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Oral History Interview: Arnold Starr

Arnold Starr

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January 30, 1994

Dear Mr. Starr,

On July 8, 1974 you were interviewed for the Marshall University Oral History Office. At this time, we would like to get your final approval in order to make the interview available to the public. If you would like to review the transcript, please let us know and we would be happy to send you a copy. If we do not hear from you, we will assume that you do not wish to review the transcript and we will make it available in the Morrow Library Special Collections.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

RECEIVED
FEB 14 1994
Ans'd *JK*

Sincerely,
Barbara Smith
Barbara Smith, Director
Oral History of
Appalachia Program

AUTHORIZATION FORM: (Please check one of the following options and return to Marshall University Oral History Department, Smith Hall, Care of Dr. Barbara Smith, Huntington, WV 25755-2678)

- Release the transcript without my review
- Release the transcript and send me a copy
- Send a copy of the transcript and wait for my review

Signature *Loretta G. Steele - Adm* Date *2-9-94*

*My dad passed away June, 1979. I was appointed as administrator of his estate. So you have my approval to release the transcript and could you please send me a copy? Thank you.
Any Questions Please call me 235-6783 Home 235-1850 work*



ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Arnold J. Starr, the undersigned, of
Route 1, Williamson, County of Mingo, State
of West Virginia, grant, convey, and transfer to the James E.
Morrow Library Associates, a division of The Marshall University Foundation,
Inc., an educational and eleemosynary institution, all my right, title,
interest, and literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on
July 8, 1974, to be used for scholarly purposes, including
study and rights to reproduction.

A.J.S.
initial

Open and usable after my review.

initial

Closed for a period of _____ years.

initial

Closed for my lifetime.

initial

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

Date July 8, 1974

Arnold J. Starr
(Signature - Interviewee)

Route 1 Box 76
Address

Williamson, W. Va. 25661

Date July 8, 1974

Janora Speers
(Signature - Witness)

BS: He was born January the 22nd, 1906. He's a native of Martin County, Kentucky. He lived in Mingo County during the middle thirties. He now resides at Wilcoe, West Virginia. From here on out he will be referred to as my daddy. O. K. daddy, tell me how it was when you first grew up.

AS: Do what?

BS: Tell me how it was when you first grew up. What are some of the things you did?

AS: Uh, I was raised on a school farm and I had, uh, work from daylight till dark on this farm and I usually got out before daylight, and I got into the fields to go farm by the time of daybreak then I worked till about sundown. Things were much different back then than they are today. We raised practically everything that, uh, we ate, ate and we went to the grocery store about once a month. And uh, we did that to secure sugar and, and flour and, let's see sugar, flour, and such things that we didn't raise on the farm. We raised all our garden stuff like potatoes and beans, and cabbage, and tomatoes, and bout everything we ate with the exception of a few things.

BS: What are types, what are the types of meat that you had?

AS: Meat?

BS: Um, mmm.

AS: Uh, we raised our own hogs and had our own cows. And uh, we usually butchered the hogs when cold weather came, of course we, uh, milked our cow everyday and for our butter we had an old fashion churn that, uh, we churned, uh, our butter, made it.

BS: How did, did you preserve the meat, after you butchered the hogs?

AS: Preserve the meat?

BS: Uh, huh.

AS: We, uh, had a, what you call a smokehouse.

BS: Now tell us about how it was fixed.

AS: And we hung this up in the smokehouse and smoked it.

BS: Did you have a fire in this house?

AS: Hickory.

BS: Hickory fire?

AS: Hickory, the hickory cane wood, er, hickory wood.

BS: Well where did you build the fire, on the inside of the stove like or what?

AS: Uh, yes as best as I can remember it was, uh, a small cook stove or something similar to it, I can't remember the exact type of stove was something that, uh, that would preserve meat.

BS: Now tell me about the schools.

AS: Schools?

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AS: When I was real, uh, young and started going to school I had to walk about two and a half miles, and uh, back then they taught reading, writing, arithmetic, more than they do today. And we had, uh, the teachers were more stricter on us back then than they are in this day and time. When they tell you to do something you better do it.

BS: What'd they do to you if you didn't?

AS: They strap your back.

BS: With what?

AS: A limb.

BS: Just from the tree, go out and get one?

AS: Yeah, a limb from the tree.

BS: How did you, uh, have to sit in this class, did you have to sit all day long, did you have recesses or what?

AS: Oh we had recess sure, we had a noon period just like they do today.

BS: What are the games that you played?

AS: Huh?

BS: What are the games?

AS: Well we played, uh, marbles and, and let's see, hippity-hop, what ever you call it.

BS: How'd you do that?

AS: Uh, we jumped ropes, and uh, little different thing I don't remember way back, uh.

BS: Where did the school teacher live?

AS: Do what?

BS: Where did the school teacher live?

AS: The school teacher lived, uh, usually a mile away, they had, well back when I first begin going to school then they, uh, didn't have roads like they do today to drive to the school house they had, they had to walk both the students and the teachers had to walk.

BS: Tell me about the time when you got lost in the cave and your light went out.

AS: Well to secure my education I, I had to do different things, in fact I worked my way up myself. And to get a high school education I had to walk bout five miles a day, across two big mountains and sometimes I would get up and there'd be a snow on. I had to set out walking across the, these mountains sometimes I'd bog down in the snow. And I walked for about two years like that and I finally got to staying with someone who had known and to ride the schoolbus to carry on high school. And then, uh, after I got my high school education, I had a little farm over there that I sold.

BS: Is that the farm that your parents left you?

AS: Yes that's the farm that they had ordered.

BS: How old were you when they died, let's see one of them died?

AS: Uh, my father died when I was six and my mother died when I was eight.

BS: Now you had two brothers, didn't you?

AS: Yeah, they died when they were re-real young.

BS: Well who took care of you?

AS: Well my father and mother took care.

BS: I know but when, when they died though, what did you do?

AS: Well we lived on the farm. Now I want to finish telling you bout my education, how I got it.

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AS: I sold this farm I think for bout \$400.00 that was enough money to enter college on. And after I got enough hours to teach, I got a standard honor certificate in Kentucky. And after I got enough hours to teach why then, uh, I went to school during the summer term and for awhile, and uh, then.

BS: You went to school down here didn't you?

AS: I went, uh, two whole semesters, and uh, they usually taught of a, during the school year and then of the summer I would, I would go to school and finally finish my education college of, Concord College, Athens, West Virginia. And, what else do you want me to say?

BS: Well I want you to tell me a little bit about the kinds of foods that you ate when you were small.

AS: The what?

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AS: Well the kinds of food that we ate, uh, we, back then we didn't go to the store like we do today (coughs). We cooked our (coughs), our own food and, uh, mostly vegetables and meat that we raised that we got, uh, when we killed our hogs and of course we had sheep back then, then days too. Sometimes we'd kill a sheep, eat the meat. And of course I was a hunter and I went out on occasions, and uh, killed squirrels and we had a lot of wild, uh, wild meat back then to eat.

BS: How did the women wash their?

AS: People were much, much healthy back then than they are today.

BS: Well how about church, did you use to go to church alot?

AS: We use to have old fashion, I call them old fashion services. And we would assemble ourselves in somebody's home and have prayer meetings. The preacher and people would come from miles around gather up and we'd really have a good service. And people got, seem like they got more happier back then than they do this day and time (coughs), I believe I'm taking a cold (coughs). And the people back then were more helpful to one another then they are today.

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AS: I remember when, uh, I remember when we use to have what you call log rolls.

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AS: And quiltings. The neighbors would gather in, and uh, and uh, scrub out a whole field of corn, whole field, uh, not of corn but a place to plant corn in one day's time. And then they let in and clear out a whole field in a day, in one day. And then, uh, we use to have what they call, uh, bean stringing. They'd be, pick a big lot of beans and put um in the living room and a big lot of boys and girls would gather up and fathers and mothers and (coughs) come in and just string beans and just have

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BS: Did you sing and play, you play anything?

AS: Yes, yes sometimes we'd have old time music.

BS: Did you have barn dances?

AS: Yeah sometimes.

BS: How did they go about fixing up the barn dance?

AS: The what?

BS: The barn dance, how did they fix it?

AS: The barn dance?

BS: Um, mmm.

AS: Well there's no fixing up that I know of. They, uh, just have a big time, just mostly a get together. People were help-helpful back during those days, they cared for one another, they loved one another.

BS: What happened if?

AS: More so then they do.

BS: Daddy, what happen if somebody got hurt, who helped them take care of their place, did they have to do it on their own?

AS: If somebody got hurt people always waiting and willing to assist um. They take um to the hospital, they would uh, go to their homes and sit up all night with um, and uh, help um every way that they possibly could. You don't see much of that going on today. You want to ask me some more?

BS: Do you remember when the railroad first started in?

AS: Do what?

BS: The railroad, did you use to go anywhere on the trains?

AS: Well I went to school at Chattaroy High School, I use to catch a train up there at Mt. Chattaroy and ride it down to what they call Mayor. And I would hold my books in one hand and catch the train with the other hand. I usually got off, uh, down there at East Mayor, and one day the train was going real fast and I got off and it threw me and I have a scar here on my hand now you can see (BS: Yeah) it where I plowed into a bunch of gravel.

BS: Didn't you have to burn your hat one time when you were going for the?

AS: That was during my high school days. Uh, sometimes I'd go to, uh, uh, mines big mines, and uh, I'd start from the long branch side and go plum out here below Naugatuck and one day I got in there and the light went out on me and I didn't have any light, had a straw hat. And I set this straw hat a fire and made enough light to get out of that, that mine. I don't know what would've happened to me if, uh, I hadn't had the straw hat to make a light.

BS: What kind of work did you do?

AS: Do what?

BS: When you first started to work what kind of work did you do?

AS: When I first started to work?

BS: Um, mmm.

AS: Oh, I forgot to tell you something. In order to, uh, secure my education I used to catch furs, uh, foxes, snakes, and uh, skunks, and use, and use to sell their hides and that way to pay for my expenses going to school.

BS: Did you ever go?

AS: I done just about a little of everything.

BS: Did you ever go coon hunting?

AS: Yes.

BS: Allright tell me how they coon hunt, I don't know how.

AS: You don't know how to coon hunt?

BS: No.

AS: Well a bunch of dogs and you take them out of the night, and uh, they get after a coon and you listen which way it goes and they'll finally get him treed and then they usually had, uh, uh, strong light, flashlight, something like that, we'd go to the tree and we'd, we would, uh, look for this coon's eyes and by the light we could see their eyes and after they saw their eyes then we could shoot um out.

BS: And what would you, what would you do with it after you caught it?

AS: We'd take the coon, skin it, tan it's hide, sell it's hide and eat the meat.

BS: What did the meat look like?

AS: Well the meat, the meat it looked like kind of a brownish color, redish like color.

BS: Were they, were they real greasy?

AS: They was good if they were fix, if they were fixed right they were good.

BS: Were they greasy?

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BS: Um, mmm.

AS: Well I wouldn't say they were greasy. There's a certain way you can fix um that it, uh, they're, they're not greasy. I think we use to cook them in what they called a spice wood limb.

BS: Spice wood limb?

AS: Yeah, we'd go out and get some spice wood limbs.

BS: Well what, what's that, a spice wood limb?

AS: It's a bush, and uh, cook um in those limbs and that would take the strong scent away, way from um.

BS: Uh, huh.

AS: And they were really good.

BS: Did you ever go fox hunting?

AS: Do what?

BS: Fox hunting.

AS: Oh yeah, I've killed a many of grey, grey foxes and some red foxes.

BS: And how did you do that and how did.

AS: We had, uh, hounds we'd take out.

BS: Well did you walk?

AS: Walk, that's right.

BS: You mean you didn't ride a horse or anything?

AS: No. We'd take these hounds out before daylight and they'd start a fox and they'd probably sometimes run it for three or four hours or a half a day.

BS: Um, mmh.

AS: And we would, uh, station ourselves out in the mountain where we thought the fox would come along and usually there's three or four of us, and uh, usually somebody would kill it, shoot it with a shotgun or a rifle when it came by. Then we took, uh, the uh, fox, skinned it, and uh, send it's hide away. Sometimes we'd get as much as, oh eight or ten dollars for our grey fox hide and sometimes we'd get twenty five or thirty dollars for a red fox hide. Uh, fur prices back then were much higher

than they are today. What else you want?

BS: Allright I want to know about, uh, when you use to court (laughs).

AS: Now I don't want to tell that.

BS: Now daddy come on (laughs), how did, did you take, uh, your girlfriend out or what did you do, did you go visit her at her house?

AS: As I said before we didn't have any roads back then, not in Martin County where I grew up, uh, we had to walk about everywhere we went unless we rode horseback. Sometimes we'd ride horseback. If you had a girl way up there four miles away, why you'd either have to walk or ride horseback. Didn't have no way of transportation like they do today.

BS: Did you stay all night with her parents?

AS: Oh yeah.



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Signature _____ Date _____

An Interview With:

Arnold Starr

Conducted By:

Brenda Starr

Place:

Williamson, W. Va.

Date:

July 8, 1974

Transcribed By:

Brenda Perego

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AS: We, uh, had a, what you call a smokehouse.

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AS: Do what?

BS: Fox hunting.

AS: Oh yeah, I've killed a many of grey, grey foxes and some red foxes.

BS: And how did you do that and how did.

AS: We had, uh, hounds we'd take out.

BS: Well did you walk?

AS: Walk, that's right.

BS: You mean you didn't ride a horse or anything?

AS: No. We'd take these hounds out before daylight and they'd start a fox and they'd probably sometimes run it for three or four hours or a half a day.

BS: Um, mmh.

AS: And we would, uh, station ourselves out in the mountain where we thought the fox would come along and usually there's three or four of us, and uh, usually somebody would kill it, shoot it with a shotgun or a rifle when it came by. Then we took, uh, the uh, fox, skinned it, and uh, send it's hide away. Sometimes we'd get as much as, oh eight or ten dollars for our grey fox hide and sometimes we'd get twenty five or thirty dollars for a red fox hide. Uh, fur prices back then were much higher

than they are today. What else you want?

BS: Allright I want to know about, uh, when you use to court (laughs).

AS: Now I don't want to tell that.

BS: Now daddy come on (laughs), how did, did you take, uh, your girlfriend out or what did you do, did you go visit her at her house?

AS: As I said before we didn't have any roads back then, not in Martin County where I grew up, uh, we had to walk about everywhere we went unless we rode horseback. Sometimes we'd ride horseback. If you had a girl way up there four miles away, why you'd either have to walk or ride horseback. Didn't have no way of transportation like they do today.

BS: Did you stay all night with her parents?

AS: Oh yeah.