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Glennie T. Burford

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74

ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Glennie T. Burford, the undersigned, of
1040 Walker Addn., Elkview, County of Kanawha, State
of West Virginia, grant, convey, and transfer to the James E.
Morrow Library Associates, a division of The Marshall University Foundation,
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March 17, 1974, to be used for scholarly purposes, including
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G.T.B.
initial

Open and usable after my review.

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Closed for a period of _____ years.

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Closed for my lifetime.

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Closed for my lifetime unless special permission
is gained from me or my assigns.

Date March 17, 1974

G.T. Burford

(Signature - Interviewee)

1040 Walker Addn.

Address

Elkview, West Virginia 25071

Date March 17, 1974

Charles W. Burford

(Signature - Witness)



The tape and transcript which follows is composed of material collected in an interview by Charles M. Burford on March 17, 1974, with Glennie T. Burford in Elkview, West Virginia.

Glennie is a 65 year old farmer, who has spent his lifetime in Appalachia living off a 135 acre farm. The farm has been his sole means of financial support throughout his adult life.

During the course of the interview it becomes obvious that he is very attached to the land which has supported him and his family so well. He talks of feeding the land and states that it will give back much in return. He is very conservative and is quick to encourage conservation in others.

SIDE I

Interviewer

This is Charles Burford and I'm in the home of Glennie Burford, an uncle, interviewing him on March 17, 1974. What can you recall about your early childhood?

Interviewee

Well, I was born within a few hundred feet of where I live today and my Dad ... we moved here to go to school from up on Blue Creek. My Dad got killed just after we moved here and I had two uncles that made their home with us and I went to a two-room school at Blue Creek and I started school when I was five and my brother, oldest brother, he was seven. And I used to try to keep up with him in class and the teacher that I ... that taught said that if he'd stayed up there, I'd of caught him; but he, he got ahead of me and we used to have to go a half day at a time. It was during the oil field boom and I went in the afternoon and we had three in a seat. Let me see here. We used to have a lot of spelling matches and ciphering matches on the week ... on Fridays. I remember one time I lost my dinner. Someone stole it and I went to the ... home with one of the teachers that lived just up next to the school to eat that day. I was afraid to let my books go ... I carried my books with me all the time because I was afraid somebody'd get 'em. Ah, let's see.

Interviewer

How was it you used to spell Mississippi?

Interviewee

Mi crooka letter, crooka letter, i, crooka letter, crooka letter, i, hump back, hump back, i.

Interviewer

Did you hear somebody else do that or did you make that up yourself?

Interviewee

No, I had an uncle that told me that. He used to come up to visit us and he later made his home with us and he'd ... I knew the book ... I knew the picture; then I read what was beside the picture. He'd turn the book upside down and show me the picture and I'd read what was on that page from the picture. He taught me how to spell Mississippi.

Interviewer

Did you ever spell it that way in school at a spelling bee?

Interviewee

No, never spelled it like that. I remember we had one ... they sent me out of ... we had two rooms - a little room and a big room, they called 'em. They sent me out of the little room to spell in a spelling match over in the big room and my brother turned me down on "plumber." That made a big difference with me and him. I missed that one - the only word I ever missed in a spelling match in grade school. My mother was a devout Christian from thirteen years up and she used to get us around and read the Bible to us all the time. My grandfather was a Baptist minister and she was reading the Bible in there one day about Christ rebuking the publicans and sinners and my grandad was a democrat so after my Mother finished reading, I said "Grandad surely is following Christ, isn't he?" and Mom said, "Why?" I said, "Well, Christ was a democrat and a Baptist and grandad is a democrat and a Baptist."

Interviewer

Did it cause a lot of trouble? You said your Dad was killed soon after you moved here. Did that cause a lot of hardships on the family?

Interviewee

We waddn't big enough to realize the hardship. I was five, my oldest brother - seven, my other brother was three, and my sister was eight months. I had one uncle that came and made his home with us, my mother's brother. He made his home with us, and then later on, when my grandad sold the farm, another one of the brothers came and lived with us. They made their home with us until they passed away. We didn't know much about, I guess, hardship - didn't realize the loss of a father probably.

Interviewer

What did he do?

Interviewee

He was a ... railroad man; got crushed by some timbers - he was unloading timbers and they crushed him someway.

Interviewer

What was it like around here? Can you remember when they had the oil boom up on Blue Creek? Can you remember much about that?

Interviewee

Well, I can remember a little. It started in the 1900's. It was pretty early and I can remember ... I know it was crowded and kinda like gold-rush days - that's the reason we had to go to school half a day at a time. It was ... people in here by the hundreds and they crowded the school ... the two-room school. We could hear the oil wells pumping - sound like shotguns firing - it'd be all over the hills.

Interviewer

I've seen pictures of them. It looked like they had them - just four or five in sight of one another.

Interviewee

Ah, they'd be just like trees almost, not that close, but you could go up on top of the hill here and just look out and count numbers and numbers of oil rigs. Of course, now they're about all gone ... discouraging; didn't recover the oil, didn't plug right - kinda gold-rush days, wasteful.

Interviewer

They just came in and pumped it all.

Interviewee

I don't say they pumped it all. They were just huntin' for big wells and they'd find a bad one - they didn't plug it right; I've heard'em tell they'd just put a tree down the hole, drop something in on it, then that would rot and all the water would break into different sands, and that's the reason we have bad water in this country. And they didn't recover, what I've heard them say, they didn't recover any percentage of the oil that's in this ground here, but now it'd be expensive to try it. They've let the water break into all the different sands that contain oil.

Interviewer

Could be a possibility though, that with the energy shortage and so forth, they might have to come back and get some.

Interviewee

I say they'll come back sometime, when they find a way to do it that won't be so expensive cause it's too expensive right now unless the price of oil would get high enough to warrant it.

We started ... they started to high school in 1920 ... uh, let me see ... '21 and I went in the first class that ever went in the high school building. I was in the fourth class that ever started in the high school. They had the classes down in the ... what they call the Dodd building in the Elkview grade school before they got the high school built. I was afraid to go ... I was afraid of it ... thought I couldn't make it in there because it was a big undertaking - just starting a new high school and not being used to anything but the grades.

Interviewer

Wasn't too many people went to high school then, was there?

Interviewee

No, I guess ... let's see ... my class started 55 - 55 enrolled and and eighteen graduated ... we picked up one extra from another high school to make the eighteenth one.

Interviewer

Fifty-five in what ... the ninth grade?

Interviewee

Started with ... uh, ninth grade. Ya, ninth grade ... called it freshmen at that time. It was four year of high school.

Interviewer

So you started with 55 in the ninth grade and by the time you graduated, there was just eighteen left.

Interviewee

And that one fellow, he came from Clendenin down here to graduate with us.

Interviewer

Did you all play ball or anything like that then?

Interviewee

Yea, we had basketball, baseball, and football. Didn't know much about it because we never had any training. Some of the boys, I guess, played in the first game they ever seen.

Interviewer

What year was that ... when you were a senior in high school?

Interviewee

1928

Interviewer

You had almost as many sports as we have today.

Interviewee

Yea, yea. We didn't have a gym until, let's see, '20 ... I don't know whether it was '26 or '27 ... played outdoors in front of the school building ... that is practice and then we had to go to other schools when we had a game.

Then they had six ... let's see ... they started the six-year high school in ... ah ... '20 ... I don't know whether it was '27 or '28 they made it a six-year high school. The junior high combined with the high school.

Interviewer

What did you do soon after you got out of high school ... soon as you got out of high school, what did you start doing?

Interviewee

Well, I used to work for the Eureka pipeline just a little bit. That's a oil transportation company. Then I ... in September I worked at Carbide ... September, the year I graduated, I worked at Carbide at ... went in the lab and washed stuff ... beakers and all kinds of equipment and worked a month ... I didn't like it. I quit that and went to work on a pipeline that winter until February and then from then on I started doing a little farming. I always did like it and I had ... I used to have a few chickens when I was in high school. They had vo ag classes. Then when I quit working the pipeline, I started raising a few chickens and grew up on ... we had two acres at that time and then I kept ... My uncle bought some more land and we kept working on that land, and got a few cattle and improved the land as we went along, and now we grow more cattle than my grandad had on the whole farm. He owned three times as much land as we have now.

Interviewer

What did you dislike about working at Carbide, the pipeline, and so forth or did you just like to farm better?

Interviewee

I just liked the farm. I couldn't ... just couldn't explain to you just ... just because I like it, I guess. It's just ... I like to fool with dirt, nature. I like to see things going on. I don't think there's anything any nicer than watching things grow ... apple trees bloom.

Interviewer

I guess probably most of your adult life has been spent as a farmer, is that right?

Interviewee

Well, I'd say all of it. I can remember my Mother bought me a little incubator and I used to have chickens when I growing up in high school and then I remember I ordered some ... a basket of eggs out of Nankato, Minnesota; R. F. Huber owned the farm; and that came through the mail packed in excelsior in an ordinary basket. I thought that was the greatest thing I ever received in my life. It was just ... it looked unreal, just meant so much.

Interviewer

Were you still in high school then or was that after you got out?

Interviewee

Well, no I was ... I could have been in high school. I don't know. It might have been when I was in the seventh or eighth grade, but I picture it before I went to high school - maybe two or three years - but I believe it was before I graduated or went to high school, wouldn't say for sure.

I know we used to have this ground here; it wouldn't grow corn knee-high. It was very very poor. We just kept building on it. We had ground back on the hills that wouldn't pasture a cow; kept working on it , feeding it, building it up and it's productive land now.

Interviewer

What kind of livestock do you have now?

Interviewee

Well, I've got mostly Herford; I've got a few Roane Durham, keep a good bull, raise cows and calves. We don't do much cultivating on those hills. It takes ... it erodes pretty fast. We don't do any more plowing than we have to. One of the best programs, I guess, for hill country is grass land farming. Raise cows and calves in our section of the country.

Interviewer

What happened to your brothers and sisters? You ended up as a farmer, what ...?

Interviewee

Well, I had two brothers that taught school. I had my sister ... she wanted to be a nurse but when she got through high school, my mother was ill, and she stayed at home and took care of my mother. She was ill a long time so by the time my mother ... in fact, she never did get really straightened up, but by the time she did get where she could have gone to nursing school, it was too late so she just made her home with my mother and me until she passed away.

Interviewer

So neither of you were ever married, is that right?

Interviewee

No, that's right. There's been a lot of fun, I guess, and a lot of nice things have happened as well as the bad.

I know there was a fellow, who lived on an island up here, was a ... he was a book worm and he was a conservationist from the word - go. He didn't want to kill a ... any animal. I remember he had guineas on his island one time up there and they

had so many guineas that they could have just took the island, that's all, and he finally had ... had to get some of them killed. They just grew and multiplied until they just took over and it was breaking him up to feed them, and he got a bunch of game chickens in the same way and they had to do the same thing with the game. He didn't like to kill a ... not even a rat. He didn't want to kill anything and he didn't want to cut a tree; even if it was in the wrong place, he didn't want that tree cut. He was one of the finest kind of men in the country. Maybe if there had been lots of them like him, I don't know just exactly what would have happened to us. The animals might have took over.

Interviewer

That island - don't I remember that one time that was a resort? Do you remember anything about that?

Interviewee

Well, I can't remember much about it, but it was a ... they used to call it Island Inn. His dad was a ... liked good times. They used to have big poker games up there. That was during the oil feed excitement. They kept boarders on the island fed 'em there. He used to keep a horse that he used to ride from Charleston up here in a buggy. He rode ... Ben Hall was his name. He liked to ride that horse and buggy up here. He was a lawyer. He would come up here and spend some time with his wife and the rest of the family would keep the boarders. He was a good-time Charley and his son was just the opposite. He didn't mix and he didn't like anybody to be around. He wasn't ... he wasn't mean or nothing but he just didn't like to mix with people.

Interviewer

That island was a resort about the turn of the century too?

Interviewee

Yea, yea in the 1900's. Now it belongs to the church since he passed away. They got it as a picnic grounds and so forth over there. I remember he used to ... he could handle a boat with a stick better than I could with oars. He'd take a stick and take that boat across the river, either when the water was high or the water low, trash floating. I remember 1932 around the Fourth of July there's a flood that covered this ... ah, an awful lot of this country in here; even got over the hardroad up here where there's a restaurant above home here. He rowed a boat across the hardroad and across the railroad tracks and tied it to an iron pipe that sticks in front of the restaurant there and that's still there. He had ... he had a buddy by the name of Mel Carte. And old Mel, he wasn't able to read or write but Snyder was his main man and he had more fun out of that fellow than ... ah, I don't know, you couldn't find a fellow just like him. I remember one time ... he lived across the river from us and we went over there to ... a cousin of mine and me went over there to kill a ... help him kill a hog. And this ah ... he had this hog right in the creek. He was ... built the pen right in the creek so we were getting ready to kill that hog and I said, "Mel, how come you to ... have, built a hot pen right in this creek here?"

He said, "Well, he took this hog over to the neighbors to breed it and he said she got crippled someway and he had to ... he was bringing her down off the point from this neighbor's house and when he got her down in the hollow, she just layed down in the creek there and he just built the pen around her. And that's where he kept that hog until he killed it." He had ... he made wine all the time. We were over there, this cousin of mine, and we were helping him kill a hog. He'd bring out that wine;

he'd give a ... pour out a glass of wine every little bit and so we'd take the glass and when he'd turn his head, we'd pour it out; we didn't drink it - I don't call it a good wine; I don't call him a very good wine maker, but he thought we was drinking wine faster than he could bring it to us.

Interviewer

Can you remember during the time when whiskey was illegal - did you ... do you remember people buying it?

Interviewee

Yea, I've bought it. Used to be back over behind us here ... be a fellow that got whiskey from Kentucky and he sold it to the Veterans' Bureau that used to be in the Peoples' Exchange Bank Building there in Charleston. I remember the Chamber of Commerce President used to come up there and drink whiskey. A lot of detectives in town, a lot of the politicians, he sold to all of them. That fellow would haul it in here by the car loads and then right below him was a home-brew joint that ah ... where they sold home brew; all in all there was bootleg joints all over the place here. They'd have to wear badges almost to tell who wasn't selling it and who was selling it.

Interviewer

Anybody ever get caught, prisoned?

Interviewee

Uh, can't think of any of them right around here now. I wasn't too old then. Probably caught a few of them. I can't think of them ... any certain one that got caught. I remember one fellow used to go around ballgames and things and wore a big pair of overalls and he had ... carried whiskey in his overalls and you could always get you a bottle of whiskey around the ballgames some place, go out over the riverbank, or some place - just ask him if he had any. He'd take 'er out of them overalls. Let you have a pint or whatever you wanted.

Interviewer

Did they make much of an attempt to catch those people or just kinda ...

Interviewee

Ah, I think it was a more or less a gentlemen's agreement. ... if you didn't bother me. I remember one time this fellow up the road above here had a ... used to make whiskey and the sheriff got onto him and he owed the sheriff some money so he told the sheriff ... sheriff, if you want that money, you just keep them fellows away from my place and I'll pay ya'. I don't know whether he did or not ... he probably did though.

This, uh ... a lot of these people years ago, when I was growing up, they believed it signs. Planted in signs, and dug in signs, killed a hog in signs, and even castrated in signs. I remember one time there was an old man; his son-in-law had two male pigs. His son-in-law come up - he lived in Charleston and he came up one day. He said ... well, if the sign is right, we'd castrate the pigs. Said ah ... his son-in-law said, the sign's right to castrate mine. Made the old man mad and he said ... well, if you can lose yours, I can lose mine. So they castrated them, and they both lived. I remember another time we were going to Spencer to the stock market, and this boy said ... I was with him ... let's stop up here at this fellow's house and he had a veal calf that he wanted to send to market. So we stopped up at his house and we said ... Mr. Hayes, said ... want to send that calf over to the market? And he said, well, let me go down and look at the signs ... see if we can let it go. So he went down to the house and came back and said, yea, said ... you can take it over to the market for me. Said, back it out of the barn. There wasn't a cow around there any place. Said, back it out of the barn and the cow won't bawl when she comes in the barn. So we backed that calf out of the barn, and I don't know whether that cow bawled when she came in or not, but anyway we backed it out of the barn.

Interviewer

Did you ever fool with signs at all?

Interviewee

No, I won't argue about it but I plant in the ground. I don't think nothing about the signs. I heard a fellow the other day say, if you plant ... if it freezes in dark moon, it won't hurt the fruit ... or I mean if it freezes in light moon, it won't hurt the ... it won't hurt the fruit. I guess he's tried that out; I don't know.

Interviewer

This area around here is not too much of a fruit place anyway, is it?

Interviewee

No, no ... back on the hill here ... back in the Blue Creek country, what they call Dutch Ridge, that's good fruit country.

Interviewer

What makes the difference?

Interviewee

Well, I guess it's on the altitude. I don't know how it is; seems like the higher the altitude, the better the fruit. I don't know whether it's on they stay back, or the cold holds them back, or what it is. I guess it must be on account of the coldness. I don't know. It's some kind of a ... something does it; I know it does better on the hills, and I think they could do a lot better if they'd take care of the fruit more. If they'd just feed 'em and spray and do a little bit more about 'em, they'd raise a lot better fruit.

Interviewer

West Virginia's not much of a ... you're kind of a farmer in a place where there's not very many farmers anymore.

Interviewee

No, no, what they do, they wear it out. The land is ... always said this ... A rat won't stay if he can't get food, so you can't stay on the farm if you don't produce and have food. That's what they've done in our country. They've just took off and took off and never put on - won't pay back. A lot of them think it's luck and signs. If I have luck, I'll do so and so this year - or plant in the wrong sign and ... just don't work, you've got to take care of the land and you've got to pay back to it and it'll sure give you plenty back if you'll give it something to do with. It'll work night and day. Course, there's years you'll have better crops if you get the water right and all, but you can do a pretty good job anytime if you've got good land.

Interviewer

Have you ever had any real droughts around here when you just didn't hardly raise anything or anything like that?

Interviewee

Well, back in ... of course I was just getting through high school - that was back in '30 or '31 just before the flood - it was awful dry. Then I've ... I've seen it when it was ... pasture ... just wasn't much pasture now.

Interviewer

Did you ever have to feed your cattle in the summertime, or have you always ...?

Interviewee

I started to feed one time in, oh ... I don't know whether it was August or somewhere in there. It was up in late summer. And then it started raining and they quit ... there was enough grass and they wouldn't eat hay. But that's the only time I can remember ever having to feed before time to feed.

Interviewer

What months do you feed?

Interviewee

Oh, I usually ... course that's some more weather according to how the fall is ... but I usually start feeding somewhere in November; maybe after the middle or something like that. It's a whole lot according to how the season is and water in the fall of the year. Most of the time you have dry weather in the fall.

Interviewer

When do you usually get to quit?

Interviewee

Oh, about in April. I'd say most of the time I usually feed 'em till they quit eating, and then you can just watch 'em go down ... quit eating hay. Most of the time you'll be done before the middle of April. I always used to think you'd maybe have to feed from 5-1/2 to 6 months; then hope you don't have to.

Interviewer

About how much or how many acres ... or does it take an acre to support a beef cow?

Interviewee

Well, in West Virginia it'd take more than an acre that is one farm with another. It's ... course there's a lot of farms that would do it. I guess our farm will do better than that, but one farm with another in West Virginia; I'd say I don't know where they could ... I doubt it where they could do it on two acres or not, one farm with another. With the way they take care of their land ... I believe that's one reason ... it's not on account of grazing. Even the quality of the hay is better on upland ground - if they've got food to eat.

There's all kind of good land in West Virginia; good grazing land in West Virginia if people wanted to put out the effort and sacrifice a little. Same way with fruit - there's plenty of room for a lot of fruit in West Virginia. If they'd just ... you won't do it overnight and that's what people want to do anymore. Seems like they wanta ... just get rich overnight and make no effort and I think we're teaching a lot of it, I think.

SIDE II

Interviewee

Well, it would take two weeks to tell 'em all. Uh, Wes Melton brought a load of hay over here one time and we's baling it. Ah, there was eight or ten of us there and we got to guessing how many bale that truck load would bale. So all of us guessed and old Mel; he comes up with a guess and hit it exactly. He couldn't read nor write and the counter on the baler showed the number of bales so we'd tell him whatever it was ... I don't know what number we told him and proved it to him right there on the baler 'cause he couldn't read. He used to have an old mule and there was a big culvert under the railroad tracks there and he'd haul wood from the river up to his house to burn. This mule would come down to the river there and he had a muzzle over his head and that mule would paw in the water ... paw, paw, paw, paw. So I saw Mel one day and said Mel, "What in the world have you got that sack over that mule's mouth for?" Said when he comes down here, said he tries to drink that river dry and he's not going to drink it.

And he had a couple of dogs. One was brown as could be; the other was black as could be. Said, what's your dogs name, Mel? Said, see that black one over there? I named him. I called him "Blackie," and that brown one over there, "Clarnc" named him ... that's his boy. We call him "Brownie." So he'd bring 'em over here and go out to hunt with them. I'd look at old Brownie and say, come here Blackie. Mel'd say ... that's Brownie ... I mean that's Blackie. Can't you tell? The black dog is Blackie and the brown dog is Brownie. He had another one he called Freddie. One day Dana Campbell and I were over there in the river in a boat and the river was up ... had a little current. He said, watch old Freddie go get a stick ... tossed it out in the river and old Freddie'd go and get it ... throw out another one and Freddie'd go get it ... threw out a pretty good one and old Freddie grabbed it and started down the river - the current took him down the river and he was going out in the river and Mel ... I looked over at Mel and he was pulling his coat and I said, what in the world you going to do, Mel? Said I'm going in and get old Freddie. I said, why you leave old Freddie alone now. We'll get him out if he needs to be taken out of there, so he got the stick in there or lost it or something and came on into the bank.

He went ... his boy named Clarence ... they had a cow and when Clarence needed milk, he'd grab a glass and go out and milk the cow and bring it in and give it to Clarence. He taught Clarence to spell. He taught him to spell Rumpelstilskin and Bonnieclabber, and all those different words. He'd a ... wore an overcoat all the time, Mel did. He had to cover Clarence's head up and then have him spell Bonnieclabber and Rumpelstilskin.

Interviewer

Did his wife ever come out of the house? Did you ever see her?

Interviewee

Yes, she used to come over here every Sunday or two. His wife was Gertie.

Interviewer

Was she as dirty as he was?

Interviewee

Little more. They used to come over here on Sundays and buy ice cream. They'd come across the river in a boat ... stick around here. After Clarence got old enough, he got in the Air Corps. Old Mel was visiting us one day and I said, where's ... where's Clarence, Mel? Said I don't know, but it took two airplanes to take him where he was going.

One time ... Wes Melton, Snyder Hall, and another one or two ... I met them on the road going on the hill to feed the cattle or something. They had some whiskey in the car and Mel wanted to know if I'd take a drink with 'em ... ah, yea - I'll take a drink with you. Mel said, now don't you tell Snyder Hall - don't you let him know about this. So in two or three days I saw Mel and Snyder together and he was wanting ... Snyder was his best buddy. I said, Mel what did ... what was that you wanted me to tell Snyder? So he let out an oath and said, ah, you've already told him. He just went ahead and told him himself and I hadn't mentioned it to him.

Interviewer

You all didn't really make fun of Mel. He just didn't know ...

Interviewee

Ah, no, he was just Mel. It wasn't fun; he wanted to be seen all the time. He couldn't talk to you without punching you and you had to look straight at him. There used to be a filling station above home here and he'd come up there and we'd have it made up. He'd tell a joke and everybody would just set there - poker faced - just set there like they hadn't heard him and he'd get mad and just stomp around - swear. And then part of the time, we just wouldn't speak to him. He'd come in and walk in a place and just set there and never speak. Nobody could do it like Mel could. Well, let's see.

Well, getting off Mel and getting onto some of these preachers. I remember one time up the road here, at the church there was a fellow preaching - there wasn't any moving on the congregation and it was ... ah, I guess in January or February and he was preaching and he was trying to get the move and he said, come on up. Said ... he was preaching the end of time to start with - it was right here on us. So he told the congregation, come on up - you might not have to live it any longer than spring.

Interviewer

The church has always been big in Appalachia though, hasn't it? Supposedly, we're a religious people. At least we have a lot of churches anyway.

Interviewee

Yea, there's a lot of churches in Appalachia. There's a lot of Appalachia preachers. This fellow, ah, he's been dead for thirty years ... he preached during that time that it was going to end in the next few days - it's still going.

Interviewer

Wonder what makes Appalachia people so religious? Do you have any views on that or is that just the way it is?

Interviewee

Well, I think some of it's the ... the way they're taught. You go in different localities ... it's in the people, they grow up with it and I guess a lot of them believe it and stick with it.

Interviewer

Appalachian people are supposed to be what they call fatalistic as a group. They believe, ah, like you don't have any control over nature. You're kind of at the mercy of God and nature, whereas other segments of American society don't necessarily believe that. Sometimes that's pretty much of a hindrance to people in Appalachia. They're just what we call fatalistic. They just take whatever is coming and that's it instead of ... I mean if you really believe that, it looks to me like you would just lay down and take it.

Interviewee

Well, ah ... there's a lot of them that do that. There's no question about that. I know it. A fellow told me last summer that the flood up in Donnolly Hollow ... that there was a lot of mean people up there and then there was ... I believe there was three little kids drown up there and I said ... I said, how come that they drown three little kids instead of drowning the mean people. Little kids couldn't be mean. He didn't know but that's the way they do it ... that's the way it was done.

I remember during World War II in the old Bible there some place that ... and I remember it long enough to go tell a preacher ... they had ... they started rationing tires ... ah, something about rings. The fellow telling it remembered the book and chapter and verse ... so I go down to Elkview here and this fellow's a barber and he's a preacher. He kept his Bible there all the time and I ... I said Wink, get your Bible out and turn to this certain place in the old Bible and I told him before he started reading ... I said that's about rationing tires. I don't think he would have known if I hadn't told him that. So he got his book, read it, laid the Bible back upon the table there and said it was as plain as the nose on your face. And I went down there later on and he said ... to get a haircut ... and he said they're going to sink Japan in a few days. I said I hope they do. You won't ... you wouldn't if you know what it meant. Well, I said what's it mean? He quoted me in there about the rocks and the mountains falling and so forth and so on.

Interviewer

He thought that was the end of time.

Interviewee

Yea, and I said I don't care. Let them sink her anyway. So I don't guess they ... they did about sink her, but I don't think anything happened. Then when Roosevelt took his seat, he said in so many months he'd be killed and in so many months after that or something Huey Long was killed and he said it was Huey Long instead of Roosevelt. I told him ... I said I guess the Lord just got the two men mixed up. That's about all that could happen there.

Interviewer

Well, this idea of fatalism does ... like when we were talking about farming ... looks to me like that would be quite a detriment to the farmer if he believes ... you know, things were just the way they are and that's it. That's a pretty bad attitude to have, I think. I know, Dr. Simpkins said that ... he said he made a proposal to the federal government one time that they go up in especially central West Virginia and buy up some of those farms ... adjoining farms, so that they would be big enough to be productive so somebody could make a living on it and he said that he thought they should bring people in from ... Pennsylvania Dutch or Amish people ... somebody up there that were real good farmers. He talked like maybe the Appalachian people just weren't even capable of farming if they had the chance and maybe there's something to that. Does that sound reasonable to you or not?

Interviewee

Yea, it sounds reasonable. I think a lot of 'em trust the luck. I've seen people plant under a shade tree ... plant corn and the year before, they proved they couldn't grow it under there and they'd plant corn right in the same old place 'cause they figured on luck or maybe the good Lord would be better to them this year than he was last year. I know a lady stayed with us here for awhile that ... we had kale out there and we didn't have any place to put it. We had the freezer full and no place to put it. She said the Lord won't let you have it ... you won't have any next year 'cause the Lord won't let you have any if you don't take care of that kale. I said, well I was the one who planted the seed and it's growing out there ... why would that be any difference? Well, that's the way it is; you won't have none next year. I don't think the Lord has anything to do with that. He put it in motion and maybe we've got to take care of it from there ... make your own road ... make your own success ... a little sweat, a little perseverance, a little

management. There's a lot of land in here you can make a living on. I don't think you'd get rich, but you could make a living.

Interviewer

Farms have gotten so big today that there's not much opportunity for just an ordinary person to be exposed to farm life and so forth and it seems to me like there are a lot of lessons to be learned just by being on the farm, tilling the soil, and observing the animals and so forth, isn't there?

Interviewee

Oh yea, it doesn't have to be the young ones either; some of the old ones learn to ... need to know a little. I remember one time during Easter vacation we were planting potatoes and we always kept a bull and we used to let people breed their cows to this bull until we got enough cows of our own. So we looked over there and one of the neighbor ladies was coming up with her cow and my brother ... well, we went over and ... there was a store there where we go up on the hill where we kept the bull and we got the cow, my brother and me, and we led her up on the hill. She stayed there. 'For we left, she said, keep her up there all day if you want to. Said, ah, we'll bring her back in a little bit. We took her up there and brought her back and I said go in there and tell ... I told my brother to go in there and tell her that her cow is out here; and she came outside there and said, "Already?" She said, reckon she'll be all right? Yea, she'll be all right. We got rid of that one.

Then there was a fellow who worked for Carbide called up here ... he gets eggs up here all the time ... he called up and wanted to know if I had any fertile eggs. I said, no, we don't have any but you could get them at the hatchery where I buy my chickens. They've probably got 'em. He said how can you tell a ... an egg that's going to hatch a male and one that's going to hatch a female? I said, buddy if you can do that ... I said you let me know and we'll both get rich. And so I told a fellow next door over here ... said I'm going to start a school on the birds and the bees for some of these grown-ups. There was a fellow here the other day wanted to know about fertile eggs. He wanted to know how you could tell a female egg from a male egg ... if it hatched a male or a female, and this fellow setting with me said, well, ain't all eggs fertile? I said, mine better not be; I don't have any roosters out there.

Interviewer

A lot of people believe though that you have to have a rooster to have a chicken lay eggs, I guess.

Interviewee

Yea, I saw a fellow the other day and this fellow said, do you have to have a rooster to get eggs. I said, no, I don't guess so; I don't have any. They're still laying.

Interviewer

Well, don't you think it's natural for people to be inquisitive about birth and sex and so forth, and then they can observe it on the farm in the animals? It's the natural thing.

Interviewee

Yea, I'd say that. On a farm you just grow up with it. I know we raised a nephew here that ... I used, like I said before, we used the bull to service other people's cows ... one day ... I was up on the hill with this fellow and he came along and he's about, ah, seven or eight years old, I guess ... wanted to know where I was and said he was up on the hill breeding the cow. It was just an everyday thing with him. He didn't think nothing unusual about it. I know the other day, there was a fellow preacher that wanted to see a calf born. Said he told one of his members of his church if he ever had a calf ... cow giving birth to a calf, let him know. He'd like to see a cow giving birth. I told somebody - you'd better come in a hurry cause most time you don't never know it until it's just about ready to happen. I never saw a cow give birth since I've had cattle. I've taken a few with trouble, but ... seen 'em partly born, but just to stay there and watch one born, never have seen it 'cause it's not a good idea to bother them if everything is going good.

Interviewer

It's really not too bad of a thing if it's a natural birth, is it? I mean it's a rough way to have to bring life, but still it's a ... if everything goes well, it's not so bad, but if you have trouble, you really have trouble.

Interviewee

Oh yea, if you go against nature. I always did say they should have a door you just open up and let them out.

Interviewer

I figure the cow feels that way too.

Interviewee

She probably does, but in a few more weeks, she's wanting another one. That's the way it goes. I've taken a few afterbirths. I remember one time that I'd ... I'd been up on the hill and this cow had dropped her afterbirth and I just threw it out of the barn. I came down off the hill and told a fellow ... you got any new calves born? Yea, just threw away an afterbirth up there awhile ago. Why, she'll never have any more calves; she's got to eat that before she can have any more calves. So that's ... I guess that's some more of your Appalachia. That's the way they do it.

Interviewer

I guess she had some more?

Interviewee

Yea, I don't remember her not calving.

Interviewer

Really that gives a ... I think kids ... The more things that kids are exposed to, the better opportunities they have when they get to school. You know a lot of things you learn about on the farm in a moral way ... that you couldn't learn any other way. Really, I mean you don't have to go in the back alley and learn it where humans are involved.

Interviewee

Well, I believe that. You take ... kids watch a hen lay an egg. Well, that's nothing unusual. You talk to grown-ups. Well, I'd love to see a hen lay an egg. It's just an everyday thing. I've caught 'em when they laid 'em. They didn't go off the nest; they just stand there and lay ... just catch the egg - really catch a fresh egg.

I take eggs up here to a restaurant and I tell them it's a job to catch eggs from 500-600 hens now but I just caught them this morning as they laid them; and if you get around to every hen before they drop 'em, it's a big job.

Interviewer

You'd have to have pretty close timing, it sounds like.

Interviewee

Yes you would. You'd have to use both hands.

Interviewer

Well, you've lived in Appalachia for 60 years or so and you probably have memories for over 50 years. I guess each period of time had its own good things and bad. What do you feel is better about the situation you have today relative to a long time ago and what was better then?

Interviewee

Well, I'd say it's better in certain ways and not as good in other ways. Convenience is better and that's what people are looking for any more, seems like. We're not conservative as we should be; there's more wastefulness. And I guess that comes with convenience. I think if time keeps moving, we're going to have to be more conservative. I think that's going to be one of the big things - that they're going to have to start ... just not wasting it, that's all - just save and take care of land. That's going to be the main thing; the longer we stay here, the more we're going to have to live off the top because when a ton of coal comes out of the hill, that's all she wrote. Same thing with oil and gas, but on the top you can produce vegetation year after year if you take good care of the ground, feed your land - it goes round and round.

Interviewer

Is there anything that you can remember, say, thirty years ago that was better than now; was there any advantage to having been alive thirty years ago?

Interviewee

Well, I'd say there's more contentment. I think that people were more contented years ago than they are now because you watch - everybody's in a hurry. They hurry to get some place, then as soon as they get there, they hurry to get back. Ask them what's the use; they say, well, got to that to keep up with the other fellow so it just pyramids - goes a little faster.

Interviewer

When people didn't have all of these conveniences, they didn't know about them, so really, they didn't really miss them. It wasn't the matter of being deprived or anything, was it?

Interviewee

No. No, it's like digging a ditch now. You don't want to dig a ditch because you have a ditch digger right there that will do it or grab a cross-cut saw to go cut a tree, because you've got a chain saw that'll do that pretty quick and that's another convenience. A fellow's silly to want to cut it with a cross-cut when you've got a chain saw within a third of the time or maybe less than that. Still you don't have that contentment that you had back years ago.

Interviewer

Well, it sounds as if you caught onto this idea of conserving and trying to put back on the ground and so forth before it became such a timely issue. I guess it's come to the front nationwide in the last ... what, five or six years, really. It sounds as if you've been doing that for several years.

Interviewee

Well, if I hadn't, I'd starved, because this land wouldn't produce. That's what's happened to acres and acres of Appalachia ... people wearing out the land and never put back, erodes and wears away. Always have been a conservationist and always will be, I guess. I think there's going to be more of them as the thing goes along - either that or starvation.

Interviewer

Do you think we can recover if the country were to become conservation-minded instead of trying to make the money, try to make the farm productive and look to the future. Do you think we've gone too far to recover or do you think there's still a possibility?

Interviewee

Well, I'd say it's ... surely we've not gone too far, but we've gone far enough, I'll say that ... people would just stop and believe part of it. It's not hysterical but it's serious. It's tomorrow and the next day and the next day; it's not today. That's what people live for anymore, it seems like - today. That's a very poor way to live. This thing should be better when you leave here than when you came, as far as I'm concerned. I think it can be.

Interviewer

Well, I thank you for your time and sure appreciate everything you've done.