

Marshall University

Marshall Digital Scholar

0064: Marshall University Oral History
Collection

Digitized Manuscript Collections

1973

Oral History Interview: Leonard Hill

Leonard Hill

Follow this and additional works at: https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history

Recommended Citation

Marshall University Special Collections, OH64-55, Huntington, WV.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Manuscript Collections at Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in 0064: Marshall University Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact zhangj@marshall.edu.



ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Leonard Hill, the undersigned, of
of Huntington, County of Wayne State
of W. Va, grant, convey, and transfer to the James E.
Morrow Library Associates, a division of the Marshall University Foundation, Inc.,
an educational and eleemosynary institution, all my right, title, interest, and
literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on 11/14, 1973,
to be used for scholarly purposes, including study rights to Reproduction.

 Open and usable after my review
initial

 Closed for a period of years.
initial

 Closed for my lifetime.
initial

L.H. Closed for my lifetime unless special permission.
initial

Date 12/9/1973

Leonard Hill
(Signature - Interviewee)

Box 9382
Address

Huntington - W. Va

Date 12/9/1973

Rodney Stacey
(Signature - Witness)

Question: Mr. Hill, where was that coal company at and what was the company store?

Answer: It was the Eastern Coal Corporation located at Pawn Creek. The main office was at Stone, Kentucky, across river... Tug River at Williamson. You go fourteen miles up a hollow, which is Pawn Creek. I worked for the last mine up the hollow fourteen miles. We was at the end of the road. I started up there when I was about twenty years old, I guess. Most of the people, they lived from day to day. They worked in the mines and they made \$2 or \$3 a day and they would draw it out in script. In fact, I was in the store naturally, I was a meat cutter. I waited on one woman, one day, just to give you how people lived in those times I sold her 21 items for \$1; 21 items for \$1. It's hard to understand how in this day in time how you could get 25 edible items for \$1. She got two slices of spiced luncheon meat, two slices of cheese, which that was only three or two cents worth of potatoes, which was two cents a pound, one onion which was probably one cent, so it all added up enough for a days food for the two of them, there was the two. A dollar for 21 items. The coal company owned just about everything up there. If you didn't work for them you just didn't have anything. You ask me some questions now.

Question: What was that script?

Answer: It was just a medium of exchange. In other words, you could spend it any place, you could spend it just about any store, independent store, but most of the people would discount up to 25% to the dollar, you see. In other words you gave them a dollar a script, they gave you 75¢ cash. And a lot of people made money, that had some money, made some big money. They got, you might say, wealthy cashing script. Because the people would draw it, a lot of them, they would need \$10. In fact, I was a Saturday employee and I wasn't allowed to handle script. I couldn't have any script at all and a lot of people though would come in and ask me, "I'll give you \$15 for \$10." See, give you \$15 worth of script for \$10 of money. Well I wasn't allowed to spend the script so I couldn't do it. Well, a lot of the people did and they made big money that way. Which took advantage of the poor.

Question: Like, they just used it in the place of money, right?

Answer: Yeah, well, just the same thing as money. You could spend it any place. But they would discount it, you see. And they, most independent stores or just about any business would take it. Finally they passed a law, or there was a

law, that they had to pass the script. And I don't remember now, but I believe the company would cash it, charge you 10% to start but they finally had to cash it dollar for dollar. Like if you had \$1,000 worth, you could take it to the company, the main office and they would give you a \$1,000 for it.

Question: That kind of stopped it off, didn't it?

Answer: Yeah, that was the days that script started going out. And finally some of the coal mines put in silver dollars; they issued silver dollars day by day. In other words, you could work a day and get paid that same day. Where as if it was cash you couldn't do it, see, but some of them did put in silver dollars and they was the same as script. A form of exchange.

Question: Didn't the coal company own the houses then?

Answer: Yeah, they owned everything. They owned the houses and everything. I lived in a plastered house, which there was very few plastered houses. Which we had an outside toilet and we had coal fires. Well, it's just the same today as it was back then, the way people had to live. But we lived good. We paid \$9 a month rent and our hospitalization complete was \$1.50 a month. Coal was 50¢ a month. I made, I believe I made \$100, I finally got up to a \$130 a month.

Question: About what time was this? The 20's or 30's?

Answer: No, this was in the 30's. This was around 1938.

Question: Like how did the coal companies monopolize everything?

Answer: They would come in and lease all the coal rights and mineral rights and the land. They would come in and lease all the land. They didn't own all the land. They leased it and sewed it up and no one could get in there. And they had a pretty well monopoly on everything in that part of the country.

Question: Like if a guy worked for the company, like it owned him. Didn't the coal company work the kids too some or something like that? You know, like work outside the mines or something like that?

Answer: Well, the coal company sponsored baseball clubs and things like that. Which helped the young people. Is that what you were talking about? And up there at that one particular place, we had independent school. The coal company helped finance the school. The railroad... the railroad and school really financed the school. We had a complete independent school. The county didn't have anything to do with it.

Question: Mr. Hill, tell something about the coal company now.
Like who owned it and things like that.

Answer: Island Creek Coal Company owned this operation and Ford bought it. Ford Motor Company bought it from Island Creek years ago. I didn't remember what particular year it was. And Henry Ford came there and looked. I think he come to Stone, Kentucky and he looked at the buildings and things that Island Creek had built and he bought it. Eastern Coal Corp. leased it from Ford Motor Company after he decided that he wasn't in the coal business or store business. He sold it out to Eastern. But during his time, he was the first man who put in a \$5 day for the miners, infact for every employee he had. And he... everybody said that he would go broke. That that was too much money and he couldn't afford to pay \$5 a day for man because the national wage scale at that time was \$2.50 a day.

Question: What year was this? About in the 20's?

Answer: Yes, this was in the 20's. No this was in the 30's. He said he could pay it because he had over a million people working for him and he was sure that he would never go broke. He believed that each and every man he had working for him would give him a dollar. And he had over a million working for him. So he said that he didn't think he would ever go broke. Well, He didn't. He prospered. He really has prospered. Well you know the story of Ford. The automobile magnate. And he also payed the janitors in the stores, the same money that he payed the clerks. He put them on a \$35 week. They all made \$35. If you swept the floor, if you sold something you still made \$35. And he fought the union. In fact, he didn't like the union. He fought the union. And the reason he fought the union was he didn't like seniority rule. He thought that would hold individual people back. That you would ruin a great mind. A great man by holding him back. Because he said if a man was on an assembly line and there was two men in front of him and he could do the job way in front of these two men, he should be there regardless. If they couldn't do it, he shouldn't be held back because somebody else couldn't do it. He didn't believe in seniority. But he finally... his wife finally got him to accept the union and accept that rule; seniority. But it wasn't hurting him because he had been a great... he was one of the most prosperous automobile magnates in the world, I guess, today.

Question: Didn't the coal company like schedule the guy's day for him like shift work and always give him a place to live and like...

Answer: Well, Ford had a plan. You had to save 10% of your earnings with him and when you quit, you got it. Plus interest.

And he said every man who worked for him should have a car. And I think that is a great plan and that it should be in affect today. Really I do because, if a man, every company in the United States would hold out 10% on all employees and give it to them when they quit or when they were in desparate need of money. It would help every individual because he could learn to live within his income within his means. He would never miss that 10% and it could really mean something to him and his family in later years. I'm sure.

Question: Well, on the coal miners life and stuff, didn't it all revolve around his work?

Answer: You mean the... well the miner. I didn't know really too much about the men in the mines; that worked in the mines other than talking to them on the outside. They made good money for Ford. They made good money for Eastern. It was a dangerous occupation and it was hard work. It was filthy, dirty work. I didn't know... I just can't tell you too much about that unless you give me some good questions here. A friend of mine told me he heard two coal operator-owners talking and one of them said to the other one, "Well how many days are you working?" "Well I am working two," And he said, "You mean you are only making about \$4 a week." "That's all I want to work." The other man said, "Why?" He said well, "If they work and more than two days I will have to put out some money." But he said, "I can get all their wages back in my store and that's all I really want to work because I don't have to have and money at all to operate and I'm making really big money on my groceries. I'm selling." "But now Ford didn't do that and Eastern didn't do that. They were big companies. They were good companies. They were really good too their men. But there were a lot of coal companies that really pushed their men down, down, down.

Question: Like if a man worked for them and stuff, he lived in a company owned house, bought his food at a company owned store, his cloths at a company owned store, too. Like that's what you mean?

Answer: You see, they would spend all their money and you didn't have to give them any... You could buy furniture, you could buy suits, you could buy clothing, you could buy womens suits, and you could have women's suits made for your wives, and everything. People in the store would ship it out of Cincinnati. Come in a Matney Man and he would made up clothing for people. Tailor made suits. Everybody wore fines clothes. Riverside Tailoring Company, out of Cincinnati, they would come in three or four times a year, and so would "Store Shipper." In fact we, everybody, the miners had good clothes but it was just like a song Jimmy Dean... Another dollar in debt or something you know. The song that Jimmy Dean made. Thats about the truth. Sixteen Tons. Thats about the way it was. You made a dollar but you would go another dollar in debt.

Question: Like, if you would buy something at their store though you were really just paying your own wages, right?

Answer: That's right. You just about... people just about broke even. Now that was a just great majority of them. Now I didn't say all of them. A lot of people come out with money. They come out with a lot of money. In fact, I know one man, I know two men, that were, I think they were machine operators in the coal mines and they cut coal. They got about 8¢ a ton at that particular time and they come out with good money and invested it properly and financially. I don't think either one of them is dead yet; they are well fixed right today. Because they knew what a dollar meant.

Question: Most of them spent it as they got it?

Answer: There was a big majority of them that spent it before they got it. They would have to draw it out. Just as soon as they would make a dollar... just as soon as they had a dollar cleared in the script office. They had to go get it and draw it out, or someone would send in a granish slip against them and hold it up. So they drew their script. There was a big majority of them at the script office every day and had to wait until the time come in for their payroll clerk to figure out whether the husband had any money in there so that he could draw out in script or not.

Question: They would just go our and buy anything right? And go into deeper and deeper in debt.

Answer: Everybody, the company would let you go... sell you a couple of hundred dollars worth of stuff on credit. Well, they cut so much a week, so much every payday, they would cut so much out of your payroll. Everybody was right up to their limit. They would get it down to \$1.50. Well there was something you need, you went right back to \$2.00. So they just kept in debt. You just couldn't get out. You couldn't keep your head above water. Because at that particular time, everybody was coming out of the depression really and nobody had anything and everybody was real down low and everybody wanted a little better than what they had been going through and what they had seen. Because back in the real late 20's and early 30's, it was pretty rough. People wanted a little more than what they had been through in the last eight or ten years. They just went ahead and went in debt. You know, that's all.

Question: Like if they died or something, who paid off their debt?

Answer: If they didn't have any insurance, you just lost it. If they owed you and they died you just lost it. But see,

all the miners were covered by state compensation. All the miners were and all the people that worked for the coal company were covered by state compensation. So, generally, I guess they were protected on that. I don't really know the fundamentals of compensation but I'm sure the companies were protected on that. I don't guess they lost any money on people getting killed and dying.

Question: I couldn't understand how they could hold back this money and stuff and if they kept just burrowing on it, and burrowing on it, and burrowing on it. Like if a man owed \$20 to them and he still burrowing off of it and he never can pay it back. Like, didn't that sort of insured the employer that the man would go on and work for him and stuff, right?

Answer: Yeah, that's right.

Question: How could a man just keep burrowing if he already had it out?

Answer: Well, you see... your talking in regards to script. Well, see, you couldn't burrow or get any script out unless you had time in, the money, the time in. But if you had say, worked five days and you had a \$100 in the office, you could go in and draw \$100 worth of script. But, like I said before there, most of them stayed drawn right up and they had to... stayed right up to the dollar. Because they were hard up and alot of them owed alot of independent merchants. Independent merchants had gran-she slips against them and so every day they worked, the wives would be in the next morning to draw out the script. As soon as the payroll clerk got the time figured out, which was figured out right in each store, each payroll office, which the payroll office was a part of the store, and as soon as he got it figured up he would open up the window, the script window, and he would issue the script and they would take it and spend it.

Question: It was spent before it was earned or after it was?

Answer: Just right after it was earned. Day to day after it was earned. In other words if you worked a day, you got payed tomorrow. You got dollar for dollar. For as script was concerned it was worth in the stores dollar for dollar. It was no different. And we handled, as I said, we handled, you could buy anything you wanted in the stores. You get anything except an automobile. I guess they could arrange to get you one, to sell you an automobile, I don't know.

Question: The miner just got poorer and the owner just got richer, really.

Answer: The poor got poorer and the rich got richer.

Question: Like his over head was nothing, right?

Answer: His over head was just nothing. Just like these two guys were talking you see. If they could just work two days a week. It took two days a week for the men... it took that much groceries for the men to feed their families. So if they could work them two days a week, they wouldn't have to put out any money at all. But all they would have to do would be to buy their groceries and sell them at a 50% to a 100% mark-up and make all kinds of money.

Question: Like the company made money off of the guys work?

Answer: They made it every way going.

Question: By his food and everything.

Answer: They made it every way going.

Question: They cleaned-up on them then.

Answer: They really did. Then when they were charging 10% to cash the script, see, they were still making money. See they issued it out and they would take it back and make 10% if they would fool with it.

Question: Like the miner just lost 10% out of every dollar, out of his wages?

Answer: It's just like these coupons in the stores today, you know. They will give you maybe two or three cents too handle them. Plus 3% if it's a 10% coupon you get three percent. If it's a dollar coupon you get 3% well it's 40% or what ever it is, it's not that much. They generally run about, some of them run as high as 35%. But it's just like that. Everytime the company touched something they made money, they didn't lose no money. I had a real good friend, getting off that subject just a little bit, and he loved the Cincinnati Reds and back during those days I did to. I was a great Cincinnati ball fan. He had saved his money. He had never been no place. He had never been out of Pike County, Kentucky and thats the county we was in. He had saved his money, and it took him a couple of years to save enough money to go to Cincinnati to see Cinn. play. He was suppose to go one weekend on Saturday, to be there on Sunday. He got killed on Friday and what killed him was a "kettle-bottom". I know you don't know what a kettle-bottom is. Well, there are all different sizes of kettle-bottoms in the mines. Up in the ceilings of the mines. They're in the slate and they look like a top. They are big on one end and little on the other end and the big end is the one that is facing the bottom of the mines, see, and the little end is up. So after the slate starts moving they hear it start cracking and popping. Then those kettle-bottoms;;they are beautiful in design. They look like they were made just rounded off and made and stuck up in there. They fell out and they are real heavy; heavy as lead. Back then they wouldn't wear hard hats, the miners wouldn't.

Question: How come?

Answer: They just didn't like to wear hard hats. But if my buddy had had a hard hat on that day, he probably wouldn't have been killed. Because it hit him on the head. He was loading a car of coal shoveling it in and the kettle-bottom fell and hit him on the head. It weighed about five lbs. and killed him. It fell about 12ft. and weighed about 5lbs. and killed him. But getting back to the hard hats now, when Ford, he was the guy that brought all of these things in. He wanted the miners to wear hard-hats. They had a strike. Well...

Question: A strike over hard-hats?

Answer: He wanted them to wear them. Ford wanted the miners to wear them. But they wouldn't so they struck. They finally got together. But they didn't want to wear hard-hats. He said there was too many toes being cut off, and he wanted them to wear hard-toed shoes and they said no, we will not wear hard-toes shoes. So they had a strike over that. He said, yeah but there have been too many who have lost their toes and got mashed on the end of the foot... where if they had had a hard-toed shoe you wouldn't have got that. Well they struck over that and they said the company just wants to make us, so that we will have to buy hard-toed shoes through the company. But that wasn't true because Ford was a good man and he was good to people. Then he wanted them to wear goggles in the "main trip." When they got in the "main trip" to go into work and when they came back. He had some unbreakable glass goggles that you could buy at the company store. And he wanted you to pull them down over your eyes because a lot of men lost their eyes; being knocked out by a little piece of slate on the main-trip going in and out of the mines. He didn't want you to wear them. He wanted you to wear them when you worked but he didn't demand that. He just asked you to wear them while you were riding in the cars going to and from your place of work because a lot of people had been hurt. These were all good safety rules. Today a man wouldn't go into a mine without a hard-hat, and he wouldn't go in without hard-toed shoes and chances are without goggles. I don't know, I never do see them but I'm almost sure they would wear them. Now it's a must. I think the union would demand it in their safety laws, would differently demand it. But then, see, I've seen all those things come in. I've seen all those things... people fought them because they thought it was against but it was for their own benefit.

Question: Do you remember a fight, I think it was called over in Logan County on Blair Mountain.

Answer: Oh yes sir, I remember all of that.

Question: Well, why was it?

Answer: It was Don Chaffin's, was the sheriff of Logan County and the operators told Don Chaffins; well, this is the story I got. I heard alot of the stories, I lived at Logan at that particular time. When the war was going on. I was a little boy at the time.

Question: What year was that? About in the 20's or teens?

Answer: It was the low 20's. Real low 20's. Yeah, it was right around 20's I'd say. I wasn't very old but I remember it. We lived at Henlawson and all the men down there... Don Chaffin sent down and said he was going down and get all the men. And make them fight against the miners.

Question: What started the war? Why?

Answer: They didn't want them to organize. They didn't want no miners in there. And the coal companies were paying Don Chaffins. I understood it, they were paying Don 50¢ a ton for every ton of coal that went out of Logan County. To keep the union out. He was the sheriff. He had a lot of deputies. I've seen them when empty railroad cars would come in to the Peach Creek yards through Henlawson. I've seen them, they would come almost to a stop, till they couldn't get a clear track and I've seen Don Chaffins deputy sheriffs climb up on these coal cars, empty coal cars and get people out of them and then out and beat them with the end of a pistol butt until the blood would run down and it was pitiful. I've seen all that. I've seen it. I had an uncle on one side... they moved him out of his house over on Coal River. They moved him out into a tent and I had a uncle over on the Logan County side, working for Hazel Belhory in Logan and that was one of Don Chaffins big buddies. In fact I think that's what broke him out of the union in later years. Anyhow, they was having to fight against the other or else they was afraid they would get killed if they didn't. It was pretty comical, too. But it was a real war. They had machines guns, rifles, uniforms out of World War I, it was right after World War I and see, they had alot of that stuff; I don't know where they got it but they had it. They really had some fighting going on and quite a few people got killed during that miners war.

Question: Who won that war?

Answer: The miners finally won, but I guess Don Chaffins won it in Logan County. He kept them out for a while. But

they got in, they got organized and then I don't think they finally made it until after Tennis Halfield ran for sheriff against Don and was elected. Tennis Halfield is defeated Don in that race and during that race they was 1,800 United States Marshalls in Logan County to keep peace. They was afraid of Don Chaffin. He was good in that County. They wouldn't even let, we didn't have no Marshall Law up there, but if they catch two men a talking, his men what they called there Thugs; Con Chaffins Thugs, if they would catch two people a talking they would take them to jail and knock you in the head and beat you up. You wasn't suppose to. They was afraid you were going to say and try to get Don our of there and get the Union in. Just like Marshall Law, you're not allowed to congregate or anything like that. You're got to go, and do whatever you do when you do it and they were watching everything you see. It was really going bad. In fact, my uncle took a cow and he was going to sell it. He was on a horse and he took his cow to the man and was talking to the man. He was just an innocent as any body. He wouldn't harm nothing and he was talking to the man about the cow. The man said OK I'll buy her. He had her tied with a rope. He rode the horse and lead the cow and two guys pulled him off the horse and upt him in the hospital. Beat him up with a pistol butt. Because he talking to this fellow and my uncle wouldn't have harmed nobody in the world and that was the only reason in the world that they done it. They was afraid that he would say something against Con Chaffins as he was going to talk about Don to this guy. That was their rules and orders. You just couldn't congregate or talk.

Question: Did somebody finally kill Chaffins?

Answer: No, he died. He died right here in Huntington.

Question: Died of old age?

Answer: Yes, he owned the Chaffin building here. Which he was a millionaire. He was a welaty man. He sold the Chaffin building to C & O Railroad Company for \$750,000 here. His son still lives here, John Chaffins. I guess other boys I know are still here in Huntington. But Tennis Halfield beat him for sheriff and Don rein in Logan kind of fuidled out but after that, one Sunday night in Logan Don had a body guard, he always had this body guard with him. He told this body guard, the way I understand it, that it was too quiet to go out and shot the signs, he owned the Rezall Drug Store right across the Courthouse in Logan. To go our and shot the sign our of that Rexall sign up over the drug store. That it was too quiet in this town, tonight. One Sunday evening about 7:00 o'clock, 6:00 o'clock, I just happened to be in town. Honest to goodness, back now, I don't know how they got there but I'll say within three or four hours that town loaded with

state police. I never saw so many West Virginia state police in all my life.

Question: Why, because of that?

Answer: Over that. But there was Doctor Vaughin, he lived at McConnell, and so they arrested ... they put that guy in jail. So Doctor Vaughin said that's my buddy and I'm going down and get him out and I know Doctor Vaughin real well, he was an M. D. He jumps in his car and drives down to Logan and he goes up to the jail and he gets up on the stoop, they had just a stoop that leads up on the jail and just as he got on it, somebody knocked him off and put him in the hospital. Hit him. They don't know why anybody hit him with. Somebody hit and it looked pretty dangerous there for a while because every body was saying something about the other side on the side was ready to attack, see and soymen, they got a hold of the state police and brought them in there. I think Tennis was sheriff at that time. That town was loaded. I never... there must have been about 150 police in there at that night. They stayed in there about a day and a half until things settled down.

Question: About when was this, the late 20's?

Answer: Yeah, this was in the 20's. Back during the strike, during the miners strike, my father was right after that, he was carpenter foremen at Merrill Coal Mines at Henlawson. It was Merrill, I guess it was Merill, W. Va. I guess the post office over there was Merrill. But it was across the river from Henlawson and the company, that was a big company. It was a big, little company. In other words, when he came in there and opened that mine up. He built his own railroad, his own sidetrack over across the river. He built his own railroad bridge across the river. He had his own railroad locomotive. He had a big nice engine. He had two...

Question: Who was this?

Answer: Henry Jones, at Merill Coal Mines and Merrill was his daughter; it was named after his daughter. He put in this operation and he had two coaches, railroad coaches, just like passanger coaches, to haul his men to and from work. It was really a big operation. He had a engineer from this train, he had a brakeman, he had a firemen. It was a big operation, a really big one. My baddy was carpenter foremen there. In fact, my daddy had owned the store that they took over when they come in there and they built all new houses and back then that particular time, that was in the 20's. Why, they built a garage for every house. I'm sure they all are gone now. We had a garage. My daddy bought his first car there, an Overland. He payed \$400.00 cash

for it. It was a brand new car. A friend of ours had bought it and he got sick and died and he never drove it and never got it out of the garage. My daddy bought it. Since we got to talking about that, I'll tell you how we learned how to drive. I was just a little bitty old fellow, and my daddy got some big blocks and jacked the car up and set it upon those blocks. Every evening, after he got off from work, we would go down and drive the car. We would run out of gas. We would go get us some gas. It cost 25¢ a gallon at that particular time. While, gas was the only kind you had. We drove it for about a year before we decided to get out on the road. Everytime we would go from Henlawson to Logan, we would have two or three flat tires, our batteries would go dead. Our lights would go out. It was rough. Tires weren't worth a wickel back then. I tell you, you just didn't know. You could only get to Logan during the summer time. You couldn't get from Henlawson to Logan during the winter because you had to forge the river.

Question: What was on the island then, overthere, anything?

Answer: No, that was just... the only thing they did on the island there then was that they had the fireworks for the Fourth of July. That was a big celebration in Logan. Everybody in Logan County went to Logan that one day. I guess Armistice day they had fireworks and I'm sure the Fourth of July. That was one of the great events in Logan. They would live up over there where the depot is and on the other side at this particular time was a garbage dump; over there were the A & P and the here the... well I think there is a lot of automobile and big field there I'm sure. That was a garbage dump at that particular time. That was about the only thing it was. It was just a corn field. I think someone raised corn over there during the summer time. That's all. But that's was a great thing, whoever decided to put the school over there and fix that.

Question: About that war again, was it just the sheriff on one side and the miners on the other side, or something like that?

Answer: Well, it was the nonunion against the union. It was Don Chaffins things against the miners.

Question: Like, the owners were with the Chaffin guy, right?

Answer: Chaffin was with the mine owners and I don't know. The union leaders was with the miners on the other side. They over on the Little Coal River, they moved everybody out of their houses overthere and they lived in tents for a long long time.

Question: Why was that?

Answer: The company, they moved them out. They wouldn't even let them live in their houses. They wouldn't sell them any groceries or nothing. My uncle, as I said a little while ago, was over there and he wasn't working and there was not no money. I don't know how the people lived really. I don't remember, I don't remember how the people lived. He told me that he that he fixed him up a still and started bootlegging selling monshine whiskey and making it during all that strike. He said he lived pretty good.

Question: Is this up towards Omar and that way somewhere, where it this?

Answer: No it's up, you go up there at Stollings and trun to the left and do up Dingiss Run. It's the head of Dingess Run and then you cross Blair Mountain and you come over to Blair. It takes you on in to Madison and on in to Charleston. Back when my daddy bought that car, the only paved roads in Logan County at that particular time, was from Logan to Stollings. There was one piece of paved road up there and when you got to Stollings, you had to go down and for e the creek. You had to go down and forge the creek. There was no... the Island Creek concreted all their roads to all their mines. Then when you go for a joyride, you see, there was oily one place to go and that was to Holden. Because that was were the roads were completed.

Question: That twelve miles to Holden?

Answer: Yeah, you would go to Holden for a joyride and that was it. That was the only place to go. Especially in bad weather because there was no hard top roads and it was hard to get any place in the winter time. Williamson when we would come to Williamson. Back then, we use to come to Williamson, and we would come as you said we would go through Omar and up through there and when we would get to the mountain, where mountain View is today. You know where that restaruant on top of the mountain, Mountain View Well, to go get up to that, in a T model Ford, you had to back up. It was one single lane up and it was ruddy and rocky. You would have to send somebody up to the top. If your car started up, you sent somebody up the top and so long so you could keep anybody from coming down on you. It was really a problem to go to Williamson. To get to Williamson... From Williamson to Logan back in then days. We did make it. We made it occasionally. Because we had relatives in Williamson.

Question: Like, how long of a trip was this?

Answer: It's about two hours now?

Question: No it's not that long. It's just about 43 miles. I think thats it's an hour, just a little over on hour.

But it would take you a good half a day, all day. A good 12 hours to go to Williamson and back to Logan in one day. Providing you didn't have two or three flat tires or bust or knock your oil pan, oil plug out of the bottom of your car on the roads down Island Creek. Man oh man, you went in the creek half the time. You were in the creek, out of the creek, in the creek, out of the creek, in the creek. Which you had fairly good roads after you got to the top of Mountain View into Williamson. They was graded roads. But from Omar to the top of Mountain View, you had country roads. Just plain old country roads. There was never no... I'll say Crystal Block. To Crystal Block on to Mountain View, there was nothing but in the creek, out of the creek, in the creek, out of the creek. You went right by Devilanse's Statue up there. But while you were going by it, you were right in the creek.

Question: You know, like on coming to Huntington, how would you come or if you could or could you?

Answer: You could get to Huntington but it was stuff. It was really bad. They finally got a road. When I was real little, you had to forge the river a couple of times but then they finally got a road. They built that bridge down there at Peck's Mill. I know you know where that's at. They took the road down the other side. But up until that time, the road went down the other side. It was just one little old single road, just a path, just a wagon road was all there.

Question: About what time was this?

Answer: That was when I was a little biddy fellow, years ago. Proably around the teens. I don't remember dates that well. We have some relatives that lived over at the head of Big Creek, and we could go across there at Chapmansville. Where you can cross now at Chapmansville. They got a hard top road across there now. But we, when we went across, every-time we went over we wouldn't go over except in the summer time we would have to get somebody with a team of horses to pull us our, because we would get stuck up, big ruts, wagon ruts. Where wagons had run. Our car would drag and we just couldn't make it. But we would go see then once a year.

Question: When did the convicts, you know, start clearing out the roads?

Answer: The what?

Question: When were the roads started being built?

Answer: I don't really remember exactly, but I say in the early 20's. They started building some roads, to get in and out. But during those times, see, the trains, the rrainns was big. I mean every train was loaded and that was a great sight when I was a little boy. Because every Sunday evening, we went to meet the train. Everybody went to meet the train.

Question: Why on Sunday?

Answer: Well, I don't know. Everybody was off, see, and that was before church time and the train stopped there in Henlawson, it stopped in Henlaswon, about 5 o'clock. And everybody went at the station to meet the train. To see if anybody got off, to meet the poople on the train. And I... I don't know how many people but I'm sure that was 150, 200 people up there. That would walk in you know, and then they would go to church some place that night. Then they would go back home. But that's about the only entertainment they had. But when ever I use to meet the train, Cotton Craddock he's,... I don't know whether you know him or not in Logan County, but he's pretty big man up there. I think he's a coach. Was coach around there some place. But Cotton Craddock sold Eskimo pies at the station. I mean he sold alot of Eskimo pies. Which they were only a nickle ever Sunday he sold them. He just went through the crowd and sold Eskimo pies. Everybody had to go meet the train. That was a must, on Sunday, then everybody went to church. I'll say 99% of people out of every 100 went to church. Back then?

Question: That was the thing to do, right?

Answer: Yeah, it was the thing to do and then you got to see everybody that you hadn't got to see all week. Trade gossip and it have enjoyable to go. Because you got to see people you hadn't seen all week. And maybe there was something you wanted to tell or you wanted to hear something. There wasn't much traveling back then. But this Uncle Dike Garrett, I know, I seen it there in the paper not too long ago, about him, a big story, where some one wrote about him. He use to come to our house and stay. He was a preacher and he preached all over the county.

Question: Uncle Dike?

Answer: Uncle Dike Garrett.

Question: Dike?

Answer: Dike, he had a big long beard, way down, that come way down. He always wore a white shirt and a black tie. He was, I guess, a great man because he was... I don't think he would take anything for his preaching. He went and visited. He would visit the sick and he did a little bit of everything. You just don't have them today, do you? Well you couldn't. Times just don't permit things like that.

Question: What did the kids do then, you know, for fun and things like that?

Answer: Well, after, after... most of the children druing the summer time, they had to work out in the fields, you know, like with my daddy. We raised corn, we raised what... potatoes, corn and beans and everything and my mother caned

them. In the fall fo the year, there was always apples to peel. She would be making apple butter and stuff. There was always something for the kids to do around the house. Then at night after dark set in, well, you'd light the lamps we had lamp lights, you know. Why, they would tell ghost stories until about 7:30 and then go to bed. But the crack of day was up or a little before the crack of day. Back at that time we washed outside. It was pretty cold some-times, to go out and break the ice. But when it got really cold, our mother would always manage to have us a place to wash in the kitchen. Wash our hands and face, you know, you know you had to bath in a big, round #3 washtub. And have to build a heck of a fire to get warm, to stay warm. Because one side of you would burn up and the other would freeze to death.

Question: Like, you know, how was courting then: Like, you know, dating then?

Answer: It's just like it is today, really. Except they didn't have... boys would go get his dirl and they would go for walks instead going for rides in automobiles going to the drive inn. They would go for a walk and she would always, most of the time prepare one meal for him on Sunday, you know when he would come and see her. She would cook a meal for him and they would have dinner and then go for a big stroll and a walk. Most of the time, they would send a little one along with them, you know, to make sure that everything was up and up. But then they would go to church and that was about it. There wasn't much to do then. But I said they had plenty of work to do. Just like my mother... Everybody was busy. When we got out of school, which we got up real early in the morning, We would walk to school. We walked about 2 miles then. A mile to and a mile back. About a mile each way. In fact we walked up to...from where we lived to where, do you know where old man Justice lives at Justice Addition? Do you know where that drive-in is. Snap Creek. Well, it's right there, too. But we walked about a mile I guess to school. It was probably a mile from where we lived. We would get up about 4 o'clock. I don't remember about what time school went out. I believe school let out about 4 and we get home and eat supper. Time we got our kindling, got our hogs fed, out chickens fed, maybe our cow milked and fed, why it was after dark. The ones big enough had to do that. After we got all our work done, as I said, we would set around a lamp, big fire, lamp light and tell ghost stories. People would. That's about all... get your lessons for your school. That's it.

Question: What was the story about Mamie Frampton(Mamie Thurman, interviewers mistake) on Holden 22?

Answer: What Mamie Frampton?

Question: There was a lady that got killed and a man threw her off of the Holden 22 mountain about in the 20's or so. Have you ever heard of that?

Answer: Was he a white man or colored man?

Question: I don't know about that, but the lady though, you know, but her ghost appears there now.

Answer: Is that right?

Question: Yeah, have you ever heard of that?

Answer: No I never heard of that. No, but I've seen that big old oak tree over there at Trace Creek. The biggest oak tree, the biggest white oak tree in the world. Before they cut it down. First they built a fence around it, pinching it. Taking this piece, and cutting this piece off.. They killed it so they cut it down. I don't know how big it is. A portion of it is in the Capital, in the museum section up Charleston now. If you are ever up there be sure and go see it. And it's something. It's something that will never happen again, I'm sure. It's the biggest oak tree, white oak tree in the world. And it was right up the head of Trace Creek. Right along or pretty close to where they put that lake in.

Question: Where, in the park?

Answer: Yeah, no, at Trace Creek. You know where Trace Creek is? Well, it's over on the Delbarton side. Over on...

Question: Like the husband would work in the mines though but what did the lady do in the daytime in the summer though? Work in the fields?

Answer: Yeah, they would go swimming in the river. Guyan River. At that particular time...back then when we was children the Guyan River was clean any little stream was clean. Those little streams, they were all clean. That was before the coal companies come in and started washing coal. They just, well they were in there a long time years before they started washing coal and then they put those washers in and started washing coal because they could see it better and get more money for it and then when they started letting all that black stuff out and setting in the rivers and killing the fish and everthing. Up until that time the Guyandotte River was beautiful, full of fish. I'm telling you, you could go any place and catch all the fish you wanted. Just see them in droves. Even Island Creek after they started washing coal. They would keep their water up some way or the other and then they would let it out. When they let it out, they let everybody know. It would kill a lot of fish and you would catch them swimming across the top of the water trying to get some oxygen, you know. Just pick them up, big long 18'

2 ft long fish. Eat them, they was good. There was nothing wrong with them. They were just dying, see, because they couldn't live without oxygen, there was nothing wrong with them. There was some kind of gas in that stuff that took up all the oxygen.

Question: I always heard stories of about how the Guyandotte first got coal stuff in it. Like people just went along with bags and stuff, is that true?

Answer: Yes, yes it's true, yell it didn't hurt the fish, I tell you they just, man there use to be all kinds of fish.

Question: What kind?

Answer: Mostly game fish, see, bass and stuff like that see they didn't hurt the catfish. Catfish, carp, and suckers they didn't have any effect on the, but you take the purch and bass and walleyes and all kinds of fish like that they just couldn't stand it because they were a regular fish. Bass was generally the big fish. Man, you could catch some beautiful big bass. Just pick them up. Lot of them would just turn up. Well, when they died nobody would have them but see as long as they could catch them with their hands. We use to go our and catch them and eat them. They was fine. It didn't hurt us. That's about the only time we had any fish. We didn't have to fish too much. Which they let that water out about once a month. And when they did, they said they was going to let the water out. They sent word. Well, that was beautiful water though. Man people would come and swim.

Question: Blue or Green?

Answer: It was clear... it was green, I guess, you would say. I'd seen aguy, I use to fish with, I had seen him drink it many times. He said it has to be clean. But not now.

Question: I don't think, I would want to. That old black water.

Answer: No, not now.

Question: It's either black or rusty color. Like, who keep up the garden and stuff, if the husband was working somewhere?

Answer: Well, the wife and the kids if he had any. My daddy, he worked during the summer but during the winter... he was a carpenter back then, when I was real little. He would build a house or two during the summer but during the wintertime, he didn't do anything but stay around home and take care of everything. Take care of the stock. And we had about ten or

twelve acres and he would mend the fences and straighten up that in the wintertime, see. But honest, back then, I don't know, I say 50 years ago or 55, it seemed to me that winter came in, it stayed in till spring. We didn't have summer days during December. Just like today. When it got bad, it stayed bad. It froze. The ground stayed froze. In fact, when I was a boy, I seen the ground dusty because it froze so hard, whera wagons run. It was dust. And it froze hard as a rock and it stayed froze and didn't thaw out till spring. But now, we just don't have that kind of winters anymore.

Question: No, pollution and stuff like that.

Answer: I don't know what it is. It's just not like... I know that we're not having as cold as winters.. I don't think so. We might have a few days as cold but I mean now... Me and my daddy and me, we always went squirrel hunting on Thanksgiving. That was one thing we done. All the time. I was a little bitty boy and I always went with him. That was one day, he didn't do nothing except squirrel hunting and he was a dandy.

Question: Do you know anything about the curing of meats and smoking them, and stuff like that?

Answer: We always killed two hogs each year. My dad and...

Question: When?

Answer: When I was little..

Question: Like the time of year, though?

Answer: Oh, we would wait until about Thanksgiving to kill our first one.

Question: Why's that?

Answer: Cold weather. So it would be good and cold and we could keep it, see. But we would want it to be a little warm after we killed it, see, that it would take the salt. We would kill the hog, my daddy would kill it and dress them. Then they would dunk them in and quarter them up. They took the hams off. They done more than that. They blocked them off into hams, shoulders, midlines, as they called them then, and then they made their sausage. They made souse meat.

Question: What is souse meat?

Answer: Souse meat. What is it, you say?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: Well, you make it out of the hogs head. All the meat off the hogs head. Make it souse meat. It's real good..

Question: Like the brain and stuff like...

Answer: No, you don't use its brain. We always cooked those with eggs. We eat those, too. Brain and eggs and they were good.. Then they made souse meat. I don't remember what all she put in it, but it was delicious. Put... pour vinegar on it, and eat it. Oh, it was good! Then we made our home-made sausage, which we raised our sage. We always raised our sage and had it dry. Then you rubbed it in your hands like this. When you go in the store, you see on the box, rubbed sage. Well it's rubbed. It's rubbed. Maybe you'll find it now ground sage. I don't know whether they put out ground sage or not. But I'm sure you'll find rubbed sage. And we would rub our sage... my mother would and salt and pepper the sausage. And it was delicious sausage. Then we would cure the hams and shoulders and midlines and that's what we would eat during the winter, up until our vegetables would start coming in the spring and our canned stuff. Maybe during the summer, we didn't kill the beef but someone around the area... someone of our friends, they would all get together and kill a beef. And we would have beef. And we would have beef about twice a year, see, because we didn't have no way to keep the beef. And we had... they would kill it. In other words, 10 or 15 families would just take the whole beef and eat it in a couple days and they wouldn't have to worry about keeping it. I guess a lot of people dried some of it. I don't know, I don't even think they canned it back then. But beef didn't last long. They would eat it up... but pork, see they knew how to keep pork. They would cure the ham and everything. They were real good. They would cure them with salt and smoke them with hickory bark. And after so long... put salt on the hams and round them and get down in the joints, the bones, the knuckles and be sur the salt gets down in there and that preserves them see. After they get cured real good by that salt, you smoked them. Hickory smoke. You've seen it on the hams and bacon. Today though they use needles to do that. They don't use... it took them two or three days to smoke a ham, 36 hours or maybe 72 hours to smoke a slab of bacon. But they don't use that today.

Question: How long did it take to smoke down a ham or something like that about?

Answer: Today?

Question: Yeah, or then too.

Answer: Well, you mean to cure them and everything?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: It would take about, it would take about 10 or 12 days

to cure a ham with salt. For it to really take the salt, see, and stop all the bacteria it might form and everything and get cure all the blood and everything that you didn't get out. Take care of all of it. Preserve it real good and then you put the smoke on it. That smoke kept the skivers off it and things off of it, too, see, and put hot pepper on it, too. We put that on it. And that will keep them off. Put a lot of hot pepper on it, over the outside. Which if you didn't like it, you just trim that off when you got ready to fry it, see, and the bacon was the same way. But now today they din't do that. Today, today they do use salt brine for the first cure of the ham but it's so modern today that it takes only a little time and smoke cure them. There is a machine that has thousands of needles. They just run it through this machine, that brushes liquid smoke on them. Then this machine shoots it into... it cures them in a second.

Question: How long would a cured ham last?

Answer: A cured ham would last a year or two. Two years any how.

Question: At least two years?

Answer: Yeah, they would last two years. A lot of them would last until they would just dry up. Just dry out and get hard. But they will not today. They will mold and smell and they will really rot today. Hams today will, but they wouldn't back then. They would dry up, absolutely just dry up because they had so much water and stuff in them, see.

Today, see, I'll tell you what you can do. You can take a mop.. You can take a plain, clean mop and put water on it and set it in a corner, let it set for 10 days and I'll guarantee you that there will be maggots in that mop. I don't believe it would have done it back in those times, years ago. I believe it's the air, the water. There is that much bacteria that we didn't have back then.

Question: Everything was kind of cleaner?

Answer: Yeah, I think it was. I honest to goodness think it is true, as you said it. Back then, water was clean and sex was dirty. Today, sex is clean and water is dirty. That's about the truth. But it's really the truth. Like I said, when my daddy would go squirrel hunting if we wanted a drink, we drank out of the creek. Cold.

Question: Now, you have to carry it with you?

Answer: Oh yeah, I would be afraid to drink any water other than... unless it came out of a spout. In fact I would be afraid to drill a well right here and drink it. Honestly, some people around here have wells, but I mean have pumps but I'm afraid of it because it hasn't been purified.

Question: Were times better then?

Answer: No not really, you didn't... I guess we enjoyed it

as much as we do now. But we didn't have the things to do things with and everything is really great now.

Question: Would you change places? Would you rather live back then or now?

Answer: No I would rather live now. I mean... I enjoyed living, but I wouldn't want to go back.