lived in the house right across from the church. Used to be right in front of that old house right there. That was Hoos' old house. Be right over there. And they named it Hoos Memorial Church.

Q: And he gave the land for the church?

A: I think so.

Q: Must be by it being named from him.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you take part in any kind of sports, Mr. Abel?

A: Not--just--the only thing we taken part in on Sundays and Saturdays we'd have ball games just like we did in school, you know. Choose up sides and-

Q: As you got up to be a young person, did you really have a bought ball or did you still use-

A: Well, I think it came along that we got some softballs and used those.

Q: You could knock those a little farther than you could--

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Right. Alright, now before we get out of your youth, and into your marriage-getting married--can you think of any thing else that happened to you as a young man that you would like to share with us?

A: I don't think there is anything--I can't recall anything. Of course, I--we...

Q: Did you ever get into fights with the boys?

A: Oh, sometimes. We got, but we always easy to get along with.

Q: You weren't a fighter?

A: No.

Q: Always easy to get along with. Okay, you say you got married at what, 17?

A: 18.

Q: 18, and who did you marry, Mr. Abel?

A: Gladys Snyder.

Q: Gladys Snyder. And how had you known Gladys before you married her?

A: You know, back in 1921, I used to work at G & H-had a truck and hauled the girls from over here to get girls jobs over there and they were looking for people to haul and bring them in. So I had a truck and I hauled the girls over there for them. Four or five years and so that's where I met her.

Q: And you had at that time--you owned a truck?

A: Yes, m'am.

Q: But you didn't have a car?

A: Didn't have a car until 1921. That was the first thing we had. That was a car. Then I got this truck after that in 1921.

Q: Did you take a honeymoon?

A: Well, went to Washington, yeah. Went up to the Continental Hotel.

Q: Where did you all live after you got married?

A: Come back and lived with my mother.

Q: Lived with your mother for awhile.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Okay. Were you married up here at Hoos?

A: I was married in--I can't think of its name. Baptist church.

Q: Okay. Your wife was working at that time?

A: She was working.

Q: And she continued to work?

A: Yes, she continued to work.

Q: Okay, there is a lot of discussion this day and time when men and women both work as to how they are going to spend the money. Did you all ever discuss on how you were

going to spend your money or did you spend yours and she spend hers?

A: Well, we always put it together and what we needed to spend, we always went together.

Q: Well, that was a good way to describe it.

A: We got along pretty good and we had our anniversary--50th anniversary.

Q: She hasn't been dead but for a few years, has she?

A: She died 1979--February 1st(?).

Q: Well, shortly after you married on up into there, we get into those depression years. Do you remember the depression?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Did that affect you all?

A: We tried to... the trucks and she kept working on up until... put in right many years, I don't know how many years she worked but she worked as long as she could work.

Q: And that helped?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: And then of course, in the country where you raise your own food and--the depression didn't hit country people-

A: Not like it did... She got--I think she first started working over there for 8c an hour.

Q: 80c?

A: 8c. .

Q: 8c an hour?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, the thing I remember about the depression was that Mother used to get 10c a dozen for eggs and she thought that was terrible.

A: That's right.

Q: And that was all that she got. That was her cash money.

A: Cash money.

Q: As she kept on to work at the G & H, how far--how much did she--was she getting up when she quit?

A: She got pretty good then 'cause they started giving raises and she got to 15c and on up you know. And then they start out on piece work, you know. And she got so much--had

to do so much to gain so much. So she worked on that for right many years.

Q: Okay, and then we went through the depression and after that came World War II.

A: Right.

Q: You did not serve in World War II?

A: No, I did not.

Q: Do you have any recollections of World War II that you'd like to share with us?

A: Well, I know we had some people--all the people around us, you know, went to World War II. Some didn't come back--they got killed over there and it was pretty sad with everybody that had been killed and all over there in that-

Q: Just a minute. Did you continue--when you quit--leaving G & H hauling people to the G & H, what did you do then?

A: Back in 1935, I went into the sawmill business--had a sawmill and I used that. Back on 1929--bought a farm up there--the old Wallace farm and that had 518 acres in it and my uncle he wanted me to have it so he offered to buy it and paid \$8,000 for it. And so I kept that and we cut wood off of that and sold wood and... ties, saw them and all and we farmed it--what land was available and I bought that and two cows and a horse and buggy, so we got the horse and buggy-- I used to ride up and down the road on that Sundays, you know--the horse and buggy.

Q: You were moving up in the world, then.

A: Going up there--like we did very well with the farm there--we kept that

up until '72, I believe it was or '70, I sold that.

Q: Is that when you bought this farm?

A: No, I bought this one in '45.

Q: You had both of them then?

A: Both of them.

Q: Both of them, uh-huh. I'm sure through the years having lived here in this community for so long you've seen a lot of things change--do you think people have changed a lot in that time?

A: Well, I'd have to say "yes"--they have. I don't think the people are really close to each other like they should be and like it was when we were growing up. People were very close and visiting like from home to home and I think that's one thing-

Q: Did you all ever in this community have a corn shucking?

A: Oh, yes--lots of corn shucking.

Q: And the people would all come together.

A: All come together and help shuck corn.

Q: You worked first and then had a party afterwards?

A: That's right.

Q: What would they do--have refreshments and--

A: Yeah, they'd have something to eat and something, you know, eat and of course, shuck corn until I reckon about 9 or 10 o'clock at night and-

Q: Well, did they always have it on a moon shining night?

A: Well, sometimes, of course, the moon shine at night. They would be about the time that they would get ready for it. They take and put it all in a row and then they all get around and shuck corn.

Q: I'll bet that was a lot of fun. Of course, the ladies probably had the quilting parties.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah--most ladies, I think, enjoyed their quilting parties.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Did you ever have community picnics?

A: Oh, yeah, yep.

Q: Get together for the picnic?

A: Yeah, had picnics with church and lots of times, in the summertime, we'd always have picnics at church, you know, and they had different stuff to eat, cakes and all that kind of stuff. People would bake and gather there and what they didn't have, they would... them off and sell them and people had a right good dinner.

Q: Did you ever go on any excursions?

A: Not too many, no.

Q: You were too far away from the river for that.

A: Well, when I had the G & H truck, I used to take a bunch of--a truckload of them and carry them to Colonial Beach some Sundays and they'd have a big time down there.

Q: Colonial Beach was the place in that day and time.

A: That's right.

Q: Have you ever regretted, Mr. Abel, being a country boy? Did you ever think you'd rather been a city boy?

A: No, no.

Q: Always enjoyed the country?

A: That's where I want to be.

Q: Yeah. Do you watch TV now?

A: Some, yes.

Q: Some?

A: Ballgames.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't like it as much as I used to because I think it changed. They put a lot of stuff on I'm not too happy with.

Q: Do you think TV has improved our quality of life any?

A: I think it has helped and again I think that the young people are, I believe, it has been a hazard to a lot of the young children that's growing up today.

Q: But if used right, it does have its place?

A: That's right.

Q: Of course, like I said in 1955, Interstate 95 came to Stafford County. Do you think our quality of life improved after that or do you think life in Stafford County would have been better if 95 had bypassed us?

A: Well, I know it has happened--we got a lot of people in Stafford County since

95 went through--done a lot of contracting and building, building. Before that, we didn't have that much. In 1965, we had a lot of--right good much of people living in the county then. We went from 1948, the population in the county was close to 11,000--ten or eleven thousand and about even with Fredericksburg--- that's the way it was and then after that it began to grow and I don't know if Interstate--any Interstate like that Stafford gets some business, but I don't know, I think it was pretty good like it was. We had little No. 1 anyway. I think--

Q: When was No. 1 first made a hard surfaced road, do you know?

A: Let's see--I remember but--I remember when they went through with it and on down to the old Hollywood Restaurant--that was down on No. 1 through there winding road and it went on through there and they built that with just gravel and that was the first hard surfaced road we had through here and that was back when--I can't remember-

Q: How much traffic was out there?

A: Just a little.

Q: Just a little bit.

A: And finally they got to black-topped it and all through and that made it better again(?), but most of it was gravel which was--they changed it down at Crane's(?) Corner, went back down to ... School. That's the way it used to go. ...by Chichester(?).

Q: old Telegraph Road.

A: Old Telegraph Road. That's where it went through there. That used to be one of the old roads that people used to travel back years ago, you know, when they come from Stafford Courthouse, they'd come down through there and that's where old ... they... come down from right across from the Moose Lodge used to be there-right back of that, that used to be... and across the road and come on across the... and back up there back of Hollywood Restaurant, on up through there and on out down and went across the road there and hit down to ...

Q: Now are you talking about Hollywood Restaurant--are you talking about the...?

A: At..., uh-huh.

Q: Well, can you think of anything else now during your life that you would like to--that you think would be of interest to anyone--any incidents that happened either funny or sad or--that you would like to share with us before we get over into talking about your board of supervisor work?

A: I think things have gone along pretty good in the county far as I could see. In fact, my time back before I went on the board and things had begun to pick up and money was beginning to get better you know, all the time and had more jobs and a lot of people work at Quantico, which helped out a lot. People got jobs there and worked and different things happened to help build the county back in those days when I was-

Q: Alright, Mr. Abel, now let's get into your work as a member of our board of supervisors in

Stafford. When were you first elected to that position?

A: November--I think it was November the 6th, 1947.

Q: Who did you defeat? Did you have someone opposing you?

A: Yeah, Mr. Estes and Mr. Copeland.

Q: Okay.

A: And I won two of them running and of course, at that time there wasn't very many... voted out the... out there and I won by 18 votes.

Q: Okay, and Mr. Abel, we want to talk about some of the problems that faced Stafford County at the time that you went in as a member of the board of Supervisors.

A: Well, one thing that was bad in the county we didn't have the roads--the roads were bad--we didn't have good roads and we couldn't get any blacktopped or get them fixed up and drainage and that's one reason that I tried to be elected on the board of supervisors. I remember one day I didn't have a new car and I started out here by the... Church and the old road that leads off the old No. 1 highway--753 it is now--used to be 654--and I met Mr. Billy Bones(?) and the road so narrow he came down here in the bushes and he was sliding right together and hit the cars together. Didn't do any damage, I don't think very much, but anyway, right after that I said, "Well, I'm going to try to get on the board and see if I can't get a few roads fixed and I did and got elected and I have to say that I did work hard on all the roads in my district and Stafford County as a whole. And I got a lot of new roads and it helped people that lived back and didn't have roads and I worked on them and got a lot of them fixed and got them blacktopped and I worked hard at that and I would help ... the supervisors, Mr. Bill Helflin(?) and the other men who need some help... I would try to help them. So we got pretty good roads and begin to get pretty roads in the county.

Q: Who else was on that board when you first went on--do you remember?

A: Yeah, Mr. McMature(?), let's see, John McQuirk(?), I think was on there and Harold Light(?), we worked together on that--I got a picture part of them... part of them I'll show you before you leave.

Q: Alright, I'd like to see that. What were some of the other problems that the county was facing?

A: Well, school. We didn't have a real good high school in the county, and so I

was interested in that and far as that came up, we got together and built the-- Stafford High School. Middle school it is now--and I think that was around 500 and some thousand dollars when they built that and of course, that was pretty much--that was a lot of money to think about. I had never been used to talking about that much money, but anyway, we got the school and was proud of it and

got

that all built and when I went on the board, the school budget in this county was \$75,000. And I remember that Mr. Gayle in this first term that we started and I started out in 1948, he came up with a budget that was \$75,000 and he wanted

to raise it \$5,000 more and, of course, I hummed and hawed on that--finally, I reckon, he did get the \$5,000 and that was what we started off with. We started off with \$80,000 school budget in 1948 when I first went on the board and it--now it has gone up to about 38 million so I've seen a lot come and go in that time. And we started the building and they didn't have a junior high school, the board of supervisors got together and we decided to go to the school board with a new junior high school at Gayle and one at Stafford Courthouse and that was what I was working on during the building of this elementary school at Hartford. And rebuilding the one down at Ferry Farms so we carried that out. In lump sums that one night, and of course the board didn't like it very much, they "Oh, we can't build all those schools." Well, we said, "We're here to do it. You've been talking about building schools, so we're taking time now to go build them." So we talked to them and talked to them until they agreed--Mr.

Gayle

agreed with us to go ahead and build the four schools, so we did. So that's when I got the Hartwood school built--I had a lot of opposition to building that. The people up there--a lot of them fought me on that, but I stuck with it and built it anyway--got it built and it has been a great asset to that community up there which since then, I think, they've built on to it twice and it has been a great thing to have it done in that end of the county. We didn't have a school up in that end of the county. But they kept telling us that there wasn't enough children up there to carry on a school so we decided to try it and see what happens. Mr. Rollins(?) at that time, was helping us, you know, and he gave me a lot of figures--

Q: Which Mr. Rollins?

A: Gilbert Rollins.

Q: Gilbert. Was he the principal?

A: He was working for the school board.

Q: Oh.

A: But he had a counting of all the children who went to school and he gave me that. So then we built the two schools--built the junior school and the high school ... so got in right much arguments over building the schools, but I was really proud of them. And since then, we tried to build schools where we need them which was one down at Grafton, one down at Falmouth here, and we added on again over at Gayle, added on to Stafford Courthouse, and we built another school at Stafford-elementary school and we went from there to...--built that school. Then we had the land bought and all was ready to build the Stafford High School and I got

(A: continued) off the board and they had right much trouble after I left and some of them though they ought to use a tent or something else to teach the children school, which I didn't think was good idea that's why I am an opponent--and I didn't think very much of that. I thought that was getting down pretty low, you know, to--anyway, we finally got it through and we built a high school and I'm really proud of all of it and it was a great thing... for all the people especially children and I'm very proud to be on the board that helped do that.

Q: That's good. What were some of the other problems that you all had? I know there was a lot of talk maybe about the sewage and water.

A: Well, I'll tell you about the sewage. Falmouth as you know, they had a wpa(?)... ... putting pipes and all down in the ground for sewage and I kept reading in the papers about where they had a sanitary district--sanitary district and so I got together with Henry Chichester at that time and I think his uncle or somebody was in Richmond with the Health Department and we talked it over one day up there in his office and we got together and formed a sanitary district in the county. We formed a sanitary district for Falmouth and got the water and sewage in. And the water, sewer--I think the county put up \$50,000 to help put the sewer in Falmouth and start the sanitary district. The water came across the bridge there when I went on the board, it was \$10,000 earmarked to bring the water closer to

Falmouth, which was \$10,000 at that time was a lot of money and did a lot of work.

You couldn't touch it now for 100,000-200,000, I reckon to bring us across and finally we got water and sewage down there and then we finally got the water and sewer to run from Falmouth down to Chatham and sewer and that was what was started

up down there. And we also up on Clearview Avenue, carried the first(?) of pipe and we run the pipes up on Clearview Avenue back up through there and got the sewer up on the top of the hill there and that's where it started through there. And that was a great experience trying to get--that's when we started out the sanitary district. And I read... newspaper from Northern Virginia where they were starting these sanitary districts to do that. And then finally, we went from there and started one up in Hartwood--I mean, Garrettsville(?) and they--went along pretty good. Made a big thing up there because we had big sewer pipes in there now and that was--Smith's Lake was built there which was--Howard Smith, our congressman then which helped us--helped Mr. Metz(?)--he was the ringleader

in trying to get the lake and Howard Smith seen fit to go ahead with him and put it through. And he got it through Congress to put the lake up which is a million, one thousand to build and so we got the lake built--so that's what happened to one end of the county, I think as far as the water and sewer.

Q: Well, was that before Lake Abel?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. Then you want to hear about the Abel Lake, I'll have to tell you that. ... still... from Culpeper--both Smiths--Mountain Lake up there and so we got into--after I got on the board, a few years after that, we got together and formed with Mr. D.C. Carver that was our new first administrator in the county and we got, we worked and got Mr. Carver and brought him in for the administrator.

Which went to Charlottesville and we--hired the new administrator with nobody had any knowledge of our hiring a new administrator in the county 'til we brought Mr. Carver here and we already done hired him--the board had. He was the first administrator we had and good one. Nice man and he got busy on that and we got to working on this Abel

Lake. So we had to make a trip to Roanoke prior to some of the work--we made a trip over there and got

number one priority on it to help get the money and stuff to build it. So, it was Richard Dent or

Beck(?), County-County Administrator, I mean Extension Service, we worked together with him and he

worked with board and all got it started and then we had some people come in from the government--I

can't recall their names--but one man particular was really, really nice fella in helping us get the lake started and all. Which he offered us a lot of opportunities of--better opportunities than we would ever get, but at that time, the board didn't feel like--some of the board didn't feel like they should get into it too deep and finally we started out and got the Abel Lake started. And we got the dam built, which I think it covers about 265 acres and the dam was both 90 feet deep and the water was 90 feet deep at the dam. And it goes way on back to where... old mill back there--it used to be an old grist mill back there. It goes back to that area and then cross over 651 at this side of Mountain View--that bridge right there. So we did very well on it and got that fixed. Then finally, we had to start in to get the filtration plant. Finally we got that started--got the filtration plant and got it built and everybody worked together. The board of supervisors--all of us worked together and got it fixed and then we had a sanitary district in Hartford, had a sanitary district here, and Farmers Home Administration, they came in and helped us with the money and all to put that plant up and get the lines built through the county here through the Hartford district and we started that. And the name that got the Abel Lake was Mr. Heflin(?), and Mr. Lightner(?), I think was on the board then, they got together and thought, well, had a lot to do with it and worked that far--they said to name it after me. So they did and I didn't ask for it, but I was right proud of it. Of course, I think a lot of people in the county didn't like it too well. Well, I have to say one thing. If it hadn't been for Ralph Metz working on the projects that was in his district and in Garrisonville, and the Smith Lake, they wouldn't have 610 with all the business he got because he was the man responsible for getting the water and sewer lines built in that area. And, of course, I worked down here and got the water lines built through here and got them from here on out to Berea down to... and on down to your area-White Oak and its kind of a big thing to have it. And with a nice plant and a lot of people, I reckon at that time wondered why opponents like the high school, "Well, it's nothing but a mud hole." I said,

"Well, if it takes a mud hole, she ought to go over and jump in it and see how she'd like it for a mud hole." But anyway, the same time, you can't satisfy everybody, but I think that the majority of these people in this county and the people who got children to send to school, appreciates having Garrisonville system and I'm sure they appreciate now having Abel Lake system.

Q: Well, I think any time that you try to do something that moves forward, you have people who would rather stand still.

A: That's right.

Q: You've got to have foresight to see those things.

A: I thought that I had foresight enough and I think I was right and it turned out to be wonderful.

Q: You were happy with your decision?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Tell me this, Mr. Abel, how much time in a day or a week do you think you spent on Stafford County business when you were in--on that Board of Supervisors?

A: Well, I spent a lot of time on it before--you take when they built Potomac Run Lake and to get all the easements and options and things I had to go back as far as down to Belle Plains(?) and get all the people down there and Mrs. Silver sign that--all that, and all the way up clean up here to the dam. We had to get people--the people were in Hawaii(?) and different places and we had to get--had to spend and get them to sign and give us the right of way through there. And I worked on it--hard for many years. Of course, that's got another small lake back of Mr. Moncure's(?) there which was there for flood purpose. And when I left the board, the four year that was supposed to be dredged out from here to Belle plains. Along the line somewhere, it got sidetracked and we didn't get it done. It got lost. But I was working on that when I was on the board for four years. Anyway, I think there has been a wonderful project for everybody. It is a recreation and it's nice fishing and we got plenty of water and it's just great where now I understand that they've got to build twice its capacity, to have enough water to go ... in this dry time, they've been pleased that we had enough to help the water situation in the county.

Q: Now when you say to enlarge--are you speaking to enlarge Lake Abel or do we have to look for some other water supply?

A: No, what they are going to do is enlarge the plant so they will manufacture more water there, you see. Other words, filter more.

Q: There is sufficient water there?

A: There's enough there to--

Q: Just need to filter?

A: That's right. But--you haven't been there, have you?

Q: No.

A: That's a beautiful plant. You ought to go down to see it--it's really beautiful and it's--they got a nice place there--they got nice road to it and the plant is beautiful.

It's nice there. And I'm sure they wouldn't mind if anybody wanted to go down and look at it, they'd show you what's there--look at it. 'Cause it is really something worth seeing.

Q: When you first went on the board, how much did they pay you all for your services?

A: They paid us \$300 a year.

Q: A year?

A: Yep.

Q: That would figure out to be about 50c an hour, wouldn't it?

A: Yes.

Q: Well, now how much had it gone up to when you came off the board?

A: Well, when we--when I left the board, we were getting \$5,000 a year. And since then, they've hiked it up to \$9,000 something and the chairman gets \$10,500-- think that's what it is.

Q: Well, they've gone up a little.

A: They've gone up a little.

Q: Yes. Well, you have been off the board for some years and had a chance

sort of to look back. If you had an opportunity to relive your life and went through that again, would you do anything different from what you did that time?

A: Well, I think there would be some things that you would change. I-

Q: Hindsight is always better. Better than foresight.

A: That's right so I guess it would be some things that would be changed a little bit. I realize you got to have a lot of--well, we didn't have as many people as they have today in the county and expenses were not as great as they are today. But now it is pretty heavy payload that we have in the county and I guess if they need it, I don't know, but it is pretty heavy.

Q: Now you hear that commented on quite often. Do you think that the same problems that faced you all back then on your term on that board still is facing our supervisors today?

A: Yes--I think they got problems with water and sewer, schools and things. I think they got to look forward to having that. In other words, it is not going to be a drop back in the water. We're going to need all the water we can get. In this county--it should be looked into all the places they could make another dam or something to have water. I know we had talked about having another dam at Horse Spin Run(?). We would talk about building another one up there.

Q: Where is that--Horse Spin Run?

A: That's up in Hart--it was on 655--back in that section there.

Q: Do you think that Stafford needs an airport?

A: Well, back in the years, I worked with them on that airport and tried to get them to get the plans for and get the--the government wanted us to get--to make a study of it and which I went along with it at that time. We had never picked out a site for it. We had one in mind and that was the one at Greenvale(?) and since then they've got other sites which is very good and well, put it this way, a lot of the counties like Chesterfield County and Hanover County, you read about has made good with priports. We did have Shannon over here, but that's going out. That's going to leave

in this area, all the way around, a vacancy for an airport and I don't know, I think probably if they go at it in the right way and try to get it done--the government would pay at the time that we were talking about was 95% of it and I think probably it would be a good thing. It would bring a lot of people--industry in the county, I think it would help. It would help the economy of the county. And like people have planes to--they want to pay to fill them--like Shannon was gone, a lot of people had to... go to Manassas or Culpeper or Hanover.

Q: You feel sure one is going somewhere and it wouldn't hurt Stafford to get it?

A: I think so.

Q: It would be to their advantage?

A: I think it would be to their advantage--to be first and get it and I think it would work out alright.

Q: Alright, let me ask you another question, Mr. Abel. You hear discussed every once in a while, the thing about electing the school boards. Now back in your term of the board of supervisors, you worked very closely, I am sure, with the school board. Do you think there is an advantage to electing a school board or do you think the system of appointment works well?

A: Well, the time that I worked on there--I worked with the Superintendent, I worked with most all of it--while I was there, was start with Mr. Gayle, which was a fine superintendent. Fine man--we got along--we had ups and downs and all, but at the same time, we got through. Didn't anything happen that would--we wouldn't be friends. We always friends and of course, a lot of people that we should have a school board elected by the people or appointed by the supervisor. We have made out very well in Stafford County with the system we've got and I think maybe if they want a change, a lot of people think they want a change, of course, that would be up to the board to set it up and have that system. I noticed King George is going to that system and probably will be--it wouldn't be bad, I'd say that.

Q: But you figured it worked very well--

A: It worked so far, but I think--I don't know--I think maybe it might help some.

Q: Can you honestly say that you enjoyed your years of working as a member of the board of supervisors?

A: I sure did.

Q: You really enjoyed it?

A: Yep.

Q: You felt that it was worthwhile and rewarding to you?

A: I do.

Q: Do you ever consider offering your services as a candidate again?

A: No.

Q: You are retired now? Okay. What do you think--just very briefly--this of course isn't anything to do with history, but what do you look forward to--what do you think lies ahead for Stafford County between now and the year 2000?

A: Well, I think the way it's growing, it's going to be a big population. It's growing now each year-- let's see, I think it's up around 40,000 to 45,000 now. Now you take that amount of people since 1948, that's a big jump--from ten or eleven thousand. And I think that would be a big thing to have--for people to look after and they have got to prepare for it--there's no question about that. Just like I stated about the water and the sewer--they've got to prepare for it. Because it's going to be here and it's nothing they can do but try to take care of it--don't--we're going to be in a terrible condition. And it's got to be planned ahead to continue to find water, find places for sewer plants and that to go along with it. I think that.

Q: Now, can you think of any--anything else maybe that happened in Stafford County while you were on that board that I have failed to ask that you would like to bring out as

part of a history project?

A: I don't think there's anything that I can recall back.