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(SNP010) Virginia H. Taylor interviewed by Matthew Dalbey

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Virginia Taylor interview
Feb. 25, 1994
Matthew Dalbey

Interviewer: Matthew Dalbey (D)
Interviewee: Virginia H. Taylor (T)

Introduction:

D: This is an interview with Mrs. Virginia Taylor of Stanardsville, VA, done by Matthew Dalbey on February 25, 1994. The interview takes place in Mrs. Taylor's home on Rt. 33 in Stanardsville, VA. This is session 1, Tape 1, Side 1.

D: OK, where I think we should start is with your basic family background. You could just tell me about your family, and your brothers and sisters.

T: Well there were -- my father was Alex Haney [pronounced "Elleck"], and my mother was Rhoda Smith Haney and I had two brothers and four sisters, there was seven of us, and of course there's seven years difference between my sister and me, so therefore maybe I didn't have as bad a life as the rest of them did (laughter), because I was so rotten, spoiled. But I never felt anywhere along the line and I don't think any of my brothers or sisters did that we were deprived of anything. We had an eight room house and it had four bedrooms and whether they were home or not those bedrooms were filled and two of them they were huge rooms, and they always had two beds. And the company, we just always had so much company, and then my mother boarded the school teachers up there. I went to a , well up on that mountain there were only one-room schools and seven grades were taught, first grade through seventh in those schools. And I either went over on the other side, because we lived directly on the top --

D: So, right up on --

T: On Route 33, we lived directly on the top. At that time it was called Fern Hill. And I could either go to Sunnyside School, which was in Rockingham County, or I could go to Big Ben School, which was in Greene County. And during the time that my mother taught school she wouldn't let me go to school to her. And she, of course people didn't have the formal education they have now or what have your, but they had good upbringing and up there everybody helped everybody else. And I walked to school.

D: Can I just interrupt. Your mother taught in the Greene County School, the Big Ben School.

T: In the Big Ben School.

D: And you would walk down.

T: I had to go to the Sunnyside School.

D: That's right.

T: She rode to school, I walked to school. Mamma couldn't drive, but my sister could. And we had a car and we had a telephone, and later on when my Daddy and my Uncle John were in the mercantile business, they had a store up there, and before I was born, my Daddy had a man and his wife, now I guess you would call them a live in maid and something else. The man clerked in his store and his wife helped momma at the house. We didn't have any electricity and we had no running water, we didn't have any indoor plumbing, but we didn't miss that because my family, my mother's family, were mostly on this side of the mountain, Gordonsville, Barboursville, Charlottesville. And my father's family were on the other side of the mountain. And we'd go to visit people that they knew and visit them and they didn't have electricity and they didn't have indoor plumbing. So we never, I never felt that I was ever deprived of anything because we had food, and my Mother and Daddy were very good to the mountain people.

D: So, ah, in other words, when you say you had it very well, you believe that some other people who were living in the same proximity -- were suffering --

T: Well, we knew that they did.

D: Right.

T: Well we knew that -- well for instance, they would come to our house. My Daddy always butchered lots of hogs. And he always had a cow to kill. And up there it was cold enough you didn't need a refrigerator or anything else because he had this great big old building he called a granary and under that he had a root cellar. Now you know what a root cellar is?

D: No I don't, could you explain that?

T: All right, a root cellar is a place dug under the ground, which you would call a basement here, or some people would. But it wasn't warm, and it was dug under this granary, this building, and in there he had shelves and bins and all that, and the floor was just dirt, but you walked in from the side of the hill. And in that root cellar you'd put your canned vegetables and you kept all the potatoes, the things that needed to be cool, apples in there. And Daddy was a good provider, and he worked with horses and wagon and what have you. There was no such thing as a tractor, or anything like that. And our house for the lighting we had rayo lamps. Now you've never heard of that.

D: No, no. Rayo?

T: Rayo lamps they were called. And I would give anything if I could have one now. They were big lamps and they were about this big and I would say they held about a half a gallon of kerosene, and they had, have you ever seen these wicks that are in these camp lights?

D: Right, right.

T: And you touch one and you go to pieces. Well they had those wicks in there and that would flame up and that gave you a real good light. Of course not as well as electricity, but to us that was really good. And then we had the regular kerosene lamps. But our home was always open to everybody. Now there were people who lived up there, and they would come as I would say, they'd come to our house and Momma would always send them back home with something. And I never wished I'd forget one time this girl came over and we had salad greens out in the garden. And Momma said - they called me Feetsy - and said, Feetsy go out with her and help pick the salad greens, show her where. Well we picked a big bag and she -- and I said, "well do you have enough?" She said, "well, I want to see Miss Rhodie." That's what they called my mother, they didn't say Rhoda, it was Miss Rhodie. "I want to see Miss Rhodie," so she came on in, she said, "Miss Rhodie, Momma said would you send her a little piece of meat to season this with?" And see those are the things they did.

D: Now, let me ask you... How about this, your parents house and the store were along route 33?

T: It was not on the route 33 as is now. It was a dirt road and wound all around that mountain. Back in that day and time there were very few cars and trucks. So it wound all the way around that mountain, and we lived on what they would call, we called, the old 33, not this new highway that you see up there.

D: Did the old 33 cross over the mountain?

T: Mmmhm, yes.

D: So it was a way to get from this side to the other side?

T: I got you from this side to the other side. People with teams of horses would have bark, you know they would fell these trees and then peel the bark off it. Well, over in Elkton there was a tannery. They would come across that mountain with their teams of horses and go to the tannery. Well, they either stopped at our house and got water or usually Momma had some baked goods or something, and then went on to Elkton, and then did the same thing when they came back. But that road across -- this Route 33 now wasn't built until -- I cannot exactly say. I reckon it was maybe 1930. That road when they were building that road, the state convicts built it. They struck quicksand down by our house. And if you could, well I would say two miles from the top of that mountain down, all of that is laid in there with pine poles. That was their base.

D: So it wouldn't sink?

T: Yes, mmmm.

D: There are two things I would like to get to next. One, where was your father's store, and the second thing is, I wonder if you could describe the land that your father had and your uncle's land?

T: Well that was joining and the store was up there, well they had moved that monument across the road. It was across the road from that monument. and it was just a regular store and people could come there. The odd thing about that, some of those people did not know how to count money, especially the children. And if there was somebody in the household who could count money, they knew exactly how much, maybe sugar was five cents a pound - it came in these big barrels - or whatever they were going to buy. These children would come to the store and have a big old cloth, and they would have tied in this end of that cloth, that end and all. They knew exactly what that money was for but they could not count it out. It was fascinating. And then my mother, when she wasn't even in the school she taught people. Then she kept the Post Office. We had the Post Office in our home. That was the Fern Hill Post Office.

D: So where your house was called Fern Hill? You would consider that a town?

T: Oh no, no child. A town [chuckle]. It was our house, and then on up the road was -- about half a block - was the store, then back of the store was Uncle John's house. That was all that you could see except the Church. The Church was our center of activity.

D: What was the name of that Church?

T: It was called Fern Hill Church. It was United Brethren, but there was three other denominations who preached there. My mother was the choir -- we didn't know then that she would have been called the choir leader -- but she led the singing and always sat in what they called the amen corner.

D: Amen corner?

T: Amen corner. When I was a little girl, when I was a baby, they had a big pasteboard box in that church, behind the pulpit -- you know that they had railings around that pulpit? I can see it now. And they had a big pasteboard box sitting there, and she would take me to church and lay me in that box for my bed. That would be my bed.

D: Would that be because --

T: Well, she had nobody to leave me at home with. And see when I went to sleep she'd just lay me in that box.

D: So your recollection of going to church was of a long -- you weren't there for a short amount of time?

T: Oh lord, oh mercy, we used to have to go to church three times on Sunday. There'd be a morning service, an afternoon service, and then there'd be an evening service.

D: That's a long day.

T: The different preachers would be coming in. Then there'd be revivals, the revivals would last two weeks. They had bible school, we had bible school there. That was the center of most of our life.

D: You say that was the center for you and also for the people who lived up on the mountain?

T: Yes, and they would to that church. Then on Sundays, my momma would -- and aunt Lula -- would always have food and all. We never knew who was coming home with us from that church on that morning to have food for lunch and then go back for service in the afternoon.

D: I wonder -- aunt Lula is your --

T: Aunt Lula. Aunt Lula. She was my uncle John's wife. Daddy's brother's wife, and she had five children.

D: Your cousins?

T: And they were much older than me.

D: So your uncle John was older than your father?

T: My uncle John and Daddy were just about a year apart.

D: But since you were seven years younger than --

T: Oh yeah, I was just the baby of the whole family (laughter). Rotten. (laughter)

D: I wonder if you could explain the difference between sort of, just generally, the community, the people living up on the mountain and the people, let's say living down in Stanardsville?

T: Well, now on the mountain, we ah, you know, it wasn't a close knit thing, because people lived far away you know. I mean they had to walk a long ways to come to the post office, they had to walk to come to the store, and a -- but everybody was friendly, everybody was trustworthy. They depended on my mother and daddy, and uncle John, aunt Lula for their opinions and for their help. At night -- nobody locked their door -- and you could be in bed and somebody'd be banging on the door hollering, "Mr. Alex, Mr. Alex." And you knew a child was sick or somebody was in trouble that they had to get theme to a doctor or something. There were only two telephones up there. There was ours and there was uncle John's. And so of course, I guess we just had to look after everybody else.

D: If someone, let's say -- I'm just trying to understand this --

T: I know, your from the city, child. (laughter)

D: If someone was going to walk, maybe this is my perception because I think of the car --

T: I know you do.

D: So if someone was going to walk a couple of miles to Fern Hill, why not walk to Stanardsville?

T: Oh because the -- well, I'll tell you. We had the church, we had the store. That was Fern Hill, that was just the name of a wide space in the road. And to come to Stanardsville, the road didn't come straight, you wound around that mountain. And so, they could get what they needed at the store there. They could come to the church, or what have you. Now momma did most of her shopping across the mountain, in Elkton, 'cause we did have a car and shopped in Elkton. Our clothes were bought out of Harrisonburg. She helped the other people out too. Because when you got ready to go and there was somebody who needed something, well you took them along to do their shopping or whatever they had to do. And there was one family that lived -- oh I'll never forget this one. There was a family that lived -- I'm not going to name these names -- that lived up there on that mountain, and the lady was pregnant. So my momma said to my sister Totsy. She said, "Totsy, you and Feetsy have got to take this basket of stuff over --" well I'll call her 'Suzy,' "over to Suzy." 'Said, "well her baby is dead." Well, lordy me, momma fixed up the basket and said, "daddy and uncle John are making the casket --" see they made the caskets, "making the casket." Well we went over there, and it was the first time I'd ever been in the house. And it was horrible, to me. Dark, everything was just as dark as could be. And she did have just one room. And I don't know what was upstairs or anything. But I remember this bed being there. My sister went on in. And Totsy told 'Suzy' there were some things -- she called her 'Mrs.' "Here are some things momma sent you." And momma had sent some things to bury the baby in, you know. She said, "oh do ya'll want to see the baby?" and pulled the covers back. Now here I was, about six years old -- about five or six years old. I had never seen a dead person before. I didn't know what to do and neither did my sister. We got out of there, and it was getting dark, towards dark. And we ran all the way home. And I could see that baby now. It was just as blue as indigo. Now I'm sure it choked to death or something. And we ran home, and momma said, "what in the world has happened to you all." Well we were so scared and so upset, we couldn't even tell her what had happened until we had calmed down. (Chuckle) But those experiences were -- she wanted to share that with us, not realizing that gosh, we didn't, we didn't know what to do.

D: How did this family make their livelihood?

T: Well now, there was a sawmill. Well they didn't call it a sawmill at the time, it was a stave mill. You know where the monument is now? Well you kept right on down, there was a road that went down behind that monument. I believe there is a little bit of a road there now. Well all of where Route 33 is now was just woods at that time. And there was a big old, what we called a stave mill. You would call it a log or saw mill now. But they didn't make boards, they made these little things -- I can see this man now. They were strips, he had something that came down and cut those strips (hits table in cutting motion), off like this, but what they were making were shingles

to put on the rooves of the houses. You know you had to have them squared off like this. And people worked there. Then when men got old enough, when the boys got old enough, and men who could leave their homes, they went to West Virginia, Ohio, and places like that and worked there.

D: Was that because the milling industry was in decline?

T: Well you see, no, you see they didn't have enough work there for everybody.

D: I see.

T: And there was one guy who lived up there and he went to West Virginia to pick apples. And he came -- momma had known him all his life -- and he came by to see momma to tell her his experiences you know, and he said, "Miss Rhodie, do you know what they did?" Said, "they didn't give me money." Momma said, "oh they didn't?" Said, "no they paid it in something like what they called a check." And momma said, "now Tommy what did you do?" He said, "well I got it in my pocket, don' kn' what do with it." And momma explained to him what had to be done. And he said, "but you know Miss Rhodie I can't write my name." to endorse the check. Well you bought tablets, they called five cent tablets, like your tablet right here, except they were about that thick. She said, "Tommy go up to the store and get yourself a tablet and a pencil." And he did. He came back, and at the top of there, every page, front and back at the top, she wrote his name. She said, "now Tommy that's your name, that's how you spell it, now." And she showed him how to start writing. She said, "now when you get that full on both sides, you bring that back to me." He brought it back and he could endorse his checks from then on.

D: Where would someone cash their check?

T: They didn't have to go -- daddy and them would cash them at the store, that was the reason they would bring them back, daddy and them. But the banking was in Elkton, that's where daddy and them would do their banking. But the people up their didn't have much to bank. So, really, the store was their bank too, and they knew when they cashed their check there, they were getting what they were supposed to get.

D: What I was trying to get at was -- trying to understand, and I have understood this better now, the fact there seems that there was somehow a knitted together community up on the mountain.

T: There was. There was a knitted together community because it didn't matter, you could live three or four miles, which is city blocks, or whatever you would call it -- from somebody, but through the grapevine somebody would find out that somebody was sick, or somebody needed some help, somebody needed food, or they needed something. So, somebody'd drop in on them with this, whatever they needed. There was no such a thing as the elderly people being pushed out, they took care of them. All the elderly, no matter what you knew when you were born and had lived in that house you were going to die in that house.

D: You mentioned how some people would go away to West Virginia and Ohio, and things like that --

T: For work.

D: They would work for short periods of time and then come back? Or would they leave for good?

T: Oh no, no, no, they would come back. They went away to make money to run them through the winter or something like that. The men with families. Now the younger boys, they usually found something else besides the seasonal work like picking apples in the orchards like the migrants do now.

D: So there were apple orchards up in the mountains?

T: Well now on our place there were. Daddy had an apple orchard and he had peaches and he had apricots. We had horses and cows and sheep and chickens and turkeys

D: So it seems that he didn't really need to buy supplies for his store in other places?

T: No. The store was for the convenience of other people. But anyway, we never felt, I never felt deprived or anything like that. I never felt that anybody had a better living or anything that I had until I came, I moved to Stanardsville.

D: Why is that? What did you notice here [in Stanardsville]?

T: You see I went to school, part of my first year in high school in Elkton. Well down there you just mingled in with the crowd. You were just one of them. And when I moved here -- and by the way my home is where that middle school is right now.

D: Just up the block here?

T: Yeah, where the middle school is. They -- my daddy was displaced twice. One out of the Park, and then they were going to condemn his land because the high school was there -- it was an old high school, and they were going to condemn his land, sixty-eight acres for a school, so he had to sell. But my mother was dead at the time and my husband and I lived there with him. And they told him he could live there as long as he lived 'cause he had cancer. Just as soon as he signed that deed, the next thing, "you get out."

D: So that was to build the school?

T: Uh huh, right.

D: Can we go back a little --

T: Oh now you were coming back to why I felt this coming down here.

D: Right, right, right.

T: Well now, these people, I'm talking about the girls who were my age, now it wasn't the boys. The boys, I didn't have any problem with them. (laughter). The girls, and, when they tried to make me feel that I was not as good as they were, you see. That I had come out of the mountains and I was a very ignorant person and I should not be noticed by the elite, they thought, of Stanardsville. So that I can understand when people talk about discrimination. There was another girl who lived up on the mountain and moved down too. And she and I just kind of more or less stuck together until we made good friends.

D: What year did you did you start going to high school here in Stanardsville?

T: Thirty-five.

D: Nineteen thirty-five. So that would be the same year that your family moved?

T: Mmm hmm.

D: Could you explain sort of what you remember of moving down the mountain?

T: Well to my daddy it was an ordeal because he didn't want to leave. But I think to momma it was happiness. (laughter). Because she wanted to get out from up there. But she never complained about living up there. And we came down and daddy bought a house and we were happy. But she died -- hmm, we moved in thirty-five and she died in thirty-nine. Before she died she was an invalid. She was paralyzed. My senior year of high school was very trying because my sister and I took care of her at home you see.

D: When you moved in nineteen thirty-five, did she stop teaching on the other side of the mountain at that point?

T: Oh, now listen, my momma was not a full time teacher then. She taught before when daddy married her. But when the children came along, she didn't teach. It was after we had gotten bigger and they would need someone to come to take over the school, then she would teach. She would do it as -- she didn't do it because she -- until she got the post office, and then when she got that she just could never help them out anymore. She did more to help them out because they couldn't always get teachers to come up there. But they boarded with us whenever they came. We boarded the teachers.

D: Can you just describe where the school was where she taught at -- you said it was on the other side of the mountain, in Elkton?

T: No, no. She taught on this side of the mountain, that was the Big Ben.

D: And you went to the other side?

T: Uh huh. It was about -- the way you had to wind around, the way the crow flies, it would have been not -- but the way you had to wind around that mountain, it was a good mile, mile and a half, that I walked to school. And the school on the other side of the mountain was a little bit closer. That was about a mile. But you went snow, rain, sleet, or what have you. You went to school. Now let me tell you about the school.

D: Ok.

T: The school, the teacher, whoever the teacher was had to go in and build the fire. They had a wood stove and the bigger boys got out and got wood, and some of the patrons, some of the parents would bring wood to school. And she had to build the fire. And there was a big old cooler, oh about, I'd say about two feet and it had a spigot on it. Somebody had to go down t' spring and bring water back and pour it in there and everybody had their own cup. But they went there and got water.

D: Hot water?

T: No hot water, it was cold water, it was drinking water.

D: I, I, I -- I guess I thought it was near the stove.

T: You can't vision that, cause it's hard. My grand children can't even envision that.

D: You mentioned yesterday when we talked quickly about your father and your uncle, how they received their land -- Could you just explain that?

T: It was given to them by their father.

D: And it was --

T: It was split in half and there was some meadows up there you know, lees, and level land. Then when you went down the mountain it would level out. It wasn't all real hilly. It was called mountain land, but it was not real bad.

D: So some of the people who would use your fathers store, and would come in and your mother and father would help them out, their land you would describe more as mountain land as opposed to your parents?

T: Well, it was all mountain land. What there's was, they had a long way to come to walk to the store. And it was mountain land and they did live in log cabins. And they lived in, you know, well I wouldn't say unsanitary conditions, because they were clean. I read in this book about the moonshining and all that, well I knew nothing about that. My daddy, when he was eighteen years old he came to Stanardsville for something, I don't know what, I never did get the full details of it. He came down here and they had bar rooms. Well daddy -- somebody decided that it would be very cute to get that young man drunk. So they got him drunk and he was riding a horse. They put him on this horse and the old horse took him home. Went on home. And when he got home, my grandma Liny -- that's what we called her, that was his mother -- had to get him off that horse and get him in that house. And daddy said, "I never was as sick in my life, I was afraid that I was gonna die and prayed that I would." He said, "I was in bed for a week so I couldn't get my head off the pillow for a solid week." (laughter) And he was so opposed to alcohol from then on.

D: I would say that I heard --

T: Whisky was not out, not even thought about, mmmmm.

D: That's interesting because I probably read the same sort of thing. Because you do hear about --

T: About the moonshiners. Well now, I'm sure they were up there. But see, I wasn't exposed to it because daddy was so opposed to alcohol, but it's like my husband and I used to talk about how we had this one old guy who was right up here in Lydia and he had been caught for moonshining twenty-two times! In federal court! Twenty-two times. But he said that was the only way he had of making a living for his family. So, isn't that better than going out and robbing?

D: When was the first time you ever heard of the Shenandoah National Park?

T: Well I was a little girl and I heard them discussing it because there was a lawyer from across the mountain, lawyer Conrad. He decided that he could fight the federal government if the people up there who owned their land -- well everybody up there owned their land, see. And if they would pay him so much, then he could fight the federal government and not get it passed. So that went on, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, and I don't know what daddy and everybody spend, but they spent alot. All the time he was just leading them on because you don't fight the federal government. When they say they're going to condemn something, they're gonna do it. And in retrospect, when I think back, some of those people were moved out and they were moved to Madison County, and they were called "resettlements." There was a resettlement at the Christian Brethren Industrial School, that was out on [Route] 810. I guess that it was much, much better for them. At least they had a decent house.

D: As opposed to your description of their log cabins?

T: Of the log cabins and things like that. But they were happy. They were happy people, they were good people, and they didn't ruin the communities that they came into after they were displaced from up there.

D: Ok, they way you phrased that -- in other words, you think that there were people who lived down off the mountain who thought that the people who lived on the mountain were --

T: They were opposed to the mountain people moving down. They were opposed, and as I was telling you, that discrimination was there, toward the mountain people.

D: For me, I guess it's hard to imagine people who live four miles apart, or five miles apart, which is what it really is right?

T: That's right. Look how far it is up there, but that encompassed all back here you know, you went on back the [Skyline] Drive, and you went to Luray and down there, all the way over to Afton Mountain.

D: Do you remember -- you mentioned the industrial at the Church of the Brethren -- the church that was on Fern Hill, that was Church of the Brethren also?

T: No, that was United Brethren, it has merged with the Methodist. But the Church of the Brethren minister, he preached there, and the Baptist minister, whew, and that Baptist minister, he had a sermon ten miles long. I mean he would keep you all afternoon in church.

D: And you had to go to all of them?

T: Oh yes. Yes indeed, I had to go to everyone of them. And I shall never forget -- this is the funniest -- when they would have night services, revivals, you know. That church could hold them, I mean there was no place to even sit. So this Mr. Stern who had his mile long sermon, he was holding a revival up there and the church was full. There was a young boy standing up, they were standing up in the back, and he was doing this, you know he was tired, he couldn't sit down.

D: So, he was swaying back and forth.

T: He was just sliding back and forth. Mr. Stern -- they knew everybody, the ministers knew everybody -- he pointed his finger at him and says, "Garfield, you would make a real good windshield wiper." (laughter) Cause he was swaying.

D: You mentioned the settlement, the resettlement -- they were called resettlements, right?

T: They were called resettlements, right.

D: There was one that I understand was called Wolftown?

T: Yes, called Wolftown. Now you go out [Route] 230 here and you would go to a little place called Hood.

D: Ok, I think I've seen the signs for that.

T: You've seen the signs. They have a store, a church.

D: Right, it sort of comes together like that [motions two roads coming together as in a "Y"].

T: All right, and you go right just when you come around that curve and when you start down that hill, to your left up there -- I've never been to the place, but that was Wolfstown Resettlement, right through there.

D: So you had never been there. Did you know anyone who had lived there?

T: Oh yeah, I think we knew the Beasley family.

D: Which would have been a family up on the mountain?

T: Oh yeah, mmm hmmm. And at the resettlement up here, I didn't know anyone. Most of the people that we knew real well bought their own homes.

D: The resettlement up here was --

T: The CBIS, I'm talking about.

D: Church of the Brethren [Industrial School]. You mentioned that it was an industrial school, did you know anyone who went to school there?

T: My sister went there.

D: Oh, I see. What did she get trained for there?

T: Well, you went to high school there. See, there was no high school up on that mountain. And no way to get off to get to high school.

D: So, your sister was there before --

T: Oh my sister was there back -- she's eighty-nine years old. That was years and years and years ago.

D: So that was before you moved off the mountain?

T: Oh yes. You see momma saw to it that we got the best we could get.

D: Uh, I just forgot what I was going to ask. (laughter)

T: Now, you're buying some time (laughter).

D: Uh, uh --

T: Look at your notes.

D: Yeah. Uh, you mentioned the lawyer from the other side of town --

T: From Elkton, I mean Harrisonburg.

D: Do you remember your father or your uncle having any other discussions about how they felt about it?

T: Oh, they were all vehemently against the Park taking their land. And uh, you know they would meet at the store, that's where the men would meet you know. It was kind of a meeting place.

D: I can begin to imagine that.

T: So I don't know what all went on with their conversations there, but I do know one thing. Before the Park took over and it was after the road, it was before the road, Route 33 was built through there, paved you know and graded, this Mr. Snap from down in Elkton, he had some money. He came up there and bought some land and he called, they called it Snap's camp. They made platforms, big platforms and they put tents on those platforms you know. Then they this big old cabin that was their dining room, or whatever. Anyway, they would come up there during the summer and camp, you know. Pitch tents up on those platforms and camp. And he thought that he really had it made, because he thought that they were going to allow him to still keep this. He fought toe, teeth and toenails for the Park to come in and take it. So they made him git too. But you know that there was a big hotel up on that mountain. Right up there where that monument is. There was a big hotel. And Martin Monday and his wife. It was built by the federal government. It was more like out at -- not Skyline.

D: Skyland?

T: No. You, know. It's out the drive, South River, the falls and all that. Skyland, it's between Skyland and, this --

D: Was it Herbert Hoover's place?

T: No.

D: I'll look it up.

T: I can't think of what it was. Anyway, he thought, Martin thought that that hotel was gonna stay there and be as one of these --

D: One of these rest stops along the way?

T: No, not exactly a rest stop, you know they had camp grounds and everything there. But they tore that down.

D: Do you remember when that was built? Was that before you were born?

T: Oh no, no, no indeed, that was built, I would say about nineteen and thirty.

D: So after the park movement had started?

T: Yeah, but see it started with building the Skyline drive. We were still living there when the Skyline Drive was built. That's where I learned to drive a car. And my sister was the one who taught me. (laughter)
The CC[C] came -- boys, worked there and they had three or four camps. My brother worked in one. They built that Skyline Drive. That rock wall and all you see up there. We were still living there at the time.

D: Ok, so you didn't come off the mountain until 1935, and the CCC was probably 1933 when they first started.

T: Uh huh, yeah.

D: Did any of your other brothers and sisters work for the CCC?

T: No, only my one brother.

D: Was it considered a good job?

T: Yeah.

D: Yeah?

T: Cause he was a foreman. I mean he was not one of the "boys." You see that was created mostly for inner city boys. And, but they were nice boys there. They would come to our house, and come home with my brother. He was married at the time.

D: Was he living on your property?

T: Mmmhmmmm.

D: IN the same house?

T: Oh no, at that time, daddy and uncle John had gone out of the store business and uncle John had gone into the service station business. He was a bird. And the old store building was still standing, so my brother lived in there.

D: When your uncle had the service station, was that because [Route] 33 had been paved and more cars were coming up that way?

T: (Chuckle) Yeah and he was a character and he got into everything. Over at Elkton, my daddy belonged to the Fraternal Order of Juniors, and at Elkton, during the summer, one day a summer, they would have what they called "Field Day." Well they played baseball and they had bingo and all this. We just looked forward to that. Well uncle John said it was a sin. Now that was all a sin. Anyway daddy belonged to the Juniors, so he supported it. (Laughter) Well they didn't see eye to eye on that. But on Sunday morning -- that would always be on a Saturday -- and on Sunday morning, I could hear momma now, "all right, we got to go up there now and hear John preach about the field day." (laughter) Uncle John would get up in the pulpit and all of us -- he had some of the little children thinking we were all going to hell.

D: From playing baseball on a Saturday?

T: Oh and playing bingo and going to that old sinful place. It was something. But uncle John was very different from daddy. He liked different inventions[?] and daddy didn't.

D: After they closed the store, your brother moved in and your father just was raising --

T: Oh no, no, no. My daddy worked for the state highway.

D: Oh, I see.

T: Along with running that store. He had interest in running that store, but he was not a person who like to clerk the store. He had horses and they had -- I wish I had a picture -- they called them road scrapers. It was a thing that went along -- because they were dirt roads. And the horses pulled this thing and scraped it like you do a plow to get snow off it. He tried to fill the ruts in the road.

D: I see.

T: But he worked there.

D: You mentioned before, the lawyer from Elkton -- uh, Harrisonburg.

T: Harrisonburg. Conrad.

D: You said that he was going to fight the federal government?

T: Oh yeah, he was going to see -- he came up there and got all those people disturbed and upset that he could see to it that the federal government could not condemn that land, and move them off that mountain. Well that stirred everybody up. You know how anything can get stirred up. But he was doing it for the money.

D: It sounds like it.

T: Oh he was.

D: Was there any distinction? Did anyone think that the state of Virginia was doing this? Or was it only the federal government who was doing this?

T: I think that they, I think that daddy and uncle John and those people who knew the people, like this Mr. Snap, and different people that they knew, that were sent there by the federal government to talk to them. They were, I guess, so narrow minded that they felt that those people were the ones that were who were doing it. They never thought of the State of Virginia. Which the State of Virginia, you know they didn't push it?

T: Well he worked until he was hurt. And then he got hurt, and of course there was know compensation back then. And then my mother died, then my husband, my sister -- older sister, and her husband lived with him for a while. And then Neuman and I move in and lived with him.

D: Did you have some animals and horses there and things like that there? Were you raising, or was your father raising livestock like you had up on the mountain?

T: No. Then you know, after my mother died he was kind of more or less, kind of just gave up you know. But Vivian, my daughter, he was his eyeballs. Now she was his playmate, they shot marbles. He taught her when she was two years old to tie her shoes cause he didn't have any patience. If he said to do something, you did it. And he didn't have any patience, and he would show her how to tie her shoe. He'd say, "I know you can do it." She learned to tie her shoe when she was two years old to tie shoes. He was not a rich man, never wanted riches. After we came down here, we had cows, didn't have anymore sheep. He farmed, and he had a garden and did things like that you know. I think in the end daddy was -- cause momma was happy. I think that daddy accepted it better. But I think in the back of his mind he always thought about how much he had to pay out, he didn't have to, but paid out to that lawyer.

D: Conrad from Harrisonburg? (chuckle)

T: From Harrisonburg.

D: Got that right. You would have to say that your family was lucky in that you could purchase -- even if you had to pay [more] for it. You mentioned that there were other families who went to resettlements.

T: Well now, I don't know if those families every owned their land.

D: Owned their land on the mountain?

T: Well now, I know the Beasleys did. See the way it would be, it would go back for generations. Just like my granddaddy up there, he gave it to the sons. Well that would have been handed down to somebody else. And some of the people did have this handed down to them and owned their own land. Some of the men who were married had built on their father's land. Well, see it was owned by the father but yet they lived there, they had a home of their own.

D: So, another words if the father and the son were still living on the same land, the father would be paid for the land and then the son --

T: He got nothing.

D: He got nothing. In that case, most likely, people would go to the resettlement communities?

T: Well, in that case most likely the father and son would buy something together. But now, the Beasleys --

[End Tape 1, Side 2]

T: [Already speaking] what happened to all of them. But I guess I know when we moved momma wanted more new things. But even when we moved, we didn't have indoor plumbing in our house. There were very few houses in Stanardsville anywhere that had indoor plumbing.

D: That sort of makes your -- the idea that people in Stanardsville thought, didn't think very highly of the mountain people, yet things were pretty well the same.

T: That's right, because you can go in any of these old homes in Stanardsville and you can find where there's been a bathroom added. They had what they called "chambers," and I know you have never seen -- have you ever seen one of those old washbowls pitchers? Well they had the pots that went with those, had the handle on them. And they called them chambers. Well you had one in every bedroom for nighttime use (chuckle), morning use if you needed it (chuckle).

D: And you would have those up at your house?

T: Why sure, everybody had those. Why it was too cold outside.

D: Is there anyway to figure out where this distinction between the mountain people and --

T: Well I don't know, but let me tell you, Stanardsville was a haughty place.

D: Haughty?

T: You know, haughty, or whatever you call it. You say haughty, I say haughty (laughter). High society thing, they thought. And they weren't so high society. And anyway, that when I came here to school, there was friction between Stanardsville and Ruckersville.

D: Let me just say that Ruckersville is another four miles down the road east.

T: And those kids down there went to school through seventh grade down there, and there was a big distinction that ones from Ruckersville had walked in. Well they were my friends because they just an outsider like I was.

D: Something just occurred to me a few moments ago. The people on the mountain did not want to be displaced, right, and then the people in Stanardsville did not want the people on the mountain to be displaced because then they would come down the mountain and live here. Was there ever any thought --

T: Well now, I don't think the people in Stanardsville ever thought that they would be overrun by the people up there because there weren't that many places to be bought. You know, they weren't thinking of being overrun as much as -- now I don't know how they felt in Madison county about this. It wasn't the thing, it was just the thing that maybe was -- they had gang of girls whose uncle was a lawyer or one of their mother's whose second marriage was to a doctor and you know they would just, they ran the school. And that was it. And you know when we came here, we were accepted here because my momma's cousin was a judge over here, Smith, Judge Smith in Charlottesville.

D: So your situation was different than alot of the other ones.

T: Yeah it was different. I mean, only thing is, they just didn't want me taking their boyfriends. (laughter) Which I didn't do. (laughter)

D: Can we talk about your husband for a few minutes.

T: Mmm hmmm.

D: I noticed that in the back of a book that I have, The Undying Past of the Shenandoah National Park, there's a section that lists the names of all the different people whose property was taken and there were a number of Taylor's, would that have been the same Taylor?

T: No, he lived out on [Rt.] 230. No, his parents lived out here on 230. No, he was not from -- there were lots of Taylor's out through those hollows.

D: Would they likely have been related? A long time ago?

T: Well, they never did think so (laughter), but, I always thought if you had that name you had to have the blood somewhere. (laughter)

D: It's the same thing with the Morris's, right?

T: That's right. That's the way that I feel, but of course I guess that you don't want to go so far back in your generation. Now of course they were very glad to claim Zachary Taylor as kin. But to me, I'm not that type of person. I look at you for who you are, not for what your family has don or any thing else. You are the one that matters.

D: I agree.

T: Don't you agree that's the philosophy everybody should have.

D: They did not push it?

T: Well, that we knew of. It was all just the federal government. And of course now that I read back and all, we know that there was more behind it than just that. Conservation.

D: It's -- you have probably read the same things I have. It seems that there was a good contingent of Virginians interested in seeing this thing happen.

T: Uh huh. Yeah because they wanted -- they thought, I guess they thought the land was being abused and what have you, but those people didn't abuse that land. They -- maybe too, they thought that they needed to be moved out from there.

D: Were there any -- Today, people who visit the Park could be from anywhere. They go and see the beautiful landscape and the mountains. Were there any -- people that you knew of, sort of passing through as tourists back then and would they have been allowed to do that?

T: What do you mean?

D: Do you ever remember a group or let's say a family, a well to do family, or someone who wanted to see nature passing through your store to walk through the Blue Ridge Mountains?

T: There was no, I mean I never knew -- you have to remember that was back in the time that the road wasn't to good. There was a dirt road through there. There was a dirt road through Stanardsville. And there weren't too many tourists. They came to Elkton where there was a train that they could step off of that train and get a hotel room or what have you. But as far as going back to the mountains, they didn't do that because the tales were bad, and you know, about the mountain people. And I don't know what it was -- well the roads, they were just impassable sometimes. And you would have had to have a horse and a buggy.

D: So they had this perception that the people in the mountain were not going to be --

T: Were just a little bit under everybody else you know, an weren't hospitable. But they'd be very belligerent to you. But that wasn't true, not where we were. No indeed, that was not true where we lived up there. There was nobody ever turned away. That time they had people who'd roamed around, would walk places and'd call them tramps, you know, instead of hobos. And when those people did come through that mountain, they were treated just like anybody else. They were fed, they were allowed places to sleep.

D: I don't know if this would be just from you or what your father may have talked about, when the idea for the Park came along, was it hard to imagine that there would be hundreds or thousands of people coming from the cities to see this land?

T: Well you know, I really, now, it may have been over towards Luray, but now, as far as up there where we were, we didn't see many people who were representatives of the federal government. We didn't do it. Well the fact the matter, I don't know how they knew -- what I think they did, they started over at Luray, and they just said they were going to take just so many acres and -- through here and through here. Then we're gonna put this road in first. So they built the road, they had already bought that -- got the land. But they hadn't settled it. They knew what they were gonna do. But they built the road and then they took the land on the either side.

D: You mentioned that your father was able to purchase sixty-eight acres right up here by the high school, and I assume your uncle--

T: Oh, he went to Elkton, the other side. He bought a place over there.

D: Did your father have any -- was he upset that he traded two hundred acres for something smaller.

T: Oh sure, he was upset, yeah he was upset. But, what could you do. In fact, fact of the matter, he couldn't buy what he bought for what he got for that up there. And he was still paying for it, you know buying this house here. And the house was smaller.

D: And he continued at that point to work for the highway department?

D: I do.

T: Because you can not help what your father has done. And gosh. And another thing I never felt that you had to put a show on to carry your point.

D: So you think that some of the Taylor's, even though they might have been related were not going to admit it because these Taylor's lived up on the mountain.

T: (chuckle) Yeah, I doubt it. I don't know that, but I doubt it. But as my momma used to say, or as that old joke went, "if you're snake bitten, you're gonna die anyway." So, you may as well admit something.

D: Did you every use the Park after you moved down here?

T: Oh we'd go up there for picnics. Up there at South River Picnic Grounds.

D: Would you say that other people down here would use it? Or how about this, would the mountain people go there?

T: Oh they'd go for picnics too. But that, -- there is a cemetery up there, but we don't have anybody up there. It was on our land and it was called Haney's cemetery and right up there near where that Ranger Station is, right up that bank. And people were buried in there and its been -- and even people have been buried recently. But it's called Haney's cemetery. Because they didn't have any other place they wanted to bury.

D: I understand that there was a rumor when the government was condemning the land that the government was going to remove all "living and dead" people, did you every hear that?

T: No, I never did. No I don't think they were going to remove the dead from up there. Then there was a Dean Mountain cemetery out the Skyline Drive. And if you go out that Skyline Drive to South River Picnic Ground, my daddy's land and uncle John's was almost out that far. We didn't own so much this way --

D: You mean south.

T: South, we owned it north.

D: If you went up 33, today's 33, it would be on the north side of 33?

T: All right, no look, we'll say this is 33, well our house was more or less here, store house here, uncle John's house back like this. Well daddy's land and uncle John's land. There was not a whole lot on the frontage here.

D: So just enough for the house, the store --

T: Uh well, then there was the road. We used to own a little bit down below that old road.

D: You mentioned that you learned to drive up on Skyline Drive, now was that before you were moved?

T: Oh yeah. We lived up there you see during the CCC camps.

D: Did you notice -- When Skyline Drive was built, did you notice that people would come along the Drive and stop at your store.

T: You see daddy was out of the store business by then. Uncle John had taken over a service station by then. Daddy was out. But you see uncle John had started a service station. You see, he was, hmmm, is adventurous you know.

D: Did you every hear of -- you said "resettlement villages," did you ever hear of the "Resettlement Administration?"

T: No, I don't know who did that, I really don't know. Because, you see, we were really not affiliated with it. We owned our own place.

D: Did you ever hear of the Park Superintendent, I think he was the Park Superintendent, his name was Zerkel, Ferdinand Zerkel?

T: That was in this book, no, we did not see people who were the big dogs at the Park, you know getting the Park started. We only saw the messengers. You see the messengers that came were usually people that daddy and uncle John knew. That's the reason daddy and uncle John kind of blame them. Which, they shouldn't have. But they would have, you know.

D: Don't blame the messenger, is the cliché.

T: No, they couldn't see beyond the messenger. He was just bringing them bad messages, telling them to get out.

D: Could you sort of describe the anger your father and uncle felt? Were they stamping around?

T: Oh no, uh uh. No they just talked about it. Then of course as I say that store at that time, they still had the old store. That was the place where they talked about it. Of course, me being like I was, I never gave it a second thought.

D: You were just moving down the hill.

T: I never gave it a second thought. Not a second thought at all, not a difference to me.

D: Did it make a difference that you were going to school on this side as opposed to that side?

T: No. Didn't make any difference to me at all. Non whatsoever.

D: I understand that the size of the Park right now is less than 200,000 acres, the original amount bought was about 180,000 acres. I understand that there has been some talk about expanding the Park even more.

T: I know it, that's what they're thinking. Right up here above Stanardsville on 33 you'll see where the Park line is. Well I think those people are getting scared that it may be extended down the mountain, but I don't think that will ever happen. I think that's just in somebody's mind. Because the Park doesn't run that wide. It's long across that mountain you know, it's long, but it's not that many miles wide. You start in right at the foot of this mountain and you get to the foot of that mountain and that's it.

D: Did you know that originally, in the 1920s when the Virginia --

T: Child, I was born in 1920-- (chuckle)

D: Well I'm just reading from the same books. 1928, or so--

T: Well I was eight years old.

D: Ok,

T: Maybe I do remember.

D: Well I was going to say that the original Park proposal was going to be about double, I mean triple the 180,000 acres. It was going to be about 560,000 acres and --

T: Maybe they knew they had bit off more than they could chew. Because you know we were coming in -- we were coming out of a depression and things hadn't gotten that good. We were coming out of a depression at that time. And you know, I think back, that depression didn't change our lives.

D: Things were the same before and during it.

T: Yeah they were. We'd lived just like we'd always lived. You'd hear talk about it, you know, depression and jobs were hard to find. And when the CC camps were established that that's why they were established, to give the

young boys a chance, a job. And I really think that's one of the things that brought the Park to a head real quick, was giving them the jobs.

D: Could you tell of any economic change that occurred for this area from the fact that there were let's say your brother was working for the CCC? What would your brother have been doing if he hadn't been working for the CCC?

T: Oh I don't know. He taught school one time up on Dean Mountain too. He was -- I don't remember, Dewey went away from home --

D: Your brother.

T: Dewey, he's dead. And he went away from home and worked. Then my other brother Winfrey went away and worked. So Dewey would have been doing something because when he died at 59 -- he had cancer -- and when he died he was Deputy Sheriff of Rockingham County. So he would've been doing something. But he worked with that uh --

D: Were there any other people, let's say your brother's age who worked for the CCC, that you remember?

T: Well, not that I knew. I just heard him talk about it later. They went in on -- they went more in on supervisory capacities to teach these boys --

D: How to make it up and down the mountain?

T: Who were brought in here -- I don't guess they knew what a rock wall looked like or some of them, they didn't know what an animal or a bear looked like. And I guess -- they had to teach them what they already knew about how to build a road and the mountain life and what have you. And those CC camps, oh they'd be the whole length of my lot.

D: Where was the closest one, do you remember?

T: Right there at South River Camp Grounds. (pause) Big Meadows! That's the one I couldn't --

D: Big Meadow.

T: Then there was one at Big Meadows and then there was another one way on over.

D: Yesterday you pointed to the cover of that book, with the women in the rocking chair with the pipe, I wonder --

T: Ms. Vine Smith.

D: What's her name again?

T: Vine. They called her Ms. Vine Smith. She -- her son lived on the other side of the mountain, right down below us I'd say a mile, close to the Sunnyside school. She lived with him, in the summer she lived with some of the other people. You know some of the other family, that's the way they did when the husband's died or they didn't have any family. Ms. Smith, Ms. Vine Smith, I would go to visit, to play with her grandchildren, cause mamma let me go down to play with Reethy and Rancy Smith. We would be playing and we loved hide and go seek in the house. And I mean she had a cane, when she stuck that pipe in that mouth and started puffing, and she had that cane set here, she whacked at us as went, and I was scared to death of her. (laughter) But she was good and didn't have a tooth in the mouth. (laughter) I remember that.

D: Do you remember anything about their family, where they went after they were displaced?

T: Oh yeah. They moved to Charlottesville and I keep in touch with the girls and the son. They lived in Charlottesville, but the old people they're dead. And they are the Smiths.

D: Do you think they were in the same situation that your family was in, in --

T: Uh huh, they had a little bit of a better life than a lot of the people up there had. Mr. Smith was a prosperous, prosperous man. But now they will not acknowledge that they know too much about the mountains. You know, they don't want to talk too much about it.

D: That part is very fascinating to me.

T: There's a very prominent lady in this town, her family lived up there, the fact of the matter, her mother worked for my mother, but she would die before she let you know this.

D: So this sort of lives on today.

T: I mean, yeah. Well I can't say its a stigma to me, I don't think it's a stigma, I don't care. Because we lived up there, that's where I was born, that's where I was reared for fifteen years, and our home was happy, our life was happy. I didn't know any different. When I came down here to live, I didn't see that much difference in anything.

D: You could still see the mountain.

T: Why sure, I didn't see that much difference and I was not embarrassed at having lived up there. Why should you be embarrassed about where you lived? Because we had just about the same as most of them here had.

D: Could you just quickly go through your brothers and sister, how old they are in relation to you ?

T: Well Lord have mercy child. I never kept up. My one brother who died of cancer, who was Deputy Sheriff, he was the oldest. Then my sister Nelly, who will be 90 in June.

D: She lives right down the road here?

T: Yeah. She's gone to Dayton [for a visit], or somewhere in Dayton. Cause the next door people called and wanted me to go, but I told them I didn't want to go. And then there was Winfrey, that was the next boy. Then there was Ruth and Lotty and Wyona, but we called her Totsy.

D: What was the one just above Totsy?

T: Lotty, she's in hospital now in Maryland. Now they -- both of my brothers are dead and my three sisters [aside from Nelly] live in Maryland. One is not married, Ruth is not married, the other two are married.

D: Since they were older than you, do you remember them talking about the Park?

T: No. They were all just kind of ready to go --

D: They were ready to go anyway.

T: Because see, their friends were either on this side or that side. I mean their boyfriends and their close friends. Our cousins were all down here, so it didn't matter to them. They had gotten out and gone and were working away from home.

D: The same situation with your cousins? Your uncle John's kids?

T: Oh yeah.

D: Well should we call it a day?

T: Yeah.

D: I'll just stop this. This was Side 1, Tape 2.

[THE INTERVIEW ENDS HERE. THE REST OF THE TAPE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN RECORDED, BUT SAVED FOR THE FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW. IT CONTAINS DIALOGUE ABOUT INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE APPENDIX OF THE BOOK THE UNDYING PAST OF THE SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK. THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED UP IN A FORMAL MANNER IN THE NEXT INTERVIEW.]