

STAFFORD COUNTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF GORDON BYRAM
BY A.R.MacGREGOR,III

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Date of agreement - Jan.3, 1987

Subject of Tape(s): Mountain View Area

GORDON BYRAM

Q: Okay, you can state your name and date of birth, and where you were born.

A: Gordon Byram, born June 8th, 1914, near Mountain View, Virginia.

Q: In Stafford County?

A: In Stafford County.

Q: Were you born at home or in the hospital?

A: In the home.

Q: Right in the house. Is the house still standing in Stafford?

A: Still standing.

Q: Still there. Okay. Okay. Had your family lived there long in Stafford?

A: Oh, my whole family lived in Stafford all their lives.

Q: As far back as--like your grandfather? How far back? Do you know?

A: I couldn't say how far back.

Q: You know your father and your grandfather lived there?

A: Yes. My grandfather lived down here was a relation to you. Myrtle's, yeah, Myrtle's grandfather and my grandfather was the same.

Q: And who was that?

A: Joe Cooper.

Q: Joe Cooper?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Okay. And do you remember his father?

A: No, I don't, to tell you the truth. Let's see. Joe Cooper died just about a month before I was born. I don't know how long the other grandfather died before I was born.

Q: And your father--who was he?

A: Charles Byram.

Q: I don't know how long the other grandfather died before

A: Charles Byram. And he lived in the house? Also, was he born there?

A: No, no.

Q: Where was he born? Do you remember?

A: Over here next to what they call the Brick Store.

Q: The Brick Store, okay.

A: Over that way.

Q: Okay. What kind of work did your family do?

A: Well, he farmed a little, cut railroad ties.

Q: Cut railroad ties. When you say cut railroad ties, you know how he cut them?

A: Well,- they cut the trees down, they'd line them off with a broad axe, they called it. Take the line(?) and they'd score and then they'd take the broad axe and hew them down, and make them smooth on each side.

Q: And that was all done by hand.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you know how much they got for them or--when they sold them?

A: Well, seems to me like the best I think that was called the 7 x 9 was around a dollar.

Q: That's what I've heard other people say.

A: I think it was around a dollar. Some of them I don't believe brought but a quarter, culls or something like that.

Q: Did you ever help him any? Do you remember how many you could do in a day?

A: No, 'course I'd saw down the trees. Saw off the ties and block them.

Q: And most people--a lot of people did that in the county, didn't they?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: For income.

A: Wasn't too many sawmills then, but some. Years before the way they'd do, they had an up and down saw. Sawed the lumber.

Q: Pit saw is what they called it, didn't they or did they?

A: I think so. One's down in this pit and the other one up there (level ground).

Q: Would the railroad buy--the railroad must have bought these ties. I guess they sold them right to the railroad.

A: Yeah. (J.W.) Masters and Clark or something like that, is the one that--L.A. Clark and Son, I believe, bought railroad ties in Fredericksburg.

Q: Oh, they would buy them and then sell them to the railroad?

A: I expect so, uh-huh. Take down here at Brook Station, a lot haul them down there.

Q: Okay.

A: I think the ones here they hauled them over to Fredericksburg.

Q: In this area I guess so. It's close to Fredericksburg. Well, he cut railroad ties. Anything else you remember him doing- farming?

A: Farming, uh-huh. I gonna say, he worked like trade work--helped the neighbor do something and the neighbor helped him.

Q: Right.

A: Kill hogs. Three or four families get together, help kill one another's hogs. They'd have wood cuttings, corn cuttings, corn shuckings, and all like a-that.

Q: People got together and helped each other do it?

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of crops did he raise mostly?

A: He raised corn and raised some wheat, oats. Had a garden.

Q: Probably to raise tomatoes and things like that. Did he have--you said hogs--did you all raise your own hogs and kill them and took care of them?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Do you remember anything about when you used to kill the hogs? Anything that you remember about it?

A: Yes. First thing is you'd get up early in the morning and have the wood start fire, put old plow points and all kinds of iron in there--of course, you had big barrel what they called a scalding tub. And you take them irons got red hot, they'd put them in the water and get the water hot enough and then they'd kill a hog. And put one-half the hog in there and pull it out. Of course, scraping them and get the hair off. Then they'd put the other end in there and do the same thing. Of course, they'd have to warm it up so they killed another

and put it in there one. And hang him up on poles, open them up.

Q: Well, would they take the plow points and things--would they take them back out and heat them again and put them back?

A: Yeah.

Q: I know I've heard people say they heated those plow points and stuff. I never really realized exactly how--what they did. I didn't know they put it in the water. They dropped them in the tub of water and got it hot. I always thought they would have built a fire underneath the tub of water but-

A: No. Of course, I never did see any of them do that. 'Course they had wooden tubs.

Q: So that's the way they heated it ...

A: 'Course some of them used rocks--get the rocks hot and put in the water.

Q: But the tub was big enough to take about one-half the hogs at a time or--

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Was it a hewn-out tub or--

A: Just a round barrel.

Q: Like a barrel.

A: They called them hogs-its or something like that. It was larger than a regular barrel.

Q: So you made--made your own bacon and hams and--

A: Smoked their own meat.

Q: Did they make the meat?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you remember anything about that--how did they smoke it?

A: Well, they used--uh--of course, they'd be dead apple trees and hickory and sassafras, something like that. Of course, some of them had an old stove they put in the meat house and just have just enough fire to make some smoke. Well, they'd smoke it, I reckon, for two or three days.

Q: And they just hang a fresh ham in there and smoke it like that?

A: Well, see the ham would be cured first.

Q: Oh, they cured it first?

A: Oh, yeah. See, they'd salt them, let them stay down for so long and then after they get dry enough, they take and smoke them.

Q: And to salt a ham--you just pack them in salt or--

A: They would have a thing they'd run down beside of the hock pot in there, pack salt in that. Then, they'd pack salt all over them. And it would have to be a little warm for them to take the salt. 'Course, if they got too hot, they spoil. And if it's too cold, they wouldn't take the salt. They just had to catch the weather right to put that salt on them. And get enough on 'em to keep-

Q: And then, so after they were cured enough, they put it in and smoked them.

5

A: Yeah. Of course, after that, see later on they got smoked salt and used it Some didn't smoke them.

Q: Once you smoke them, they'd keep a long time, wouldn't they?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Just leave them hanging up in the smokehouse?

A: Keep them for years.

Q: Until you needed it?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: How about the other members of your family? Any of them--all of them mostly farmers, stuff like that?
Any uncles or anything like that you had?

A: Oh, well, several of them--your grandfather--he's a carpenter.

Q: Oh, yeah. Granddaddy Cooper, okay.

A: He was a carpenter and your Uncle Ashby--he worked in Washington with the district government.

Q: He worked for the trolley car some, didn't he? Or did he?

A: No--he rode them to work.

Q: Oh, well, maybe that's what it was.

A: At first he was, I think, a collector for some furniture companies. And last, he went to work for the district government.

Q: So he went to Washington. He rode the trolley car to work, but did--how did he get from here to Washington?

A: Well, he went by train then--at first. And later on, go by bus.

Q: Yeah.

A: He had a car, I know, one time to go back and forth.

Q: Where did most people catch a train in this area?

A: They'd go to Brook Station, some of them, some Fredericksburg.

Q: So this was just about halfway, I guess, either way. It would be just about the same distance.

A: I expect just about one-half.

Q: Just about, uh-huh. How about your mother? What did she do?

A: Just housework.

6

Q: Just the cooking and things like that.

A: 'Course, at the last, after we bought the store up here, she helped in the store.

Q: When did you all open the store up here?

A: 1926.

Q: Was a store there first? You bought it out?

A: Yeah. My father bought it. After he died, 'course we rented it out to my uncle--that was your grandfather, for five years. And then I taken it back in '32 and ran it until '66, I believe.

Q: What store was it before your father bought it?

A: Well, let's see, before my father bought it--Lloyd-Byram was running it. A fellow by the name of Black run it before he bought it.

Q: Do you remember when he opened it or--

A: No, it's been a store ever since everybody could remember.

Q: Is that right? Is that the same building or been different buildings built?

A: No, this up there now is the third building, I reckon. This is the third building.

Q: When was this one built? Do you know?

A: First part of this was built in 1940 and the other one was 1950--and it was added on.

Q: And your mother helped in that later on then?

A: Yeah. Helped in there besides the housework.

Q: Uh-huh. How large was your farm, do you remember? The size of your alls farm?

A: Well, I 'spect the whole place was 115 acres.

Q: Was it all farmable ?

A: No--

Q: Or some timber?

A: I expect somewhere about 30 acres farming.

Q: Did it border the Kellogg(?) tract or-

A: You mean the Run?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Was the dividing line.

Q: That was the property line? And that was divided between you and Kellogg?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And Kellogg's the one that ran the mill down on the river?

A: I never remember him running it. Wiggington was the running it. It was called Kellogg's Mill 'cause he was the one I think that owned it first.

Q: Right.

A: I think they give it to Wiggington or something after he passed away.

Q: Uh-huh. So you remember when Wiggington ran it?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

Used to go down there and carry corn. You see, flour used to come in cloth bags. Of course, my father carried larger bags to the mill. I used to carry small bags Just to go along.

Q: So you could carry it, yeah. Well, how far was it? It wasn't very far then was it? To the mill?

A: Oh, from our house to the mill, I guess about one-half a mile.

Q: Did you go down in a wagon?

A: No, I walked.

Q: A good walk, then?

A: There was a walking path. See, it went through our woods and that's the way they come to the store--a walking path.

Q: That's what you went down to get the flour?

A: Uh-huh. Carry your corn, your wheat. They'd grind it. And of course, you'd bring that back.

Q: Do you remember the mill operating?

A: Yeah. The people who carried the corn and wheat on their back would walk through home. Of course, there was a path that come right out at the mill. A few would go in wagons, but the road was awful, gullies and all..

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But most of them on this side of the run would walk by where I lived; the

ones on the other side would come in from the other way.

Q: Did--it was water-powered?

8

A: Yeah.

Q: Water-turned the well?

A: Yeah. Had two dams--what they called a big dam and little dam. The gates they'd raise and let the water on down. And they had a sawmill there run by water, too.

Q: Oh, they did have a sawmill, too?

A: That was before we got to the grist mill, on the same race they called it.

Q: Was that Wiggington's also?

A: Yeah.

Q: You remember them sawing lumber there?

A: Yeah, I remember when they sawed some lumber, of course, they didn't saw much. They sawed some. Elwood Wiggington, I guess, was born there ... you know Elwood?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. See, his father lived--'course it was his grandfather's mill.

Q: Do you know anything about the--you knew it was called. the Kellogg's Mill? Do you know anything about the Kelloggs at all?

A: No, I couldn't tell you nothing about them. Now, Billy Gordon, he looks up things. He might tell you something about them. Some of them was buried down here. That's not very far from here--'course it's all growed up now.

Q: But it is a stone there?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that was one of the Kelloggs that was buried?

A: That was the one that owned it. He owned a farm there. That farm joined my father's farm.

Q: And after Wiggington got it, he had some other mills also?

A: He has one at back of Ararat Church called Master's Mill.

Q: On Aquia Creek?

A: Uh-huh. I think he owned it--Masters run it was all. And there's another one up at--uh--

Q: Dumfries.

A: Dumfries, yeah. I can't tell you the name he called it--I forgot.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

9

A: I've got one half-sister.

Q: One half-sister?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Were you younger or older?

A: Younger.

Q: You were younger? And of course, I know you're married. When did you all marry? What date did you marry?

A: Oh, I think '37.

Q: '37?

A: September 14th, 1937.

Q: And your wife's name?

A: Her first name or all of it?

Q: Yeah, just--and her maiden name also.

A: Roberta McGee.

Q: Roberta McGee. Did she work when you all first got married?

A: Of course, she helped out in the store after we got married. That's all she ever done. Help in the store and housework.

Q: So your father had already established the store and all and you had taken it over, I guess.

A: Yes. My father died when I was twelve. He died in '26.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: I started in the store in '32. of course, we was running it when he died--my mother and myself a while. She wasn't able and I wasn't old enough. We rented it out for--let's see--for five years.

Q: That's the time that grandpa got it? Cooper?

A: Uh-huh. August 2nd, 1932, when I started in there.

Q: Did you all have any children?

A: One boy.

Q: One boy. What's his name?

A: Claude.

10

Q :Claude Byram. Where did he go to school?

A : He started at Ramoth, then went to Stafford.

Q : And Ramoth; there was a school here at Ramoth? Where was that school located?

A : Right across the road from Ramoth Church.

Q : Right across--is the building still standing?

A : Yeah. The church uses it some now.

Q : The church uses it.

A : That building was built the same year I was born.

Q : It was? Well, where did you go to school?

A : I went to Stafford some. Uh--I mean, I went to Ramoth first, then I went to Stafford.

Q : You--was Ramoth--when was Ramoth--the building that you went to, is that

still there?

A : Yeah.

Q : It is?

A: Uh-huh. Built in 1914.

Q :And that's where you went?

A : Yeah. There used to be a glass over top the door with the date on it. Broke that out with snowballs when I was in there.

Q :And how about your wife? Did she live in the area?

A : No, she was from Spotsylvania.

Q :And your boy--where did he go to school? Did he go to school in Stafford?

A : He went to Ramoth for a while. I don't know what grade he was in. They closed it and then he went to Stafford.

Q :So you lived in this area all your life? This one area?

A : All my life.

Q :Was there much crime in the county at this--the time you remember?

A : There wasn't much crime then. one sheriff. Of course, they did have, I think, one deputy part-time. There wasn't the population then as it is today.

Q : Right. Who was the sheriff when you were growing up? Early? Do you remember?

A: Sheriff Curtis.

Q: Curtis--that's right. I was trying to think what his name was.

A: W.C. Curtis--Will Curtis. I believe he was the first I can remember.

Q: So this was a pretty good county to raise children in and all, wasn't?

A: It was good then; of course, now so many people have moved in here, it's getting rough.

Q: Everybody knew everybody back then, didn't they? Almost the county.

A: I'll tell you the truth. I knew pretty near everybody from here to

Fredericksburg. But now I don't know the ones from here to Crane's Corner(?).

Q: And they knew you, too. Most of the time anybody mentions somebody's name, they all knew them, didn't they? Did people move in and out of the county a lot?

A: Not in this section. I don't know what they did in other sections. Not much moving in here and out.

Q: Most people were here and stayed here. Made a living that way. What kind of community activities--were there any--much?

A: There wasn't much of anything.

Q: Other than what you said a while ago about getting together for--

A: Get together--corn cutting, corn shucking, wood cutting, and like that. That about all. Sometimes they'd have an oyster supper at the school or something.

Q: There wasn't a lot of idle time like there is now. Most of the time when you got together, you worked.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they have dances or--

A: There'd be--dances at the private homes. Once in a while.

Q: People play music?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember going to any of them?

A: No, I never did get away much. My mother, well, always--see, was--my father died when I was twelve. Had to stay with her; she was in bad health--used to go up here to the one across the road. Dora Gordon's once in a while. I never went off to the others like some of the others did.

Q: Did you go to the oyster suppers you mentioned? Did you ever?

A: No.

Q: Where did they get the oysters from? Do you know?

A: I couldn't--I imagine they got them from Fredericksburg--some place over there. They didn't go off like they do today to get them.

Q: What church did you attend?

A: Ramoth.

Q: Ramoth. Right here at it. So you all walked to church, I guess, didn't you?

A: People walked for miles then to church. Come in Buggies. The September meeting was always first of September revival and people would come for miles.

Q: Do you remember the first automobile anybody drove up there?

A: To church?

Q: Well, or even in this area.

A: The first automobile I can remember was Lyman Embrey down here--it was on the Kellogg's place. I couldn't tell you what year that was. 'Course, he used to haul people, people wanted to go to the fair in Fredericksburg, he'd haul them or carry people to Fredericksburg. Battle Bloxton down the road here, he'd carry them.

Q: What--did he have a car, too?

A: Yeah. There wasn't many cars around. Let's see, my father bought one in 1924.

Q: What--do you remember what it was?

A: Model T Ford.

Q: Model T.

A: \$410.

Q: Is that right? Is that what it cost you? Was it a new one?

A: Yeah. New one--brand new. It was a self-starter. If you didn't get a selfstarter, it was less than \$400.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yeah. I found the old bill of sale just some time ago--\$410, and they charged you for the oil and gas and the grease, and all.

Q: When you bought it new?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Isn't that something?

A: Let's see, there was--Abby Cooper had one, my father had one and that was all except for Lyman Embrey--there was three down that road had one. But you could tell the sound might near of everybody's car then. You'd hear them on the road, now.

Q: It made a different sound?

A: Yeah--most of them.

Q: Was there any medical facilities around here when you were growing up?

A: Well, Dr. Gordon up here in Garrisonville and Dr. Payne. Dr. Payne moved to Fredericksburg. Dr. Gordon--old Dr. Snead was tip there, too, at Aquia Tavern.

Q: So they were--most people who went to a doctor--those were the doctors.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they come up to your house?

A: Yeah, they come to your house.

Q: What did they drive? Do you remember?

A: What did they drive?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, at first it was on horseback and then Model T cars. I can remember that. Of course, in later years after they passed away, it was hard to get a doctor to come see you. You'd have to go to them.

Q: Right. It kinda died out--that home service, didn't it? How about dentists? Any dentists--or did they do the same work?

A: There wasn't any around here. But sometimes there'd be somebody around--somebody would go to them and get them to pull a tooth.

I imagine that was right rough.

Q: I imagine so.

A: It's bad enough now, I think.

Q: How about midwives? When people had children, is that what they used to do in the county?

A: Miss Mary Paine was the one around here.

Q: And she delivered most of the babies in this area? You didn't go to the hospital like you do now?

A: No.

Q: And most of the time--what she would come to the home or--?

A: Yeah, they'd go after her or sometimes she'd have to walk. Well, 'course after I got up, I've been after her many a time for different people.

Q: You'd pick her up and take her to the house?

A: Uh-huh. They'd come to me to go after her.

Q: Did she--she made her living that way, didn't she? I guess.

A: I don't know--it wasn't enough to make a living. If they charged anything, it wasn't anything like they charge today.

Q: It was mostly probably she would trade or something.

A: I expect so.

Q: Give her food or something. A lot of people just helped out people just to do it, didn't they?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember when electricity came into the county? Was it here when you remember it or--?

A: I remember when it came by here. That was--oh, that was after 1940. I had it marked down up there in the store, but I can't tell you now.

Q: It was after 1940?

A: Yeah, before it got down this road.

Q: So you ran the store right a few years without it then?

A: From 19 and 32--up until the forties. Of course, I wired the store when I built it. Electricity was up next to Moore's Corner. Most people wouldn't pay to get electricity down the road.

Q: Hard to talk them into paying, huh?

A: So we kept on, we got it. I believe it was about \$10 a month. All they'd let me sign up for then. Now, of course, it'll cost you more than that today.

Q: Isn't that the truth? Yes. Well, before that you used kerosene lamps?

A: Yes.

Q: Woodstoves?

A: Iceboxes.

Q: Oh, the old iceboxes you had to get the ice?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Where did you get your ice from?

15

A: Oh, it'd be somebody who'd bring ice around every year.

Q: Bring it in a wagon or--?

A: In a truck.

Q: In a truck?

A: The last iceman I had was Hughie Fritter. Put in a 300-pound block at a time.

Q: Do you remember them cutting ice around here or--?

A: Well, it was done, but I don't remember it. A few of them had icehouses. Cut their ice and put in to keep.

Q: Well, you could get it in the summertime. Right in the summertime. Could you get ice?

A: Yeah, of course, you'd have to get it from Fredericksburg like that--ice

down there. A truck would come through and bring ice. There were a few people had their own icehouses. They cut the ice and put it in there in the wintertime.

Q: And keep it all summer?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you remember how much it cost to get a block of ice?

A: It seems to me like a 300-pound block would cost me \$1.50.

Q: \$1.50?

A: I think that's what it cost me.

Q: Do you remember how long it would last you? In the icebox?

A: It would last close to a week.

Q: And the icebox was made, I guess, so it had a drain or something in it so you could drain out as it melted?

A: Yeah. Had a hole down through the floor. And a pipe run down that and run the water off.

Q: How about telephones? Do you remember the first telephones come in here?

A: Well, I remember about the time, but--in the twenties which was before my father died, because I know they cut poles--cedar poles on his place, and brought up here and run this line down then.

Q: Was it a telephone company that did it?

A: Yes. Garrisonville, I believe--oh, what was his name--was two of them always worked on the line--Duff Gill Buhl(?) and somebody--can't think of the other one's name. The only phone here then was up here at the store. Miss Randall lived down the road.

16

Q: What type of phone was it?

A: It was a box up there and you turn a handle on it.

Q: Old crank one. What was the name of the company, do you remember?

A: It's--I can't say the name but--

Q: Was it Toluca?

A: No, that was another company, I believe.

Q: Okay. Maybe down at the other end.

A: One up Garrisonville Road--over towards Ruby.

Q: Okay.

A: Mr. Duff Gill, I can't think who the other'n was--I think they kinda owned it or something. Sold out to--I forget what the company was.

Q: So it was a phone in the store then?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was that--and the other person you mentioned--that...

A: Was one in the store and it was Miss Gordon Now. Randall down the road here--there was three had phones right in here. I couldn't say where the others was at

Q: When you called--what did you have to call the operator? And get her to make the phone call?

A: Yeah. Call the operator.

Q: So you would talk to here or him.

A: If it was a local call maybe from one house to the other. Any call at all, you had to call the operator.

Q: Do you remember who the operator was?

A: Uh--let's see, Miss Callahan taken it over--you knew her?

Q: I've heard of her.

A: Miss Gallahan. Seemed to me like she married Jinx Callahan or some of his people I think. Was operator up at Garrisonville.

Q: At Garrisonville?

A: We called it Garrisonville--between Garrisonville and Aquia Tavern is where it was at.

Q: Do you remember who had the first tractor around here? Farm tractor? Did

many people have tractors when you first remember?

A: No. I couldn't say--Henry Southard--he had one. Used to saw wood for people. Had an old Fordson tractor.

Q: How did most people plow?

A: They had a team to plow with--'course back about the time I come along, oxens-plowed with them some.

Q: Did--they did still plow with oxen?

A: Henry Sullivan and I can't think who else had a tractor.

Q: I know Grandpa got one, but it was later I'm sure. I don't know if you remember that one.

A: I don't remember that one. Lyman Embrey got one, Atwood Payne--there weren't very many around then, of course, after the better ones come out--rubber tires and all--people got 'em. They had steel cleats on them.

Q: Do you remember anybody having an old steam engines?

A: Used to come around and thrash wheat. Steam engines.

Q: Is that right? They'd come through the area?

A: Pick up wood going along the road to keep up steam.

Q: Do you remember anybody who had them or anybody had them?

A: I can't call his name--he lived over here at Hartwood. I'm afraid I'll make a mistake calling his name.

Q: Well, this here one question--where did you shop? I guess you'll didn't need to.

A: Well, what we didn't raise it at home, we shopped up here at the store. Go to town maybe two or three times a year. Most of the time you went there, all you went for was clothes or something like that. Shoes. But they did carry clothes and shoes in stores then, too, and you could get--women could buy the goods, make the dresses--all that.

Q: Where did you all get the supplies for the store? Do you remember just all over the place or--?

A: Well, used to--Janney Marshall Company in Fredericksburg, wholesale. Julian Garner, where else?-- Baker and Wallace(?) was where you got your dry goods. There wasn't no meat companies--produce--nothing like that come around then.

Q: You probably got that local, didn't you?

A: 'Course, what you bought, you'd buy from like the wholesale fat backs or somethin sometimes some hams or shoulders. it wasn't like it is today. Wouldn't have any fresh

meat. I'd buy chickens from local people. Everybody around here

18

(A: continued)

raised chickens--raised their hogs. Someone would kill a beef in the fall.

Hunting season, there would be rabbits, squirrels.

Q: When you first running the store, what did you sell? What was mostly what people would buy when they came in?

A: Well, just buy their groceries and feed. Sold right smart feed then. Canned corn, canned beans, canned meats. Didn't carry much fresh at all then. Get bread about two or three times a week.

Q: What was the closest firehouse or did you have one?

A: Didn't have one.

Q: Didn't have one at all.

A: The closest one would have been in Fredericksburg.

Q: So Fredericksburg did have one? But around here if they had a fire, just too bad.

A: Wasn't no firehouse. Just neighbors go around and help--do what they could.

Q: Could they save it most of the time?

A: No. Sometimes you might save a few things out the house. Might save an outbuilding if you had water there close for them to wind or pump.

Q: Do you remember any fires particularly in the county?

A: Well, Mr. Jim Shackelford's, I remember that burning down. That's about

all I can remember except for a bad fire--there was some around, but I didn't see them or nothing.

Q: Do you know when the firehouse--when Stafford County got a firehouse? Do you remember when?

A: I can't tell exact dates. I suspect it was in the thirties here in Falmouth. Don't tell you on the card I know.

Q: And in this area--where was the first you remember, the post office?

A: The post office? Well, we didn't have any in here that I can remember. It was in Falmouth.

Q: It was in Falmouth.

A: And they brought your mail everyday.

Q: Do you remember who the postmaster was or--.

A: No, I can't say I do. Edith Payne, I reckon was, and (Adrian) Truslow the first mail carrier on this road. Falmouth come through here and Stafford went up the road.

Q: Past--on the other side of the store?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: So this was kind of a dividing line? It still is kind of a dividing line, isn't it? They still consider this-

A: For Stafford schools. See, we in the south cross the road; up there is north.

Q: So you had home delivery then with the mail?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you remember anything about the depression? During the depression--did it make much change in the county here?

A: Well, it wasn't no work going on. Nobody couldn't get a job. They'd do what they could, around the store there, a whole gang would come around and wait to see if somebody come along to get an hour's work. Pitch horseshoes, like that. And then they started the WPA--that helped out. Mighten everybody got a job doing something.

Q: And that was the government's policy--the president's?

A: Yeah. Roosevelt was in there. I think that was in the thirties.

Q: You're right. It would have been in that area. What did they do mostly in the county? Do you remember anything that they did in the county?

A: They'd go around--they built outdoor toilets for people. Like schools, they done work, Ramoth, they done a lot of work out there. Down at Falmouth, they put in some sewer lines, things down there. I don't know if it was any other--whether they helped people out on anything else then or not on the farm.

Q: And the government would pay them for doing that?

A: Uh --huh.

Q: Did it--like you said, some people--a lot of people just farmed and were kind of self-sustaining anyway so it didn't too much matter with them, I guess.

A: It was kind of rough on them--people didn't have any money to buy anything. They'd sell a cow for \$10 or \$15. Mrs. Briggs(?) sold a lot up here \$15. A hog \$5, some of them less.

Q: To get the money to buy whatever she needed--cloth or something.

A: Or to pay your taxes.

Q: Oh, yeah, that's right. You still had to pay taxes.

A: Or cut tires or cut wood.

Q: I don't guess they did much fishing or anything up in this area. Wasn't anywhere to fish, was it?

20

A: Like your father used to fish some.

Q: Yeah, he'd go on the water or close to the water--could rely on that some.

A: My uncle used to go down there and fish. A fella up here by the name of Raines--they used to go down there and fish some. That was about all from up in here.

Q: Right.

A: Quantico was the main thing.

Q: Did people go there to work?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: When did the--do you remember when they opened that place up to work?

A: Quantico?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: No. I couldn't say. I know some did a few months work a year maybe there. For a long time. Then they started out as full-time.

Q: A lot of people in this area helped build a lot of the buildings.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: At Quantico.

A: G & H Plant down in Fredericksburg. Shoe plants. Sylvania Plant come in. Boosted things up some.

Q: There wasn't too much in the county itself as far as working ?

A: No. There was no work in the county. 'Course some people worked on the farm--it was a big farm, but I didn't pay much.

Q: Where was the furthest you remember traveling from the county back in early times?

A: In early times, the furthest I went to Fredericksburg for years.

Q: Is that right?

A: And then, oh, '27, '28 was the first time I ever went to Washington. That far.

Q: Do you remember why you went? Just to visit or--?

A: Just went to visit.

Q: Just to see the city?

A: No. I went to see--I had an uncle up there. And all of us, well, not all of us went, but a carload of us went. We'd go up there once in a while.

Q: Did you go in a car?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: How was the traffic up there then?

A: There was no traffic then. Weren't as much as it is down here now.

Q: I'll bet it has changed. Do you remember anything--any humorous experiences or anything during your childhood or anything? Any funny--anything stand out in your mind that you remember?

A: No, I can't remember of any now. I can't think of it anyway.

Q: What was your family's--if a stranger come through the place here--what was you all's reaction--what was your reaction to strangers that came through here? Or did any--were any strangers coming through here?

A: Hardly ever. Sometimes, there would be somebody come through. Maybe want to stay all night in your barn or something. They wanted to... to stay. If they didn't look too good, let them stay in the barn. If they looked all right, let them stay in your house.

But it wasn't too many of them.

Q: Didn't too many people come through this area, I don't think.

A: No. of course, this was the main highway then.

Q: This road right through here was? It went from?

A: Richmond to Washington.

Q: So you--when you--if you were coming from Washington and you wanted to go to Richmond, you'd have to come down this road.

A: Uh, let's see. Down here at Crane's Corner, it crossed by W.L. Alens,, come out down there in Falmouth. Right up this way you'd go up to Moore's Corner, you turn right, go on up there to McWhirt's store, you turn right. Go on out Aquia Tavern. After you got down there, I don't know exactly what they call it now, you, but where Hilldrup's Transfer is, bear to the right before you got up to there and go through Chopawamsic Swamp. Had teams there to pull you through.

Q : It was that bad?

A: It wasn't the whole year like that. Lots of times.

Q: They had teams of horses to pull you through there? And they'd pull a car or wagon or whatever you had?
Was somebody--was that like a business for somebody? That they ran a

business--you paid them to pull you through?

A: Yeah.

Q: Almost like a toll bridge, or something.

A: Yeah. There was a toll bridge at Falmouth one time. It washed away, I think.

22

Q: There used to be a toll bridge?

A: Uh-huh. for a while.

Q: Do you remember Falmouth before they built the new bridge and before they did all the work. The old road went down and around through the bottom.

A: What you call Chatham bridge went across you'd go down River Road and go across.

Q: So you remember the old town of Falmouth? Did you ever go into it much? Into Falmouth?

A: No, just go through it. Then, that wasn't very often.

Q: It looked a whole lot different then, I imagine, than it does now.

A: Yeah.

Q: Since they put the highway through it.

A: Let's see, I believe the first bridge they put across there washed out in that flood some. And they had to go back there for a while. Swinging bridge-you walked across there.

Q: They did have a swinging bridge across the Rappahannock that you could walk across

A: I never did go across it. That was when I was younger. One washed out or something and they put a swinging bridge across there. Heard people talking about it, you know.

Q: Did most things in the county stay pretty much the same for years, didn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember when it changed? Begin to change? What caused it to change?

A: Didn't change too much. When World War II broke out--about that time.

Q: That started changes.

A: Oh, sure. World War I, I remember when we were coming back.

Q: Do many people in the county go serve in World War I?

A: I don't know about the whole county. There wasn't too many through here. I don't know but one.

Q: How about World War II?

A: Right smart in World War II. But I don't know but one that didn't come back from World War I. He come by and told us "goodbye" before he went.

Q: He did?

23

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Is that right?

A: Was Tommy Embrey. Sally Guy's brother.

Q: And he told everybody "goodbye" before he left?

A: See, his sister lived across the run down there at Kellogg's Mill. That's Elwood Wiggington's mother.

Q: Oh.

A: That's his sister. Never did come back.

Q: Do you remember any of the people mentioned--the ones who served in the war? Do you remember any of them getting any particular recognition in the war?

A: Not in World War 1. No, I don't.

Q: How about World War II?

A: Several of them got Purple Hearts and like a-that. That's about all I can say.

Q: How about when they built Interstate 95? Did that have much change on the county, do you think? 95?

A: Of course, it killed Route 1 some for a while, but they built up, like

down below Fredericksburg, it was almost dead for a while. It's built up now.

Q: You talk about this road here. Do you remember when this road was the main route between Washington and Richmond? Do you remember it being that route?

A: Well, I'll say just about the time I remember when they opened up from Stafford Courthouse to Crane's Corner (No. 1) and they closed it one time and turned the traffic back through here for a little while.

Q: Do you remember when they were building the Route 1?

A: Of course, I don't remember when they built this through here. That was--I think they built this through here the year I was born. 'Course, they had convict camp down the road here. They worked on it.

Q: Where was that at?

A: Do you know where Junior Wine(?) lives?

Q: Okay, yeah. Right in that area.

A: Right across the road. Let me see,... Hunter lives over there now, I believe. Can't call all the names used to live along there.

Q: Right.

24

A: On that side of the road.

Q: Well, do you remember anything about--did you ever go watch them when they were building Route 1? The new--the one in-

A: No; 'course when I went anywhere, I'd go on Sunday. And then we went, let's see, turned off, I reckon, Woodbridge. Can't think of the name of the place they called it. I reckon it was Lorton or something like that. This stone company has a stone quarry up there now. On hill up there, I can't think of the name of it.

Q: Occoquan?

A: I suspect it was. That was back in the twenties--I can't think of everything now like I used to.

Q: Do you remember anything about the winters? The snow in the winter time? What happened in the roads? Did they get the roads cleared for you?

A: Sometimes it would be a week or two. I remember this road right here was blocked since we've been up here.

Q: Was this road always blacktopped or--?

A: No.

Q: Used to be dirt?

A: Yeah. You'd go clean up to the axle going through there in the winter. This road down here I remember when that was built. The road would fill in and we couldn't get in. Walked over the top of the fence... didn't come in for several days. Couldn't get back, so I went down to see about the family. ... fence and they'd be down the road--the dirt, take you right smart while to make it. Couldn't drive

Q: You'd go over top the fence in the snow, you mean?

A: You'd walk it.

Q: Just walk over top the fence--the snow would be that deep?

A: It would drift over it. I remember one year, people lived there, taken shovels and shoveled to get to the store.

Q: So did the state take care of the roads then-, too? Do you remember?

A: The county--the county had the roads.

Q: The county took care of them first.

A: Then the state took over. There wasn't nothing done to that road.

Q: What kind of equipment did they have? Do you remember the equipment that they used?

25

A: The county? I believe Mr. Rowby Raines worked there; I think he had some mules and pans they would drag to move dirt. Two-wheel carts, they'd have a hand thing hooked to them. Of course, men shoveled and used picks, and things like that--plows and wagons hauled gravel. And after a while, they got trucks to haul gravel and that was a yard body on it at first, Model A trucks.

Q: How did they work? The dump part of it? How did you make them dump?

A: What the wagons or the trucks?

Q: The trucks--the old Model A trucks.

A: The trucks--I can't think now how they. The wagons--they could turn the boards out or fix it so the bottom would drop out. But the trucks wasn't like that. Must have lifted up some or something or another, several of them had the trucks.

Q: Do you remember when they blacktopped this road out here?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you have any idea what year it was, do you?

A: Can't say they blacktopped to the run the first time. The next time, blacktopped it out here by the store right in sight and after that they went on down.

Q: What would they do--just get the worst spots at first?

A: They just cover so many miles or something. All they had money for or something. I can't say.
Thirties or forties when they blacktopped this.

Q: It was a whole lot different traveling before then, wasn't it?

A: Yeah. Must have been in the thirties that they blacktopped in front of the store

Q: The wintertime, I imagine, was the worst time as far as being able to go somewhere

A: Oh, yeah. People that lived back in that road, they'd have to leave the car up here at the store, truck or whatever they had. Until the road froze and they could get over it or spring of the year. The ones who was in there had to stay in there.

Q: They just walked or rode a horse maybe.

A: Most of them walked. Walked up to the store to get the car or truck or whatever they had. If they had it out here, the ruts were so deep. All the roads--axle deep.

Q: I imagine some people would leave the car right in the road sometimes.

A: Yeah, sometimes, they would. Because they couldn't get through.

Q: Would the mail get through? Most of the time?

A: Most of the time. I remember going to school out here at Ramoth, we'd have to
26

(A: continued)

come out the school--had to push him (mail carrier) up the hill.

Q: Do you remember anything about holidays when you were young? Like Christmas? or things like that? How was Christmas much different then than it is now?

A: Well, people visited one another then--house to house. About two weeks, every night or a day. Just like when you're small, Christmas never would come until Santa Claus.

Q: You didn't get the stuff you got now.

A: No. To tell you the truth, some of them didn't get nothing. Just an apple or maybe an orange, something like that. I was lucky--I got a stocking and maybe a tablet, few pencils, pistol caps. Some of them would get right smart, but not too many of them.

Toys--they wasn't nothing then to what it is now.

Q: Did you have any traditions in the family? That you did special on Christmas?

A: No. Have everybody in the family a little extra day. Another one the next day, next week or something.

Q: Anything you remember eating different?

A: Well--always had some ham. Of course, didn't always have turkey like they do today. Had turkey once in a while. Had turkey or a baked hen or something like that.

People didn't eat then like they eat today.

Q: How about Easter? Is there anything that you remember about Easter?

A: Easter--used to--frocks they called it. Go to town, get hats and things like that--the women would. The boys some clothes.

Q: Wear them to church?

A: Yeah. Easter's not like it used to be.

Q: How about Easter Monday--would they do anything special on Easter Monday?

A: I always done--my father and I would plant potatoes on Easter Monday, and after we planted potatoes, if it was fitting, we'd always--we'd go down to the run fishing.

Q: Is that right? I've heard an awful lot of people say they went fishing on Easter Monday--that's the reason-

A: He'd always plant potatoes and carry me down to the run to do some fishing.

Q: So he would plant his potatoes on Easter Monday? Most--a lot of people plant them on St. Patrick's Day. Do you remember any, what you'd call a character in the county?
Anybody stood out as far as being a character? Anything?

A: Well, not right through here. I know some places there were, but not through here--this was generally quiet through here.

27

Q: Was it anybody in this area that was pretty much wealthy or well off compared to others or was it pretty much everybody about the same?

A: Most of them, I think, was about the same down through here. Some of them tried to show a little bit, but near everybody was in the same boat.

Q: Do you remember anybody in Stafford County in your lifetime that was pretty well off or in the county as a whole?

A: That's been years ago now.

Q: Yeah. When you were growing up?

A: I know it was some, but I can't think right now. Some of them seemed to be well off, but come down to the truth of it, they wasn't.

Q: Wasn't too people I don't guess had the opportunity to get wealthy in this county

A: No, not then.

Q: In early time. Do you remember any stories that your grandfather might have told about the Civil War or anything like that?

A: No, you see, I never did see any of my grandfathers.

Q: Oh, you never did see them. Never knew them.

A: Just one of my grandmothers.

Q: Well, I think that's all I can think to ask you right this minute. they claimed this was the center of the county at the time?

A: Of course, see, old people talk, of course, went to the courthouse because some of them down that way had a pull or something and got it down right close to them ...
before the government took over and all--this was just about the center. ' I think this is one of
the highest parts of the county--327 feet above sea level.

Q: Now, what is this called? This area?

A: Mountain View.

Q: Mountain View?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: They say you can see the mountains or something from up in here.

A: You can see the mountains when it's clear.

Q: That's the Blue Ridge?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you ever remember seeing them? Have you seen them?
28

A: Yeah. Of course, I don't pay any attention to it now. But years ago, when nothing much going up this road, you can see the mountains. It's not like it is now.

Q: Well, the courthouse never was in this area?

A: It wasn't, no.

Q: Never did make it to this area.

A: No, it was Crest post office up here at one time. And they claim this was Guy's Tavern up here--that's what people used to come through here and stop--going to Richmond or Washington or somewhere--one of the main routes or something.

Q: Was that close to the store or--?

A: Right across the road over there where Helen Brown lives.

Q: That used to be a tavern there?

A: That's what older people said.

Q: That's not the same building, is it?

A: No. The old house--I remember that burned down, I forgot about that. That was back in,
I think, the thirties.

Q: So it was a right old house there?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And that was the old tavern?

A: No.

Q: It was built afterwards, too?

A: Yeah. 'Course, I know WPA work was then. 'Course, I carried my grandmother to the doctor--Dr. Jett in Falmouth. Sitting there waiting for her. One of the fellows working for WPA come over to me--came up here from Garrisonville. Said, "Your house just burnt down." And he said, "Now which is your house?" Well, that happened to be the house across the road.

Q: I'll bet that was a shock, wasn't it? You think it was your house.

A: He said your house just burnt down. I held that little old Model A wide open coming home. Already burnt down.

Q: What was the first car you had?

A: Model--it was a '24 Model T.

29

A : Yeah. See, he died in '26. Of course, I was driving it when he died. Had a little pillow to sit--to look over the steering wheel.

Q: Did he ever drive it or--?

A: Yeah. He didn't drive it very much. Let's see, it had low gear and reverse and the brake and he had kind of big feet, couldn't get it in reverse very good.

They were close together. Sometimes, your foot would slip off the pedal and hit you on the ankle. Boy, that would hurt.

Q: Well, this store here--were there any other stores close around to yours?

A: It was one up here--Johnny Denton's--you know Honey Null, where he lives?

Q: No.

A: Well, you know where Ashton Bradshaw lived up there?

Q: I've heard of them, but I don't--

A: Up the road there--about a mile and a half maybe. But they closed up before I opened up. Of course, he opened up down near Crane's Corner when the road went through there. Route 1, a garage and then it was Moore's Corner, a store two miles and a half from here.

Q: Was the brick store in operation at the time you had yours?

A: Well, part of the time--see, Shackleford run it some. Nobody else, I don't think 'ourse Payne opened up a store over there, you know.

Q: It was across the road from you. What happened to the brick store? Do you remember?

A: I think they tore it down or it burnt down.

Q: I've heard of it. It's been gone a good many years, hasn't it?

A: Uh-huh. There was another one over here. I can't think who run it then. Can't think of the name of it now since it changed. Where 651 goes into 616.

Q: Santiana's or something?

A: Something like that.

Q: I know which you're talking about.

A: Was a store there.

Q: Up there close to where Stacy Raines lives?

A: Yeah--this side of Stacy.

A: Oh, it's been there ever since I can remember.

Q: Did you ever go into Hartwood much? When you were growing up?

A: No, not then.

Q: People kind of stayed in their own area, didn't they?

A: Well, I didn't get out as much as a lot of them. My mother, she was kind of sick and I had to stay with her. I didn't get out too far. It was right smart a country stores around then. Not many now. 'Course Roseville--Mr. Jimmy Rose. ... Colbert used to run up there where John McWhirt lives; he run a store and there's another up above that. Carter's, where Lynwood Heflin run just past that one a little ways.

Q: Do you remember getting anything in the store in particular or if you went in and got candy or something like that? Do you remember? What kind of candy they had?

A: Most they had then was stick candy or some loose candy--gum balls and hard candy, chocolate drops. And years later, you got bar candy--Baby Ruths and O'Henrys, Milky Ways--I can't call the name of all of them. A Baby Ruth was a quarter of a pound for a nickel.

Q: That's hard to believe, isn't it?

A: Yes.

Q: When you were going to school--do you remember anything much about the school--the teachers or anything that you studied other than breaking the window with snowballs?

A: I didn't break the window--somebody else did. Let's see, the first teacher I went to was Miss Etta Nelson(?). She used to live over there, what they called Crosses School over there then. Lewis Monroe's widow lives across the road there. That's the place the school was at.

Q: What was the name of it?

A: Crosses School, they called it.

Q: Crosses School?

A: Miss Hughes. I reckon that's about all I had at Ramoth. Let's see, courthouse--Miss Browning.

Q: How long did you go up to Ramoth? Did you--how many years or--?

A: I can't say.

Q: Did they have a certain--like one through five or something like that?

A: First, one through seven. Then, I believe it dropped back to one through five or six, at last. When Claude was going, it was one through five, I reckon--something like that.

31

Q: Do you remember when they quit using it?

A: Well--

Q: What year it was?

A: I can't tell you what year. Claude was born in '40--must have been in the fifties. He went to school out there a year or two to Miss Embrey--must have been in the fifties.

Q: And then the church took it over.

A: The church bought it from the school board.

Q: Do you remember anything about the creek--down over the creek--Potomac Creek, I think--back behind the church there?

A: It's Accakeek Creek.

Q: Oh, Accakeek Creek--do you remember anything about the furnace or something they had on Accakeek Creek?

A: No. I remember a lot of talk about it, but it wasn't there when I could remember- George Washington's father or something--he's the one who had the furnace. Something like that. I know we used to go down there and dig around and we found beds of oyster shells. Some claimed they thought they hauled oysters up there on boats then--I don't know. A lot of old mines over through there. I haven't been back in there for years.

Q: Most people in this area were--like--were buried--most people were buried at the Ramoth Church, weren't they? In this area or where?

A: I remember when the first one was put there.

Q: Really?

A: It used to be family cemeteries around here.

Q: Okay, so they did have family cemeteries. I know in this area a lot of people were buried at the church, but they did have family cemeteries.

A: Yes, I remember when the first one was put there.

Q: Do you remember the year or--? How old you were or--?

A: I wasn't over eight or ten years old, I know. My father was living. Mr. Edgar Randall down here was the first one they put there.

Q: So it had to be in the twenties, I guess.

A: They taken him up years later--buried him up--what's the name of that--close to Camp Barrett, what's the name of that church?

Q: Ebenezer? I think.

32

A: It's Ebenezer. It would be on the tombstone there.

Q: So they took him up from here and put him up there? I think my grandmother said that my grandparents--greatparents--were taken up and put in Ramoth from the old place. Do you remember that?

A: I remember when they taken them up, but I couldn't tell you what year it was.

Q: They were taken up from the old home place?

A: Right up, here.

Q: Do you remember the old home place that they had? The old log house?

A: Yeah. Used to go there every week I know. Had some people used to go for -miles to eat on Sunday-- go from church.

Q: Is that right?

A: Had some from Hartwood, see my aunt Laura. She married a fellow--Dodson. And, of course, he got drowned. His sister lived up in Hartwood, they used to come down there--what you call it a sorry or buggy--bring the children and all... The first Sunday in September, they'd be there. Come down different Sundays--eat.

Q: Where did they get their water?

A: Well, then they got it from the spring down there.

Q: An old spring--that's what I've heard them say.

A: And the well, I helped to dig it.

Q: Is that right?

A: Paul Nelson, two or three of us helped to dig that well

Q: That was another job that people did was digging wells, wasn't it?

A: Uh-huh. There was a spring right down in back of the house.

Q: Most people used springs early, didn't they? And then they started getting to where they started digging wells. I know--I think Grandma got hers dug in 1930 or something like that. I wonder what people--what caused people to start digging wells?

A: I don't know maybe ...

Q: Convenience maybe.

A: They got a few more dollars(?) maybe.

Q: Have money to ...

A: At first, they had wooden pumps. Then, of course, the other kind of pumps--metal.

33

Q: They had wooden ones to start with, huh?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember them?

A: Yeah, I remember some wooden pumps.

Q: And they would put them in the well and pump the water up?

A: Yeah--I don't know whether--I don't reckon the pipe was wooden, but the pump was.

Q: Well, that's--anything else you remember?

A: No, not now.