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### Oral History Interview: Clarence S. and Mary Wilson Rule

Clarence S. Rule

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Date 10/27/73

Mildred W. Rule  
Donna Lawson (Interviewer)  
(Signature - Interviewee)

East Beckley Sta. Beckley W. Va.  
Address 25701

Date 10/27/73

Arthur D. Gress  
(Signature - Witness)





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E. S. Rule  
Donna Lawson (Interviewer)  
(Signature - Interviewee)

East Beckley Station, Beckley W.Va.  
Address 25801

Date 10/27/73

Luther Alford  
(Signature - Witness)

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Mr. & Mrs. Clarence S. Rule

MWR: Well, I was born in Dodredge County which is almost directly north of Beckley about 165 miles. Uh, I was born in 1905 on a farm in a region where the main industry was farming, small farms practically everywhere around me. I can remember when we had oil lights and burned oil and coal and then when I was six or eight years old we got gas in our house and burned that and had gas lights and we didn't succeed in getting electric lights out there until about 1945 or '46. I attended a one room school and usually we had from 15 to 25 enrolled in the school, including all eight grades. I attended that school until, for all the eight years I was in the grades. At that time we had like all one room schools, we burnt coal in a stove in the middle of the room. Of course, we very seldom had things there at night but when we did we had oil lights to use. Of course, there were very few things that went on at night in the country schools. Occasionally we had special events. Sometimes a pie social. Perhaps not too many people know much about that, but that was one of our highlights at least once a year we usually have a pie social or sometimes it would be called something else but we would decorate, the girls would decorate boxes with crate paper and make fancy boxes. Those boxes were auctioned off at the pie socials to the boys and the boy ate with which ever girl he bought the box belonging to the girl. And that was quite a highlight and in our school life sometimes. On Friday afternoon we had, usually we'd have a little special event we'd have siphering matches or spelling bees as we called them. That is we'd choose sides and everybody in the school were included on one of the two sides and one of the teachers would pronounce the words and we'd have a spelling bee and the one who, the side who had the last person remaining without misspelling words won. And then in siphering it was the same thing. We would choose the kind of problems we wanted, addition, substration, or multiplication and then they have two people compete at the same time and the one that got the answer first, of course won. And of course the side that had the most winners would be the side that had the most winners would be the side that would win. We had to walk to school and in our case, about a mile from our home to the schoolhouse.

When the, at the time that I was ready for high school, and also my brothers and sisters, my brothers and sisters there was no high school close. And of course the roads were dirt roads and couldn't be traveled in the wintertime and of course there were no buses at that time. My older brother and sister boarded away from home and attended high school for two years and then when I was ready for high school we all went Brodus to a boarding school at that time the school there had four years of high school and two years of college so my brother finished his one year of high school remaining and my sister took three years there and I took all my high school years there. That school is now Alderson Brodus College. Of course later it had dropped the high school work and is a college. It remained a junior college for several years after I finished there, which was in 1923 when I got my high school diploma. My teaching started with my first year in a one room school close to my home, and I think I had fifteen pupils and I had most of the grades perhaps one grade was missing but only about two in each grade on the average and. I taught one year, then attended college and taught another year in Marian County and finished college before I went back to teaching again.

DL: You taught how many years?

MWR: I taught a total of twenty years and a half and one half year I was out of school. My teaching mostly consisted of teaching music to the grades and well, some in high school too. Perhaps my most interesting work, what was most interesting to me, was three years I taught in Webster County. I was called a music supervisor but there was three of us in the county that worked it that year, those three years rather. And we traveled to the rural schools and while we were called supervisors we did alot of teaching at the time we went because alot of the teachers were not musical and however, we did try to leave plans that they could carry out. We were successful in alot of cases of continuing what we more or less planned for the children to accomplish. At that time I vested I expect about twenty three or twenty four one room schools. I understand that now Webster

County like most counties have no one room schools, of course at that time there were no buses but still many of the roads were dirt roads and people lived in too remote sections to be able to get to the highway where the buses ran but now I think that many of the roads have been hard surfaced and perhaps the population's decreased a little bit in little rural sections so that most everyone now I suppose in reach of a school bus are so that they can walk to the school bus.

CSR: Well, I was borned in Fayette County in 1898. And of course I went to school there just a grade school and they had to burn the schoolhouse down just to get me out of the second grade. So, my mother she went a visitin' and was gone for two weeks and my dad was in the mines and I played hooky and during that time one of my boy friends and I built a log cabin. It happened about two weeks, it took us about two weeks to do the job and returned and the school teacher came out to interview her as to why I was absent from school so much. And then from then on I got put in school and I stayed in there for a long time and got a whoopin' about everytime I turned around. That thing was brought up everytime I said something that they didn't like. They'd throw up to me about that two weeks I wasn't in school. And of course I worked in the mines with my dad on weekends and when school wasn't in session.

DL: When you were how old?

CSR: I was about twelve years old when I went in the mines with my dad. And then in 1916 I went to worken for the railroad and that's where I continued all the time, I had about forty nine years service at the railroad company. And of course the times that I was, and from the time that I went into the service of the railroad there were times that I was furrowed and went back into the mines to work for maybe two or three months at a time. And of course after I was called back and had seniority enough I stayed on the railroad I didn't never return to the mines anymore. I guess the last work I did in the mines was 1930 or '31.

MWR: How much did you receive for your work when you first started working on the railroad?

CSR: I got sixty four cents an hour, and worked ten hours a day. And when World War I broke out and the government had taken the railroad over I got \$87.50 a month for eight hours. And that continued until the railroads returned from the government, when the government returned the railroads over to individual operations.

MWR: I can when I first saw my first automobile, that's something that the younger generation couldn't see. I was about ten years old I think and we were of course still living in the country and a automobile came along this country road and our next door neighbor called us to tell us there was an automobile coming and when it passed our house we called the next neighbor, it was that much of an event. We all went out front where we could see it as it went by, that was quite exciting to us.

CSR: Well I can remember when I saw my first automobile. Between 1907 and 1910. And it came into my home town which was Anstead, over there in Fayette County and was pulled in by a team of horses. A fellow by the name of Jim Neff along with Charlie Tarrie went to Cincinnati and bought an old Buick automobile. I think they were two or three days driving from Cincinnati to Gauley Bridge. They got to Gauley Bridge and the thing wouldn't go any further and so Neff and Tarrie they got on a train and come back home and got their horses and went down and pulled it in the next day.

DL: What did you do as a small child? Were you raised on a farm too?

CSR: Well no. Well I did mostly what my dad told me there was always some kind of work layed out for it, for that was it and if it wasn't done then the fat went in the fire and my hide paid for it.

DL: What were some of your chores?



CSR: Well garden work, cutting wood, and coal. I had to get my light work in and milk the cow and feed the stock what little dab we had, two or three head. They was always somethin' layed out for me to do, I didn't have time to get around much.

MWR: That sounds as if you worked all the time but I doubt it. You might tell her some of the things that happened out your grandfather's, you spent alot of time there.

CSR: Well it was just about the same thing, alot of work. I did my share of it such as hauling in wood. We had to go to the woods and cut wood and haul it in on a sled or wagon and then the thrashing machine would come in and of course I didn't have much to do with that. This time the thrash machine was in at my grandad's and I don't what I did but my uncle's grabbed me and held me in the barn loft until the straw was thrashed out and they tied me and layed me in the barn floor and that stuff was covering me up with straw and I worked myself loose and I got out and I got me a bucket and got it full of apples and rocks and I blowed their thrash machine out for awhile. I jumped on the two fellows that was measuring the grain and when they got run away they had to quit feeding the thrash machine and the thrash machine was runned by eight head of horses. It goes around in a circle and of course that runs the machine and the horse pulled that thing and the driver stood up on that thing in the middle and the horse pulled that thing in a circle kind of like a Cane Mill.

DL: Did you get your own grain from this?

MWR: Yes, usually the farmers raised grain and they had this thrashing machine that came through the country and they'd thrash one man's grain and as soon as they got that done they would go to someplace else and it was the machine that the chaff was fed into the machine and separated the grain that came pouring out at one point and they'd have a couple of men there to sack that grain up as fast as it came



out of the machine and the straw would be carried on through and usually people would stack that or put it away in some way so that it could be used for such things as fill mattresses. They'd make a big muslin like a pillow slip only large enough to cover the whole bed and that would be filled with straw, usually when those thrashing machines come around the neighbors would help each other in order to have enough men to do all the different tasks, they'd need the neighbors help so one man was getting his grain thrashed and the neighbors come in and help with the other as the usual thing. That took place out where I lived as well as in his.

CSR: Yeah, that's what they do they took the neighborhood that thrashed in one place like she said and then they'd go, whatever days they stayed there why if it was a couple of thirty days they'd just moved on and the neighborhood men'd just follow that machine until it moved on for several miles away and then of course another part of the neighborhood'd pick up and follow that machine until everybody's thrashing was completed and they'd thrash buckwheat, and alfalfa, and oats, wheat, and about all small grains you can think of that they thrashed, at that time people had delt as farmers they raised that stuff it was their own and it took somewhere in the neighborhood of about eight or ten men to operate that machine, I mean when they was thrashing. And of course they all, the farmers fed them men whenever they was thrashing at that particular time well they'd bed them and of course they'd bed them down but alot of them had to sleep in the barn. Of course very few people could take care of that many men.

MWR: One thing that I think of that took place out in our country that's unknown anymore is, is the way that they sent their livestock to market. I'm thinking particularly of the sheep, my dad helped with that a great deal, that is he'd buy up sheep and then when they were taken to market we'd lived

about eight miles from the closet railroad station and they would drive those sheep along the roads on foot, you see, to the market, so one farmer would have just a few sheep to sale and they'd gather them up and as they'd weighed them out at certain places where some of the farmers had scales for livestock, not everyone but usually they'd be at a certain place and weigh them out and then gather them up as they went along. Sometimes those droves'd go as far as fifteen or twenty miles to the railroad. Of course as they went along the drover sheep would become a little bit larger and sometimes they couldn't travel that fast, they couldn't drive all that distance in one day and so they'd have to lay over with, find lodging someplace where they'd have a suitable place to keep their sheep in a field where they wouldn't get out. My mother and father kept a good many sheep drivers over night. Sometimes they'd have their drover sheep and they'd, my father had a pen that was large enough to take a good many and they stayed there quite often and too, they had a large enough house that they can give several man a nights lodging. So quite often they'd stay over night at our house and usually, I believe they made the drive then of on from where we lived to the railroad station. Of course there would be several hundred sheep in those droves and they'd always take a wagon or something along, before the days of automobiles to go behind because they'd sometimes have sheep that would give out and they'd have to put them on the wagon and, of course they never thought of trying to get them all. Like today they are trucked in from farms to their market but in those days they wasn't anyway to do that because more people raised sheep out in the country than they do now and there wasn't sufficient conveyance to get them anyway except to drive them in on foot.

DL: Did you make your own clothes then?

MWR: I do part of them.

DL: I mean when you were a kid.

MWR: I started sewing when I was about fourteen or fifteen I guess and up until that time my mother made most of our clothing, a few things we bought ready made.

DL: She didn't use a pattern, did she?

MWR: Yes, well to some extent of course she's like I've been, I guess she changed patterns quite often. She'd get one pattern and make several dresses over it and change them a little bit so that they wouldn't all be alike but she made most of our things when I was small.

DL: What about shoes?

CSR: I was lucky to get one pair of shoes. I went barefooted just as soon as the snow left, and patches on top of patches on my britches, not only on my seat but everywhere.

DL: That's nothing new today is it?

CSR: No, they've got that today but that's because they want to but mine was forced on me because they didn't know nothing any better.

MWR: I think that we had about two pair of shoes, one for everyday and one for Sunday. Because we always, my family, always went to church and while we didn't have any fancy clothing why we aimed to have something better dress up occasions like going to church and so on. I remember one time when I was perhaps six years old, I had an older sister so a lot of my clothes were passed on from her and I was very anxious to have a new hat for the winter and I had one that I had worn for maybe a couple of years that had been handed down from my older sister so I wanted a new hat and we started to town in what we called a spring wagon but it was really what some people would call a surrie but the top had been broken so it didn't have any top on it

and it was a two seated back. And on the way, we lived about fifteen miles from where we went to do most of our shopping. On the way it started to rain and everybody put up umbrellas but I wouldn't sit under an umbrella because I wanted the rain to ruin my hat so I'd get a new one. I believe I did get a new hat but I don't know whether that was the reason or not. Of course we raised a whole lot of our food but there were such things such as flour and sugar and other things that we bought. As far as I can remember there was no regular time for going to the store but quite often in the fall I remember my father would always lay in a supply of flour and sugar so that he wouldn't have to do those things, but of course we had stores locally within our community of two or three miles away. For instance, when he got a large amount of flour out, I've know 'em to buy two or three barrels of flour. Now it came in sacks, I don't mean it came in a barrel but the sugar was really bought in a barrel and he'd perhaps buy a barrel of flour and also of sugar.

DL: For how much?

MWR: I don't remember the price.

CSR: A barrel of flour was about four dollars a barrel. Lonley Mountain Pastry. That was the name of the flour. I believe it was 196 pounds a barrel.

DL: One hundred ninety six pounds for four dollars?

CSR: That's right. For wheat we paid about six and eight cents a pound for that.

MWR: And that' "Salt Poor," what people called "Salt Poor."

DL: Did you raise your own beef then to slaughter?

CSR: No.

MWR: In my childhood we ate pork more than anything else. My father always raised several pigs and

butchered in the fall, sometimes five or six hogs in the fall. That sounds like alot of meat for just a family but my mother always kept alot of boarders and so, of course they needed extra meat and another thing I remember that my dad always layed up in the wintertime and that was apples. Now he didn't raise quite enough apples to supply them through the winter so he'd yearly always buy about fifty bushel of Roman Beauty apples and he had a bin which he'd built and in his cellar and held about three shelves we might say in the bin and those apples he'd store in that bin in the winter. I remember how good they used to taste.

CSR: When I used to go sleigh riddin' I'd hitch the dog up to the sled and make him pull it back up the hill for me. I was too lazy to pull my own sled back up the, up the hill.

DL: What kind of dog was it?

CSR: Just a dog that's all I can tell you.

DL: Tell me something about your courting days.

MWR: We've only been married twenty six years. Our courtship doesn't go back to the pioneer days.

CSR: No, what you're after doesn't go back that far. Yeah, I was dead with old age before I ever thought about marrying or had the time too.

MWR: Well I lived in the country where we didn't get together too often with young people except maybe on Sunday or some other time if there was something special to go to. Of course we, in my young days out in my country it was customary for us to visit back and forth alot on Sunday because everybody was too busy during the week. While on the farm we had so much work to be done so we weren't with young people as much as young people are together today.

CSR: So I went out about once a month with a girl and went to a show and that was about all.

DL: Where was the show? Was it close?

CSR: Then I used to operate the machine, it's silent pictures then, you see. I tell ya back then my daten' was rather scarce.

MWR: It wasn't as scarce as all that.

CSR: My workin' on a railroad, I never stayed in one place long enough to keep a racket worked up.

DL: You saw the silent pictures?

MWR: Yes, they was silent pictures when he, well in fact I remember seeing silent pictures too but, it while I was in college that they began to have sound movies I believe. Do you remember the year?

CSR: Millie I don't. The first it was a preview, the first person ever I heard speak a word on sound movies was Alfred Smith. The governor of New York in Baltimore.

DL: What did it cost you to go to the movies?

CSR: Oh, about twenty five or thirty cents, thirty five. I don't believe, I believe in Baltimore they charged about thirty five cents.

MWR: When did television start?

CSR: Just after World War II, wasn't it? I think so.

MWR: I think so too.

DL: You don't have a television in your home?

MWR: No, he can't watch television very well because it hurts his eyes. So we just never got one. I remember when the radios first became common. The first that I heard was in 1924 I believe. Well, of course there were radios before I heard them but. What year did I start school at Venison? Twenty four I guess, wasn't it? In the fall of twenty four I

went to Venison University in Ohio for my first year of college work and my great uncle who lived in that had the radio with ear phones and that's the first one I'd listened to.

DL: Do you remember how you got your mail when you were a kid? Was it at the general store or . . .

CSR: Oh no, you had to go to the Post Office for it. It was hauled and transported then by wagons and trains from Post Office to Post Office.

MWR: Our mail where I lived was delivered by a mail carrier. He rode horseback in the wintertime when the roads were so bad that some of the roads he had to travel was pretty difficult to travel even in a buggy. The first mail carrier I remember had a little two wheel cart that was pulled by one horse and he used that to deliver the mail in but now, that came from our Post Office which was about three miles from where we lived and it was brought into the Post Office by what we called the Stire Route that is another mail carrier that just delivered the mail from the railroad to the Post Offices and then this local mail carrier delivered it to our boxes along, each house of course had a box so we usually had our mail delivered. I lived in the country he lived in a small town so that made a difference.

CSR: Our mail was transferred from Hawks Nest from the railroad station to the Amstead Post Office about thirty miles and that was by horses and buggies and wagons and hacks or whatever you want to call them.

DL: How often?

CSR: Well they got the mail in there off of about four different connections, I mean four different trains. One in the morning, one in the afternoon, one at noon about three or four o'clock and then another 'em at about six or seven that was the four trains that come in there at Hawks Nest, local trains.



DL: So was everyday?

CSR: Yep, everyday, everyday except Sunday. And then the hack man hauled passengers, it was four miles down there by the railroad and they sent passengers back and forth and fare was twenty five cents a passenger.

DL: When you first started on the railroads, what was the fare for a certain distance?

CSR: I believe it was two and a half cents a mile. It was fifty miles to Hawks Nest to Charleston and it costed about a dollar and seventeen cents. A dollar eight or nine cents I believe.

DL: For one way?

CSR: For one way, yeah, and then you got a discount of ten percent on a round trip. You could make a round trip on about a dollar and eighty cents. I used to play around Hawks Nest Rock and Lover's Leap. You know where that is, I guess?

DL: I know where Hawks Nest is.

MWR: Lover's Leap is just a mile or two from that.

CSR: That's where the lodge is built down there. It's called Hawks Nest Lodge but it's built on Lover's Leap. Hawks Nest Rock is about a mile from that.

DL: Did you do alot of hunting and with what? What kind of gun did you use?

CSR: Gun? A single barrel shot gun. It costed four dollars. And then later on I got a twenty two, I think it cost me two dollars and a half, single shot. Yeah I used to go with my dad, he was right much of a hunter. They had no seasons then. The men just made their own seasons, it was usually, squirrel season opened up, I mean when everybody went was on Labor Day, the first day of September or Labor Day.

MWR: It was customary to do that then.

CSR: Yeah, it was customary. You usually killed all the squirrels you wanted or could kill and then you wound up pickin' papaws, and walnuts, and stuff and taken them in, hickory nuts. Take your over-alls off and tie the legs up and fill them full.

DL: Did you just go for the sport or?

CSR: We got hungry for meat. People depended on that back then, a whole lot of it, I mean at that time of the year and then people would can those squirrels and they wasn't no limit as to how many you could get a day. I remember being with my dad, we wound up with twenty seven. He went in with the squirrels and I went in with the over-all leg full of papaws. Every season they was squirrels as scarce as they are now, at that time they depended on the nut crop as to the squirrels that you'd get. They were plentiful and of course they wasn't as many people that hunted then that do now. They just wasn't there and people had to walk, you couldn't ride no place you might if you had a horse or something like that but, they was plenty of wood and you didn't have to go too far to do that, to look for your game.

DL: So you hunted any kind of game at any season?

CSR: Yeah, they just wasn't no law that protected game back there then. Them people back there then didn't go into big game hunting like they do now. I mean they did in the past twenty five or thirty years. Maybe occasionally somebody'd kill a bear, I don't believe ever I remember anybody in my neighborhood that killed a bear but round up here in Pocahontas County you might hear of it ever once in a while. It'd get into somebody's sheep up there and go to eaten them up. They'd hunted for game, big game, to eat back then more so than they is now you see because the woods and timbers have been cut out so bad. The nuts and berries

and stuff just didn't do 'em like they used to at one time. The bear they liked black berries, they'd feed on black berries during the season.

MWR: We used to gather chestnuts during the fall. My dad had five or six real large chestnut trees on his farm and on one particular hill we'd call it the chestnut ridge and we'd gather chestnuts every fall until I guess it was in the twenties wasn't it when the chestnuts blight killed the trees? In the late twenties I think the chestnut trees were all killed out over most of the state I guess. Since then, of course they've been no chestnuts out there.

CSR: My granddad Rule, he had a chestnut orchard, that wasn't nothing back then at that time to myself, and I had three aunts that were just a little bit older than I was, and we'd take number three warsh tubs and go and pick up warsh tubs of them chestnuts. And we got three cents a pint for them in the stores. And then when they'd sold them they'd get a nickel for 'em.

MWR: Now those chestnuts weren't nearly as large as these chestnuts that we buy in the market now. They were small.

CSR: They were lady chestnuts, you see.

MWR: I expect not half as large as they are now. One thing that I use to do when I was a child as part of the work, now that wasn't play it was work I hauled hay shocks. That's somethin' unknown I expect for most people now a day. What they'd do would a, get a little shock of hay, I'd suppose about as high as that chair and if you hauled hay shocks you'd ride a horse and the horse would have a collar with a rope attached to one side of the collar and you'd ride the horse around, the horse around the hay shock and get that rope wrapped around the hay shock you'd have to hitch the other end of the rope on to the other side of the collar would be left loose until you'd get around the hay

shock and then you'd pull the hay shock with the horse into where they were stacking hay. That was my job when I was I'd say from when I was about seven or eight on for several years.

CSR: I can remember when my grandparents made homemade soap out of ashes with ashes and lye. They got the lye by soaking the ashes. They had a bin that they'd put these ashes in and then they'd put water on them and then that water ring through those ashes and that water would be their lye for the purpose of makin' their soap.

MWR: That was combined with some kind of fat or grease saved from well, grapsel grease or something like that, that you didn't like. Bacon grease wasn't used, they'd save it up and make soap out of it.

CSR: They'd have molasses makins'. In the fall of the year when they cut the cane they'd make molasses and that was a neighborhood project usually, the neighbors'd get it in.

MWR: Well, most people back when I was a child had to wash on what they called on the board. You had wash tubs on a wash board and, however, we had a sort of a washing machine. I don't know whether I can describe it or not, it was rounded sort of like a half of a tub and there was a agitator I suppose that fit on top of that and then we could work it back and forth and rub it instead of rubbing each one by hand, you know, we'd get a whole wash tub full of clothes in that washing machine. I've forgotten now what the name of that washing machine was but I think it came from Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward but everybody didn't have that. Then there was a place that you could put a wringer on one end of the washer and we'd turn a crank that run the clothes through that wringer but, of course a lot of people had to wash their clothes on the board and wring them by hand. My mother I remember had that washer when I was not very old because I cut off the end of my thumb on the wringer once when I was about three years old. So I wasn't

very old when they stopped doing all their worshing just on the worsh board. But those old wringers had cogs that weren't covered, they were on the outside and as the crank turned one cog would turn in one direction and the other would turn in another and when I was three years old I was standing behind that worsher watching my cousin worsh once for my mother. I remember thinking I would take my fingers all aride on that cog as it went around but I started with my thumb of course the thumb got only half way around got caught between the cogs so that ended my ride. So I remember that wringer very well and remember how old I was when they were using it because I was only three years old when that happened.

CSR: I want to tell you one on me about my teeth be'in pulled. My dad slipped the dentist down one Saturday night on my and they chloroformed me and they pulled seven or eight teeth. Then we had an old folding bed, and I was helping mother when back, and let that folding bed down and I got my finger mashed in that. Well, there I was with my teeth pulled and my finger mashed and the next mornin' I got up, mother had some orange peelin's layin' on one table I reckon that's all they had, and I was cryin' and carrin' on with my teeth hurtin' and my fanger mashed and I was hackin' them orange peelin's up and was slicing them up with a knife and cut the end off of that fanger. So there I was with the index on my right and the index on my right and my teeth hurtin'. No, no, no we had a barber and we used to have to pay fifteen cents to have a hair cut. I don't remember him ever cuttin' my hair, I remember him always help sew my shoes.

DL: Your dad?

CSR: Yeah, my dad. Had to for years and years, and I can remember that we had an old shoe cobbler they called 'em that made the shoes. Leather old homemade shoes. I've seen a many and many a pair, but I never did have to wear them. I don't remember what the price was on them, an old feller by the name of Sanford Hollie made those shoes. Yeah, the shoe shop there in Amstead.

MWR: When I was a girl, very few girls had short hair, most everybody had long hair and when the girls first began to cut their hair they called it bobbed hair, but that wasn't until I was nearly grown. I guess that most everybody cut their hair.

\*Note: The ticking in the background is a wall clock.