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### Oral History Interview: Charles E. Smith

Charles E. Smith

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# RELEASE FORM

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Courtney Smith  
(Agent of Receiving Organization)

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4-27-98  
(Date)

**CHARLES E. SMITH BY: COURTNEY SMITH**

**Growing up in Chapmanville, WV, Mr. Smith describes births and weddings in Logan County, flooding, how his family raised most vegetables and hogs for a living. He briefly discusses his jobs as manager of a dairy in Logan, owning a Chrysler dealership, and a new and used furniture store. He concludes with his interest in the WV Calvary, the Civil War, and coal mining in West Virginia.**

**Tape #1**

**Subject: Oral History of Appalachia Project**

**An Oral Interview With: Charles E. Smith**

**Conducted and Transcribed By: Courtney Smith**

**Date of Interview: April 27, 1998**

0579

The following interview was conducted with my grandfather, Charles Smith, on April 27, 1998, following his 86 year old aunt's funeral. He talks mostly about the different types of businesses that he and his mother and father have had. He tells of how he met his wife of 46 years, and when they moved to Stollings where they live today. There are some interesting stories about the flooding that was experienced before the R.D. Bailey Dam was built, his time in the Navy, and how his father taught him to garden.

Courtney Lee Smith (CLS):

I'm Courtney Smith, and I am interviewing my grandfather, Charles Smith who lives in Stollings, West Virginia He's 66 years old and he's lived in Logan County most of his life other than his time in the Navy. So, I think he's going to tell us a little bit about that . If you'll just start by telling us where and when you were born.

Charles Edward Smith (CES):

Well, I was born in Chapmanville in either 1930 or 1931. According to my mother, I was born in 1931. The courthouse has me born in two years '30 and '31 so who knows how old I am.

CLS:

So you could possibly be 67.

CES:

I spent the first 5 or 6 years of my life in Chapmanville as a little child, living with my grandparents and my mother and father. My grandad was an old blacksmith and a farmer also. I used to follow him around all

through the gardens, feed the chickens, cows, slop the hogs. But when I was about 6 years old he moved to Stollings and was a manager for one of the largest dairies in Logan County.

CLS:

So that was your grandfather

CES:

That was my grandfather

CLS:

Your grandfather on which side

CES:

Peck

CLS:

Your grandfather Peck, okay, that would be on my mother's side

CES:

On my mother's side, yes.

Of course, we moved from Chapmanville to Aracoma when I started to school in the first grade. It was a large two room school (spoken sarcastically), four grades, two in each side of the building, with a big burn side heater. The teacher would make the kids stoke the fire up every day. When you had to relieve yourself we had real nice (sarcastically) outdoor toilets. When the line would get real big you would have to run over the riverbank and hide. But I spent 4 years in Aracoma Grade School. Well, three actually. And we moved to Stollings and lived up here for a couple of years.

My father owned a garage and a body shop, and about the time that

World War II started he bought out a cab stand.

CLS:

Now, was that WWI or WWII that you said that he bought out the cab stand?

CES:

WWI! I wasn't even thought of in WWI. That was in 1917. This was in '42

So, I would get to go stay with my grandparents, and if you sat at their breakfast table on Saturday mornings you got a real treat a double dose of castor oil with orange juice. She really believed in cleaning out the system. Very seldom you ever had colds or flues or anything back in those days.

When I was at the dairy farm one summer, my uncle, I found a little old car in the creek in Dingess Run. Him and my cousin took it away from me, poured gasoline on it and set me and the car both on fire. And my grandad he found me, tore my clothes off, rolled me in the dirt and the cow manure, put the fire out. And after that my dad wouldn't let me go stay with them anymore for a whole week.

CLS:

I guess not.

CES:

When I was going to grade school at the Stollings Grade School, I had a little job at Alton Kinser's grocery store. He let me and my cousin Jimmy Keaton, we'd kill chickens on Saturday. The people, the customers would come in and pick out a chicken in the coop, whether they wanted a fryer or an old baking hen. We had a little room in the back of the store.

We'd have to scald them chickens and pick them, get them ready for the customers. And I would take my Radio Flyer red wagon and deliver groceries all over Stollings, all the way to Sunbeam.

CLS:

How old were you?

CES:

I was about 10 years old. Just about the time the war started. Of course, my dad he'd sold his garage at the time when WWII started and went in the cab business in Logan. He had Black Diamond Cab. Of course, during that time, when my brother and I were little. He would take us to Tennessee and put us out on the farm down there for about 2 or 3 weeks every summer. Have to get up of a morning, go out in them old fields, look an old mule in the back end behind the plow. I was a little older than my brother, and my cousin on Saturday evening and sometimes Friday evening he'd take us to a little old country store, and it was really a big treat. You would get a bottle of pop and maybe a little nickel bar of candy. Sunday morning you would wind up in Sunday school and church every Sunday. It was the same old tale every day looking that mule in the back end, plowing, hoeing corn, staking tomatoes, but it was really a great experience. You learned a lot of practical things. And a lot of common sense was put in with it too. And then once in a while you got your hide tanned a little bit because you got out of the way, out of line rather. We came back, we'd come back in the summer. I went to Logan Junior High up on the hill in Logan. Logan Central now.

CLS:



I think they closed it.

CES:

It's closed now, I went to the 8th and 9th grade up there. Then on to Logan High School. Which was in East End at the time. J.A. Vickers was the principal at the time. Of course, I had an early typing class, I'd have to hitchhike to school of a morning from Justice Addition, we'd moved back to Justice Addition at the time from Stollings. We'd hitchhike to school so we could get there on time, didn't have a school bus at 6:30 and 7:30 like the kids do today. Of course, every now and then we'd get out a little early, slip out rather.

On my 16th birthday my dad made the down payment for me an automobile. A '41 model Plymouth. And he said "boy, you pay the insurance and you make the payments." That kept my feet to the fire. I worked at a service station at the triangle in Logan. Where the State Police Headquarters comes off of the boulevard bridge now.

CLS:

Haven't you told me before that you told a little fib on your driver's license to get it a year early.

CES:

I really didn't tell a fib because that's why the courthouse had me born in '30 and '31. Like my mother said '31 but I just told the state police '30. You didn't have to show your birth certificate so I said 1930 and that's what my driver's license shows today. The only thing is I didn't get my social security, get to lie on it like I did my driver's license. I had to wait until I was really old enough to draw social security. So I got cheated out

of a year's social security.

CLS:

Well, anyway back to high school.

CES:

But during high school and working at Pickle's service station it was a really wonderful experience. I think it was in '47 or '48 a friend of mine, well 5 of us we decided to go to Morgantown to the basketball tournaments. Back at that time we didn't have no single, double or triple A. When you played sports it was dog eat dog, the best team won. So we took off to Morgantown, 5 of us in a '41 Pontiac. We'd never been out to try to rent a room or a motel, so when we got to Morgantown at the ball tournament there wasn't a room to be found anywhere. So we parked in a funeral home parking space and the funeral home director came out to run us off because he had a funeral going on in an hour or so. We intended to go over and try to stay in the jail, but if we hadn't moved that car we'd have stayed in and missed the ball game. Anyway we stayed at the funeral home, a couple of my friends, I woke up one slept on a cooling board, a cot, and in the casket display room. What was so funny about one of them though he got scared, I guess he was afraid of them dead people he locked the door and propped a chair up against it so nobody could come in on him. (laughter) But back to the ball game, like I said they didn't have any triple, single or double A, and a little town called Normantown, that back at that time nobody in the southern part of the state had ever heard of, in the last second of the ball game, like things do happen, they beat Logan by one point and broke everybody's heart. So back to Logan we traveled like a little old dog with

its tail between its legs we came whimpering back home.

After I graduated, from high school I worked for my dad in a furniture store for a little while. To keep from being drafted into the Army I joined the United States Navy.

CLS:

Well, when did you meet your wife?

CES:

That was during a Logan and Huntington basketball or uh football game. We used to ride the train from Logan to Huntington to see the ball games. Of course, I had a cousin that lived in Huntington that had moved from Logan, and my sweet little old wife her and my cousin were good friends so she had come to the ball game and come over to see my cousin. And for several years she kind of chased me around 'til she captured me. Of course, she didn't marry me 'til after I got in the Navy. But just before I was drafted I joined the Navy. I was in Great Lakes, came home on Christmas leave and something happened old cupid got around to us and that spark flew, we just kind of made it off. After that I went back and I was shipped to Panama. On the isthmus of Panama.

CLS:

Didn't you all get married on Christmas and not have anywhere to eat?

CES:

We went to Sparta, North Carolina. On Christmas Day there was not a place within a hundred miles open that you could even get a piece of bologna. This sweet little old girl that run the motel, she invited us up and gave us a ham sandwich and some refreshments. Neither one of us was old

enough hardly to buy any illegal refreshments , but sometimes we , I was known to partake. Anyway, after I got out of boot camp we lived in Memphis, Tennessee, and then went to Jacksonville, Florida. And we stayed down there a while, and from there I went to Panama. Well, I went to Norfolk, Virginia, stayed there for a couple of weeks, and I really thought that I was going to get to go to Bermuda and Viv would get to go with me. I'd heard all about them pretty islands. It was going to be just a big honeymoon. Well, I really got it. One morning they called my name out and 12 more sailors, and they stuck us on the U.S.S. Missouri. The next thing we knew we were headed for Panama. Anyway, when they got down there, Panama oh it was a wonderful place snakes, birds, monkeys, jungles. But when they took this little old boat through the canal, and they put it up in this gallard cut they always washed them down with fresh water. Lo and behold I was where I didn't have any business the next thing I knew I got washed over the side, and it just so happened that a couple of my buddies saw me and dropped a life raft back and picked me up. I stayed in Panama a little over a year and a half. Then my father died and I got out and came home.

Then we ran a new and used furniture store in Black Bottom. Which is Ellis Addition or Mount Gay now. Back then most of it was called Black Bottom, because they had 2 or 3 little communes there that nothing but black people lived in.

CLS:

That's where the black high school was too, wasn't it?

CES:

Aracoma high school was in the mouth of coal branch, which was later the Community College or part of it. Then part of Logan Junior High.

After my father died we ran the store for about a year, I guess, and sold it, and opened up a real nice restaurant establishment at Peck's Mill. Right Now the Moose Club is there. Before that it was the West Virginia Club, the Blue Goose, Blue Bonnet, but we named it the Country Steak House. We really had good food and elaborate stuff for about 2 years and then we sold out.

I went back to work at Aracoma Motors in the body shop.

CLS:

Didn't your uncle own it?

CES:

My uncle, my dad's brother owned the business. I worked with Mousie Thornhill in the body shop for a while. I started out as a flunky with Mousie, and greased cars, undercoated, just anything that a (stutter) flunky had to do. I was about to say that other word. The shop foreman he'd always stay onto me so much and my uncle did too, it's hard to work for your people. So, I decided one of these days, you've been so hard on me, I will buy you out.

I started to quit a couple of times, and a friend he got me to selling stock. I worked for Wattellen Reed selling mutual funds, and I did that part time. So, I got out of the shop and sold funds, then started selling cars. So I worked both of them against the middle. It wasn't no scam deal like people do now, but I did sneak in on some insurance people. They thought I was trying to sell a car and I'd listen to their pitch and I'd slip back the next

day or two and sell them a mutual fund and knocked them out of their business. I sold the car too sometimes and let the funds pay for their automobile.

CLS:

So, when did you have children?

CES:

I never did have any children, but my wife did. We had 1 boy and 1 girl. Cathy, the daughter, was born in 1954, and 2 years later we had a fine little old boy. He weighed 11 pounds and 4 ounces. Old Doc Starcher he come after I'd sat there for 2 days and nights in the waiting room. He come in and he said, woke me up, when I looked at that boy he looked like he was half grown beside of them little old tiny things. Big old red face where they had scrubbed him up, and at 11 pounds he was almost grown. Anyway, we got to be big friends. When he got to be 5 years old I got him a little shotgun, pop gun with stoppers in it and take him through the woods hunting. After he graduated from high school, he started working for me. I finally met part of my goals and I bought my uncle out, and ran the place as a Chrystler-Plymouth dealership, Aracoma Motors. And Eddie, he worked for me in the parts room. The next thing I knew he ran into this little girl, and he fell head over hills with her, and she hornswaggled him and got him to marry her. Lord have mercy what a wedding they had. Anyway, the next thing I knew he come home and he said, " Donna," that was his wife, "she's going to have a baby." I said, " Lord have mercy son what are you going to do with a baby?" So, time come around for her to go to the hospital. His birthday was on the 20th day of April, and she was about to go into labor a

little off and on. He said " I hope that child is born on my birthday." I said," boy I'll tell you what I'll do if its born on your birthday I'll buy you a \$1000 savings bond." So, he got out he done rain dances, he jumped up and down he even tried to get the doctor to give her a cesarean just so that baby would be born on his birthday. But he couldn't get that to happen so the baby was born on the 25th of April. They named her Courtney Lee Smith.

CLS:

That would be me.

CES:

A bouncing baby girl.

CLS:

I wasn't exactly a small baby either I was up there in the 9 pound range. So I guess I took after him in my weight.

CES:

Well, I think she started talking when she was less than a year old and she has never shut up since. Her mouth runs all the time. Continuously, like a bell clapper in a bell.

Anyway, we ran Aracoma Motors from '73, when I bought it out, and we had a good business going, of course Chrysler Corporation had a little bad luck and we went broke like a lot of Chrysler Dealers. And we went out of business in 1983. After that we just took a little vacation, rested a while, didn't do nothing, worked in the garden, cleaned the house, lord you can't believe how mom makes me clean that house.

CLS:

So what about when you had Aracoma Motors and the water would get up, and all of the different floods that you would have.

CES:

Some years we'd cleaned out a flood on a weekend, be ready to go back in business, and Monday morning we'd have water again. Backing up to when I bought the dealership, back then you didn't have any flood insurance either. I went in debt for most of the money a quarter of a million dollars, on the 1st day of January, on the 11th day of January we had 11 feet of water in the showroom. All the parts and everything, but back then everybody pitched in and worked together pretty diligently. And we cleaned her up and went ahead and we made her. She was the 3rd largest dealership out of 7 dealers in Logan County.

CLS:

In one of those floods didn't Cathy get hepatitis?

CES:

She probably did, she's sick off and on all of the time anyway. I tried to get her to work in the parts room, not in the parts room, but as an office manager, when she was going to college. I said, "Why don't you do something to help me?" She turned out to be a professional student. Instead of taking business education she was going to be a doctor, but she did wind up, after about 8 years, being an RN. Then she got married. We had one of the awfulest weddings when she got married, we roasted a hog. A friend of mine and my brothers says, "let's have a roast pig."

CLS:

What year was that?



CES:

That was in '77 the year that you were born.

CLS:

And my mother and father got married in '76?

CES:

Yes, and this was in 1977. Anyway, when I bought this pig from a friend of mine I said, "I want you to keep that thing for me 'til December 24." My mother and father in-law had gotten married on December 24th, my wife and I, Vivian and I had gotten married on December the 24th, so, Cathy and this drug head they wanted to be married on December 24th. So, we went to pick up this pig that we thought was going to weigh about 20 pounds, and it weighed 150 pounds. It took us two days to barbecue that pig.

CLS:

And how did you cook it? Out in the yard.

CES:

We cooked it on charcoal on a spit.

CLS:

Do you dig a hole when you do that?

CES:

No, we got a big sheet of tin and filled it full of charcoal, and went to Baisden Brothers and got us some pipe and welded some spikes on it, put that hog on there. Well, we fixed a big tub of barbecue sauce. It took about 10 gallons and 5 gallons of whiskey to get that hog roasted. (laughter)

CLS:

And I don't think that was for the hog.

CES:

And we had one of the biggest weddings at the time that Stollings had had for many a day. Then there was Courtney we couldn't keep her around, she was just fresh, from April to December, so, we took her to my mother's house, down to her granny's and left her for a couple of days while the wedding was going on. So everybody could party and have a good time.

Like I said, the dealership did real good 'til Chrysler started having problems, and in 1983 we didn't really go broke, but business was so bad that I called them one day and said, "I quit! Come and get these cars that belong to you and I'll keep what belongs to me." And we went out of business, of course I did sell used cars for a while, and for a couple of years I didn't do anything. Then I went to see Larry Lafon at L&S Chevrolet. I said, "Larry I'd like to go to work part time." So, I worked for him about a year, and I quit again. I was getting close to getting my social security.

CLS:

Well no, you worked for Larry and then went back to Larry for a couple of years before this last time.

CES:

I went to work for him again and worked for him for about three years, then we had a little disagreement one time, I didn't quit the second time, but he fired me. I didn't sell enough cars to suit him is what it was actually about. So, I said well, I'll just draw unemployment. So, he didn't want me to, but I drew unemployment on him anyway until I got old enough to draw my social security at 62. That's another time that I found out that I

was either one age or another. The lady at the social security board said," Why don't you wait until you're 65?" I said," I may not make it to 65." She said, "you just got 2 years to go you're 63." I said," No I 'm 62." So I said," Well then why don't you back up and give me this back pay?" She said, "It don't work that way." Anyway, I drew unemployment until I got my social security. Drew it and decided we needed a little extra funds, Courtney finally got out of high school and she went to Mud Fork University.

CLS:

Which is actually SWVCTC

CES:

While she was going over there and staying at home I went back to work, but now she's in Huntington going to Marshall and they put me back to work 4 days a week to supplement her income.

CLS:

When did you move to Stollings?

CES:

I don't remember which time. Viv and I moved to Stollings in 1964. We lived at Switzer for a little while, and the lady Mrs. Lawrence said,"I need my house and I'm giving you 30 days to move." So, having lived in Stollings for a while and Viv was raised at Stollings also, just driving through one day I saw this house that the Baisdens had owned. They'd moved out, they'd built them a new house in Mitchell Heights. So, I went over to see Mr. Baisden and I said, " Anthony, how about renting me the house?" He said, "Sorry, I ain't going to rent it, but I'll sell it to you." Then he asked me how much I could pay, which I told him. Which I didn't think

anything about the interest on it and by the time I started paying interest the payment was about double what I thought I was going to have to pay.

CLS:

You still didn't pay too awfully much for it did you, for the size house that it is?

CES:

We paid at the time a considerable amount, but it was still a bargain.

CLS:

Hadn't it been flooded too?

CES:

It had had a flood, the house had been raised, but it had had water in it. So, anyway we cleaned and sanded floors, painted the inside and out, worked like towheads, all of my friends, and my brother-in-law everybody worked together and got this little house cleaned up real nice. And we moved in. Well, on New Years Eve, that was before the R.D. Bailey Dam was put in water started coming up, and I took Vivian, Cathy and Eddie, took them up to Holden. Left them up there so they wouldn't be around the water, and the water lacked 4 inches of getting in the house, and the house is 10 feet off the ground. You talk about being scared, and not being able to swim in a flood water like that Charlie Smith was. But anyway we got through it and cleaned up. I put things in the attic that have never been gotten down since, and this is 1998. Only 34 years ago. (laughter)

CLS:

So, there was quite a bit of water that would get up around here.

CES:

Dingess Run, the creek is only 100 feet from the house, and when they have a lot of flash floods why it does get up in the yard, but with the dam there is not too much threat of it ever getting into the house, but it is a lot of aggravation. It can get in the basement continuously, but we just pitch in and clean it up and go right on.

CLS:

So, when did Cathy get married to her current husband? That was in about '85?

CES:

She moved to Charleston and was working in the hospital, Thomas Memorial, I think, and her and this first husband they divorced, they had some problems and got a divorce. A couple of years later she met Grant Goodwin and they tied the knot. The next thing we knew here she comes up with a little, well he wasn't very little, baby boy. He's a fine young man today. Big for his age. The next thing 6 years later here she says, come home one day and she says, "Dad we're going to have another baby." I said, "No, we're not you are." And lo and behold she's got the meanest little girl that ever put a pair of shoes on. She's straightening up pretty good now. She's 6 years old and the boy is 12 and they live in Proctorville, Ohio. They're both in school now, and doing real good. They work in the scouts a lot, do a lot of church work and so on which is really good. Cathy don't work any more she just stays home with those 2 kids like she ought to do. Grant stays on the road working. He's really a good worker. When he's awake. (laugh)

CLS:

So, let's see you lived at Mitchell Heights for a little while didn't you before you even moved to Switzer.

CES:

Well, we lived at Mitchell Heights when we left the furniture store. We lived there for about a year when Cathy and Eddie were small. That's when we moved to Switzer. They started to school at Switzer, and of course I was working at Aracoma Motors at the time also selling cars.

CLS:

What kind of things, like when you were younger, did you all eat? Did you eat fresh foods, or did you buy things at the grocery store, or when did you start buying things at the grocery store?

CES:

Well, you always bought some things, but you always had a garden, and canned and raised most of your vegetables. You didn't go to the store and buy everything like you do today. My dad would always in the fall, when we lived at Stollings, he would always raise a couple of hogs. And he'd kill, he'd always kill two hogs every year, and you didn't know what Crisco was you got out and rendered lard, and they'd can some of that meat, some of it they'd smoke it, and salt it down. Then you had your own pork. Of course, your vegetables you canned the biggest part of those. My dad he's kind of strict he'd put you in the garden, he had to keep his garden pretty straight.

CLS:

So, when you were young did you go to the family cemetery any or was that later after you purchased the farm?

CES:

No, when I was little my grandmother Peck every summer we'd go down and clean the cemetery off. The family cemetery where my mother and my aunts and uncles, where all the Pecks and Dingess' were born. You had to walk back then or ride a mule to get back in there. My great-great, let's see I have to think here, my great-great grandfather was in the confederate army, and he was in the West Virginia Calvary. His dad when they were clearing the farm and cleaning the old man had to sit down to rest and my grandpa was clearing timber and he cut a tree down on him and killed him. After going all through the Civil War he got killed by his own son, cut a tree down and killed him.

CLS:

So, your mother was born back on that farm wasn't she.

CES:

Yes, my mother and she had 5 sisters and 3 brothers. And one of the brothers, the oldest one, him and a friend of his, they were out with old shotguns, I've got the shotgun in the attic right now, it belonged to my grandma. They were squirrel hunting and he got, one of them, shot him. He got to getting along pretty good, old Doc Hatfield rode a wagon and a horse in there, and operated on him on the kitchen table. My mother and my aunts said that when he left he said to drop him a card when this boy dies. But he got to doing real well, and he took typhoid fever, and he loved to chew tobacco awful well of course his stitches hadn't healed real good, but he was getting along real well. They said that he got up to get him a chew of tobacco and when he pulled a homemade chest of drawer, that my grandpa

had made, lord it was heavy, one of my cousins has still got it today. When he pulled that drawer out he busted them stitches in his side and bled to death. That was the oldest boy in the family.

So they , they moved, my grandand he was a blacksmith, they moved out from the farm in 1921 to Rossmore. That's where he did blacksmithing. Then they moved to Chapmanville when I was born. Of course from there he come to Stollings, and ran the dairy up there, that I was talking about a little while ago.

CLS:

Today is April 27, 1998 and we just buried the last of his mother's sisters, Amber Pugh. Maybe you wanted to tell us a little bit about her and when her and her husband Bill were courting.

CES:

She worked at Omar with one of her sisters at the Junior Mercantile Store, and Bill ran the service station and sold cars for West Virginia Coal and Coke. They dated for a long time. When the war started they moved to Baltimore and worked for Western Electric. Then back during the war they worked up there until the war was over, and they moved back and they got married sometime around in the mid '40's. I remember when he came back to Logan he was driving a '47 model Fraizer, Manhattan. It was a big luxury car then, it was a new breed of car that they no longer make. It was a real fine car. They lived with my grandmother for a while, Bill opened up a floor covering and a tile shop. Bought it from Al's floor covering. When I'd go to school a lot of times, when I wasn't working at the service station, I'd go out and help him lay tile, and put floor covering and stuff down so he



bad, that was in '49 and '50 when I graduated out high school, and went in the Navy in '51. He finally had to give up his lease on it, and right after he died somebody got back in there and the coal business started booming again. So, he was just a day late and a dollar short. Which all of us have been.

CLS:

Well, do you think you have much more that you want to tell or do you think that about covers it?

CES:

We're just about up to date, we just had the funeral.

CLS:

So, you work down at L&S still and you're still living in Stollings since 1960...What was it?

CES:

1964

CLS:

'64

CES:

And I guess we'll live here 'til they cremate us.

CLS:

This concludes our interview.

CLS:

She was born in what, 1911?

CES:

She was born in 1911 on the farm, in Lincoln County, Griffithsville.

CLS:

So, was your mother older or younger than Aunt Amber?

CES:

Mother was younger, she was born in 1916. Anyway, she was always out helping people a hauling and taking them around. Just a few weeks ago, on the 8th day of this month, as a matter of fact, she was taking a lady to the bank and had an automobile accident, then she passed away on the 23rd. We had her funeral and buried her today. That was the last of the aunts in the Peck family. That was the last aunt, actually, that I really got, because on my father's side the last one of them died several years ago, where he was really from Piney Flats, Tennessee.

He came here in 1917 to get away from the farm. His old dad, I think that is where the laser beam was invented was from my grandpa Smith's eyes. When we were kids he could just sneak up on you and you could feel his eyes burning a hole through you if you were doing something wrong. My dad said one reason that he left the farm, his dad, grandpa Smith, he was a carpenter and a contractor, and he'd go off and work for a week or two weeks at a time, and then he'd come back in. The first thing he'd do when he came in, he'd always cut him some switches and all the boys, he'd line them up in the back yard and just whip them whether they needed it or not. He knew that they all needed a good brushing. Just as soon as they got old

enough to slip out and run away, they came to West Virginia, my dad came here first. Harry Dingess got a hold of him some way, and they said he could run any kind of piece of equipment that the state road or these contractors had to do. Dad came here and worked with the state and worked for him for a while.

CLS:

With all of the mining going on around here, how do you think that your family managed to stay out of the mines?

CES:

Some of my uncles did work in the mines, and my peg-legged aunt from Huntington, Reba Staley, her husband got killed in the mines, in Bartley. That's the one's that moved to Huntington in about 1941. Viv and I used to go, that's when she captured me, got to courting me, when we rode the train to see the ball games, she captured me and courted me down there in my cousin's house. But, two of my uncles were killed in the coal mines. My dad, you mentioned how we stayed out of the coal mines, at one time he decided he wanted to get into mining. He didn't do no deep mining, but he bought him an old bulldozer and he bought a shovel and he started stripping coal on top of Huff Mountain, up Dingess Run at Bear Waller' Holler' at Wanda. And that little job it soon worked out, he didn't have a big job there at the time, he got a contract and leased some coal on top of Huff Mountain. He sold his coal to the N&W Railroad. He had about the same luck I did in the car business. One morning he got out and they gave him a notice that they were switching from steam engines to diesels. He didn't have very much longer to work. So he never could get a contract. Coal business got